

PGSO S1 03

Sociology of India

SEMESTER - I

SOCIOLOGY

PAPER - 03

BLOCK - 1



KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA
FIRST SEMESTER
BLOCK - 1
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COURSE INTRODUCTION:

The course 'Sociology of India' offered in the first semester of M.A Sociology Programme of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University introduces to the learners the various sociological perspectives to understand Indian Society. Apart from that, this course will also discuss about the key aspects of Indian society like caste, class, tribe so on and so forth.

The course comprises of 15 units. **Unit 1** of the course discusses about the emergence and growth of sociology as a discipline in India. The **Unit 2** intends to familiarise the learners with the indological approach or perspective to understand Indian Society. Here discussions have been made on the contributions of G.S Ghurye to Understanding Indian Society from the Indological Perspective. **Unit 3** discusses the Functionalist perspective to understand society by illustrating the works of M.N Srinivas and S.C Dube. **Unit 4** explains the Marxist Approach to understand society where discussions have been made on works of D.P Mukherjee, R.K. Mukherjee and A.R. Desai **Unit 5** is about the Subaltern approach to understand society where works of Ranjit Guha, B.R. Ambedkar and David Hardiman are explained. **Unit 6** explains one of the key aspects of India society i.e the Caste System. **Unit 7** talks about the class system in India. **Unit 8** discusses about Tribes in India, and also about the Tribe-Caste Interaction which is another very unique aspect of Indian Society. **Unit 9** explains the different problems of the Tribal people. **Unit 10** discusses about another three very important institutions i.e Family, Marriage and Kinship system of India. **Unit 11** explains the Education and Economy of India. **Unit 12** talks about the Major Religions in India. **Unit 13** discusses about Social movements in India, its causes and consequences. **Unit 14** discusses about National Integration in India. **Unit 15** discusses about Communalism, its causes and consequences for Indian Society.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION:

This is the first block of the paper titled 'Sociology of India' offered in the MA 1st Semester Sociology programme of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University. This block intends to provide the learners a basic understanding regarding the different perspectives to study Indian Society and also about its key institutions i.e Caste, Class and Tribe. **Unit 1** of this block discusses about how sociology as a discipline started in India. **Unit 2** discusses the indological approach to study/understand Indian Society. This unit focuses on the works of G.S.Ghurye **Unit 3** discusses the Functionalist perspective to understand society where works and methodological approach of M.N Srinivas and S.C Dube are explained. **Unit 4** explains the Marxist Approach to understand society by illustrating the works of D.P Mukherjee, R.K. Mukherjee and A.R. Desai **Unit 5** explains the Subaltern approach to understand society where works of Ranjit Guha, B.R. Ambedkar and David Hardiman are illustrated. **Unit 6** explains one of the key aspects of India society i.e the Caste System. **Unit 7** talks about the class system in India and the different classes found in Indian Society. **Unit 8** discusses about Tribes in India, meaning and characteristics of tribe and also about the regional variations in tribe-caste interaction in India.

In order to make the text more interesting and informative, a section called LET US KNOW has been provided in all the units. This section try to provide some additional information regarding the content of the unit. Further, in order to enable the learners to continuously check their progress regarding the content, some questions has been put at the end of various sections of a unit with the heading CHECK YOUR PROGRESS. The answers to the questions of CHECK YOUR PROGRESS section has been provided at the end of each unit. In the end of each unit, few Model Question of long and short type is provided in order to provide an idea of the question 'pattern' to be expected in the examinations by the learners.

UNIT 1: DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 1.1 Learning Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Emergence of Sociology in India
- 1.4 Development of sociology in India
 - 1.4.1 Foundation of sociology in India
 - 1.4.2 Development of sociology in the pre-independence period
 - 1.4.3 Development of sociology in the post-independence period
- 1.5 Recent trends of sociology in India
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 Further Reading
- 1.8 Answers to Check your Progress
- 1.9 Model Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- describe the history and development of sociology in India
- explain the contributions of the pioneers of Indian sociology
- discuss the Indian Sociological Traditions
- discuss how sociology came to be established as a discipline in India.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Sociology is relatively a new and very young discipline in social science. The emergence of sociology is confronted with several critical phases of history, both in India and in the West. Sociology and Social Anthropology were brought to India from outside, particularly from Britain. British Scholars who lived in India and later Indian scholars who were trained in Britain and U.S.A. played a major role in the development of these two

disciplines in India. Sociology, as a discipline, came much after the contributions made by social thinkers, philosophers, administrators who worked at understanding the Indian society, in general, as well as studying some specific aspects of Indian society, such as law, family, religion, caste system and so on.

Moreover, the contributions of the indologists such as Henry Maine, Alfred Lyelt, etc. helped the development of sociology in India. They gave more emphasise to preserve the indigenous social institutions in Indian society rather than demolishing them and imposing colonial life style on Indian people. They recognised the past glory of Indian cultural and literary tradition.

Besides the indologists, we cannot deny the contribution of the British administrators who made extensive study of Indian people, their races and cultures. Most of these studies helped to generate a body of knowledge, preserved in the Census Reports, Imperial Gazetteers, District Gazetteers, etc. as well as in books and monographs which are referred by social anthropologists and sociologists even today.

In this unit, we shall discuss about the development of sociology in India in its three phases. First is impact of colonial ruler and administrators, Second is Early Indian Thinkers and third one is Post Independence Indian Scholars.

1.3 EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

Sociology in India, as a formal discipline, came in the year 1919. It was the decade when Gandhi had already returned from South Africa and the trauma of First World War (1914-1917) had engulfed mankind. During this period Gandhi's presence not only encouraged the freedom movement but also inspired several pioneering sociologists to devote themselves to the cause and study of the common man.

Though sociology does not have a long history but it does have a long past. Sociological research in India started long before the arrival of formal sociology by British administrators. The lack of a proper grasp and appreciation of Indian social realities, the inadequate, and often inaccurate,

understanding of local customs and traditions, and misinterpretations about different institutional arrangements led the colonial administrators to make use of sociology and social anthropology to smoothly run the colonial administration. To quote Yogendra Singh,

“The contribution of the British administrators-cum-sociologists was quite substantial. Related to studies of the various aspects of Indian social structure, customs and traditions it was not without ideological biases in the selection of themes and sociological paradigms. The conceptual problems of caste, tribe and village community, reflected in their observations served consciously or unconsciously to exaggerate the elements of segmentary cleavages in Indian society to the exclusion of the principles of organic linkage and societal unity. This bias was rooted in various ideological positions that Western sociologists and scholars held while analysing Indian social reality. The “Missionaries” derived their paradigm from their own version of the normative principles of Christianity and judged most Indian social and cultural institutions negatively. Their solution to India’s problem was, therefore, its Christianization. The view of social reality that it offered was mechanistic, segmentary and instrumental in nature. It constituted a typical “colonial paradigm” for social analysis and offered a deeply fractured picture of Indian society and as such of Indian reality.

A vast difference could be seen between the Western and Indian intellectual development. ‘Religion’ had a great impact on the mind-set of western and modern intellectuals, whereas in India, the thinkers paid more emphasis on ‘secularism’. Although, at the same time Indian sociologists were positively influenced by the Western traditions of the philosophy of rationalism, positivism, and historical materialism. Moreover, the pioneers of Indian sociology drew their value premises and perspective on studying Indian society from the nationalist reformation leadership of the nineteenth century.

The early pioneers of Indian sociology always believed in indological approach which is based on Indian society and culture. According to them, the Indian society and culture are very unique and that this “contextual” specificity of Indian social realities could be perceived better through “texts.” The use of the Indological approach during the early formative years of Indian sociology and social anthropology may well be observed in the works of S.V. Ketkar, B.N. Seal, B.K. Sarkar, and G.S. Ghurye.

1.4 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

Sociology emerged as a separate academic discipline in Indian universities in the 1st half of 20th century. At the beginning it was associated with Anthropology. However **according to Srinivas and Panini, the development and growth of sociology in India can be divided into three phases:**

- The first, covering the period between 1773-1900 AD, when their foundations were laid;
- The second, 1901-1950 AD, when they become professionalized;
- The third, 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.

1.4.1 FOUNDATION OF SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA:

During the period of colonialism, the British administrators realised the importance to acquire knowledge of the Indian society and culture for smooth administration. To collect the revenues they also required the knowledge of Indian family system, tradition and customs. Hence, the laws and customs prevailing in Indian society needed to be recorded accurately in detail. This prompted the origin of sociology in India. During this phase, the British officials had conducted many surveys on Indian people. In this regard, in 1769, the first attempt was made by Henry Verelst, then Governor of Bihar

and Bengal. In 1774, William Jones founded the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, the aim of which was to study 'nature and man' in India. Francis Buchanan carried out a survey of people in Bengal in 1807. A French missionary in Mysore, Abbe Dubots wrote the famous book titled "Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies" in 1816, in which he describes the characteristics of caste system and the interaction between castes. In such way, many British scholars had started to write on the Indian society.

All these works of British scholars had helped for more systematic study of Indian society which was done in the second half of the nineteenth century. During this period, the need for census was felt and the British government conducted the first all India Census in 1871. Thus the census became an valuable source of information for data on population, society and cultural life of India.

The colonial rulers also showed their keen interest on Indian classical literature. Therefore with the help of Sanskrit scholars a book on Hindu law was prepared in English in 1776 for the British judges. This discussed about the religious practices, customs and laws of Hindu society. In nineteenth century, Max Muller, a German scholar translated several classical Indian texts into German and later translated into English. Further, in the last decade of nineteenth century, many other western scholars were also influenced by the writings on India.

Thus this period witnessed several studies being made and several books being published on Indian Society and its people even though it was mostly for colonial interests.

1.4.2 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD:

Sociology as an academic discipline, had its beginning in two cities, Bombay and Calcutta. In 1917 at Calcutta University, Sociology had its formal beginning with the efforts of B.N. Seal and later on, the subject was handled by Radhakamal Mukerjee

and B.N. Sarkar. But unfortunately, it did not get any progression at Calcutta. Thus it moved to western India i.e. Bombay, and the first department of Sociology was started at Bombay University in 1919 under the leadership of G.S.Ghurye followed by the University of Lucknow in 1920s with Radhakamal Mukerjee as its head.

Whereas, in South India, the efforts of B.N. Seal and A.F. Wadia brought tremendous achievement to establish department of Sociology at Mysore University in 1928. Simultaneously, Sociology was also introduced in Osmania University and Poona University in the late 1930s with Irawati Karve as the head.

Initially sociology initially had a subordinate position in the organizational structure of Indian Universities. Most departments of Sociology, in their premature phases began their journey under the aegis of other established departments for eg, in Bombay and Lucknow, sociology was taught along with economics. Whereas, in Calcutta, it was taught along with anthropology, and in Mysore it was under social philosophy.

During this phase, the tremendous efforts could be seen in the works of many prominent scholars who contributed to the growth of sociological research in India. B.N. Seal, K.M. Kapadia, Irawati Karve, S.V. Karandikar, M.N. Srinivas, A.R. Desai, I.P. Desai, M.S. Gore and Y.B. Damle are some of those who shaped the future of Sociology in the country. However, their intellectual interests, methods of data collection, and their interpretations of the Indian social system and social institutions were strongly influenced by the ethnographic works produced by scholar-administrators throughout the colonial period. Studies on caste, family, marriage and kinship, social stratification, tribal communities, rural and urban society figured prominently in this period.

The main reason for sociology not being accepted in Indian universities before Independence was the result of a prejudice derived from the country's association with Britain. To British academics, sociology was a foreign subject', its origins were in

Europe, and it was also associated with socialism. The Indian elite, educated in British universities, accepted these prejudices as a matter of course. It is significant that in Britain, Sociology was first established as an academic discipline in the London School of Economics (LSE), founded by the Fabians, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and Bernard Shaw. The first professor of sociology in the LSE was Edward Westermarck, a Finn.

1.4.3 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN THE POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

The next phase of expansion and development of sociology started in 1952 with the factors that are responsible for its growth. The policy makers of Independent India pursued objectives of economic regeneration and social development, and they recognized the role of the social sciences in attaining the objectives of national reconstruction and development. They defined the new task of Sociology as social engineering and social policy science. It meant increased participation by social scientists, particularly economists and sociologists, in research and social and economic development.

At the same time the Indian sociologists got the opportunity to undertake research in the field of development because of heavy funding from the Ford Foundation to save India from sliding into the revolutionary communist path of development. The development of research activity also meant the enlargement of the employment opportunities at all levels.

There were many reasons for the popularity of Sociology during this phase. The main reason for this was the beginning of planned development. In the meantime, the Bombay sociology department was flourished under the leadership of G.S. Ghurye, who supervised students from different parts of India, to carry out fieldwork in his or her region. In this way, he was able to construct a huge amount of writings on Indian communities. Thus, he founded the Indian Sociological Society in 1951 and started its journal entitled,

"Sociological Bulletin". Besides, in 1969, the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) was established which also led to the expansion of Sociology.

During this phase many sociologists had undertaken village studies which resulted in several village monographs. Some of these are McKim Marriott's *"Village India"* (1955), S.C.Dube's *"Indian Village"* (1956) and M.N.Srinivas's edited volume *"India's Village"* (1956). In addition, several Indian communities, castes, tribes, all were also included in the sociological studies.

Another credit for the growth of sociology in the post-independence period goes to the Constitution of India, which declared the practice of untouchability in any form as an offence, and with the introduction of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SCs and STs) in the legislatures, and jobs in the government and the public sector, a new field of study was opened up to sociologists, though very few were aware of this fact.

However, during the period of industrialisation Indian society moved from agriculture to industry which led to the growth of many internal inequalities in Indian social structure. Such situation led to interest group oriented Sociology, such as black sociology, gender sociology, Dalit sociology, Tribal sociology, Hindu or Islamic sociology, etc. Moreover, this situation brought the concept of middle class social base, growth in professional and services sectors, the Green Revolution, and the widening of the base of the commercial and industrial entrepreneurship, etc. But the basic problems have remained unresolved. Nearly half of the total population was still illiterate and the rate of population growth continued to rise which led to the high poverty, at about 40 percent of the total population, and the number of urban poor was increasing at a very rapid rate due to migration from villages. This process led to multiplication of urban slums. The larger the city, the larger is the problem of urban poverty and its ghettoization. Urban slum dwellers faced miserable condition. Thus, the Indian sociologists had to take up all these social issues and proceed into a new direction.

1.5 RECENT TRENDS IN SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

Recent trends in the field of Sociology are inclusion of Sociology of Development and then the Sociology of Globalization. Besides, some new academic branches of Sociology have also been included such as Sexuality and Reproductive health, Social Theory, Collective actions in Urban Area. Before independence, the views of Indian thinkers such as Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and Phule were not understood; they were not even recognised as social thinkers. But after independence a tremendous development can be seen in the field of sociology. Today, people have understood their point of view and these social thinkers are recognised as the social thinkers in the Dalit study which is a part of sociology developed by Indian sociologists.

In contemporary society, Indian sociologists have given more emphasis on regional language. In India the language problem can be seen in each and every state and society. Sociologists are either working in regional languages and suffer from scantiness of vernacular journals or even if they are writing their reports in English there is very little chance of getting them published, particularly in limited English language journals. Therefore, to overcome from this problem, the Indian Sociological Society (ISS) has taken concrete steps to support regional associations by organizing special symposia on regional issues and in this way it encourages the sociologists from different parts of India. The contemporary young sociologists are still working to understand the new trends like social exclusion, ethnicity, and culture in the broader context of social justice.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: In how many phases can you divide the growth of sociology?

Q2: When and where was the first department of sociology founded?

Q3: What do you mean by Indology?

Q4: Which professional society did G.S.Ghurye found in 1951?

Q5: Who is the author of "Indian Village"?

Q6: In which year ICSSR was formed?



1.6 LET US SUM UP

- Within the context of history, colonialism, and its impact on the intellectual and cultural traditions in India, of which sociology and other social sciences are at a certain level of manifestations, provides an important historical backdrop for its theoretical, ideological and professional evaluation.
- The emergence of sociology in India as a formal discipline coincided with several critical phases of history, both in India and in the West.
- There are mainly three phases of development of sociology in India. These are the first period is between 1773-1900 AD, The second phase is 1901-1950 AD and the third period is the post-independence years.
- Sociology appears in India formally in 1919 and the first department of sociology was started at Bombay University in 1919.
- The tremendous efforts could be seen in the works of many prominent scholars who contributed to the promotion of sociology

and research in India. Some of those are B.N. Seal, K.M. Kapadia, Irawati Karve, S.V. Karandikar, M.N. Srinivas, A.R. Desai, I.P. Desai, M.S. Gore and Y.B. Damle who shaped the future of sociology in the country.

- After independence, the number of sociology departments has increased which brought a number of research projects in India.
- Since the independence of India, diversity of sociological studies could be seen in the works of many sociologists. Village studies began in India. Several Indian communities, caste, tribe all were also included in the sociological studies.



1.7 FURTHER READING

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1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Growth of sociology in India can be divided into three phases:

- The first is covering the period between 1773-1900 AD, when their foundations were laid;
- The second is 1901-1950 AD, when they become profession-alized;
- The third is 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.

Ans to Q No 2:The first department of sociology was started at Bombay University in 1919.

Ans to Q No 3: Indology is the academic study of the history and cultures, languages and literature of India.

Ans to Q No 4: G.S.Ghurey founded the Indian Sociological Society (ISS) in 1951.

Ans to Q No 5: S.C.Dube is the author of "IndianVillage".

Ans to Q No 6: Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) was established in 1969.



1.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

- Q1:** Mention in brief about different phases of development of sociology in India.
- Q2:** What were the major contributions of sociology after independence?

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

- Q1:** Briefly explain the recent trends in Sociology in India.
- Q2:** Explain the Development of Sociology in the pre-independence period in India.
- Q3:** Discuss the history behind the emergence of sociology in India.

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UNIT 2: INDOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF INDIAN SOCIETY

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 2.1 Learning Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 G.S. Ghurye: Early Life
 - 2.3.1 Indological Perspective
 - 2.3.2 The Vedic period from 1500 BC to 600 BC
 - 2.3.3 The post-Vedic period from 600 BC extending to 300 BC
 - 2.3.4 The period of Dharma-shastras from 300 BC to 11th century
 - 2.3.5 The modern period from 11th century to the beginning of 19th century
- 2.4 Let us Sum Up
- 2.5 Further Reading
- 2.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 2.7 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- know about the life of G.S. Ghurye
- understand the Indological perspective
- develop an interest in explaining the periods of Indian History .

2.2 INTRODUCTION

We are aware of the resources available to study any discipline or enhance our knowledge on the same with the help of literature and books. In the same way, in order to study Indian society in specific, the help of Indological approach can be taken. It is regarded as the science of Indian society. The Indian society is said to be understood through the concepts,

frameworks and theories that are closely associated with Indian civilisation. It also serves as an independent discipline or branch of study that takes Indian society as the subject matter. Both as an approach and discipline, "Indology consists of studying language, beliefs, ideas, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, rituals, ceremonies and other related components of culture. Indology demands inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary approach". Indology basically relies on book view i.e. Indology makes use of ancient texts and scriptures of India thereby helping sociologists to understand the social and cultural life of India. G.S.Ghurye was an Indian sociologist who had profound knowledge of Sanskrit literature and sacred texts with the help of which he emphasized the socio-cultural life of the Indian society. In the previous unit we have discussed about the emergence of Sociology in India. In this unit we shall discuss the Indological Approach to understand Indian Society.

2.3 G.S.GHURYE: EARLY LIFE

Ghurye was born on 12th December, 1893 in a Brahmin family in Malavan, Maharashtra. Since early days Ghurye had an interest for Sanskrit. Sociology was not his subject in school or college. He admitted himself to Elphinstone College, Bombay, after his matriculation. He graduated with first class second position and was awarded the Bahu Dazi prize-the blue ribbon of Sanskrit competence. He post-graduated in English and Sanskrit with first class first position and was awarded the chancellor's gold medal. Holding a strong background of Sanskrit, Ghurye finally came in contact with Sociology, which immensely influenced Ghurye's later writings and the course of research made in the field of Sociology under his guidance.

Ghurye submitted an essay entitled "Bombay as an urban centre" to Patrick Geddes while the former was still teaching at Elphinstone College. The essay was highly appreciated which won him a foreign scholarship. Ghurye worked with L.T.Hobhouse in the London school of Economics. In 1923, Ghurye completed his doctoral work on caste and race in India under A.C.Haden. His PhD work was published by Routledge and Kegan Paul in 1923 in C.K.Odgen's History of Civilisation Series. This has been a

remarkable feat for Ghurye which established Ghurye's position in the academic field.

G.S.Ghurye had been instrumental in the formation of Indian Sociological Society in 1952 and in the publication of his masterpiece, *Sociological Journal in India*. The *Indian Journal of Sociology* was started in January, 1920, under the editorship of Alban G. Widgery of Baroda College in Baroda. Indian society presents a long historical process of growth and constitutes a culture held by values, religion and norms of Hinduism. Ghurye, as a sociologist, felt the need to explore the Indian society with its uniqueness.

The reality of diffusionist approach of British social anthropology initially influenced Ghurye but later on he shifted to the studies of Indian society from indological and anthropological perspectives. He focused on indological approach in the study of social and cultural life in India and elsewhere.

2.3.1 Indological Perspective

Indology in the tradition of Max Muller is commonly understood as a discipline that studies traditional Indian-mostly Hindu-ideology, values, institutions and cultural norms and practices through careful examination of classical sacred texts. Indology refers to the study of India and her culture from the early Sanskrit works on Indian civilizations and philosophical traditions such as Vedas, Dharma Shastras, Epics and other manuscripts and archaeological artifacts. Nature of society, law and customary practices, science, technology, etc is studied with the help of those manuscripts. The most prominent sociologists to use Indological approach in understanding Indian society are G.S.Ghurye, Radhakamal Mukherjee and B.K.Sarkar.

G.S.Ghurye was one of the pioneers to employ the indological approach in the study of Hindu society and its emergence in India. He had the advantage of his profound knowledge in Sanskrit in examining the Indological sources such as Vedas, Dharma Shastras

and epics to provide an explanation to the emergence of the unique institution of caste and caste system in India. In one of his most celebrated works *Caste and Race in India*, Ghurye has examined the emergence of 'caste through the ages' capturing every detail possible to give a picture of Hindu caste society as it was functioning before modern ideas affected its course, drawn from the Indological sources such as Vedic Samhitas and Brahmanas, Dharma-Shastras and Mahabharata. For the convenience of historical reconstruction of Indian society through ages, he breaks history of India into 4 periods:

- a) The Vedic period from 1500 BC to 600 BC
- b) The post Vedic period from 600 BC extending to 300 BC
- c) The period of Dharma-Shastras from 300 BC to 11th century
- d) The modern period from 11th century to the beginning of 19th century

Almost all the literary accounts on the nature of society in India during the first three phases, from 1500 BC to 11th century A.D, especially from the Indological resources of Vedas and Dharma-Shastras, point out to the predominance of the four orders of the society, viz. Brahmana, Vaishya, Kshatriya and Shudra from which the numerous castes/ Jatis have emerged in due course.

2.3.2 The Vedic period from 1500 BC to 600 BC

According to Ghurye, the Rigveda- the earliest work of the Vedic period initially mentions about the two fold division of society during early Vedic period differentiating the Arya Varna- the fair conquerors, with those of Dasa varna-the indigenous dark people. The initial usage of the word 'varna' here referred to the fair and dark colors of Arya and Dasa respectively. There is also the description of the three fold division of society in terms of Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya along with their occupations of poet-priest, warrior chief and commoners respectively. It is only in the later hymns of Purushasukta that the emergence of four-fold division of society-

the Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra has been described as spreading out during the sacrifice of the Primeval Being, in that order from the mouth, the arms, the thighs and the feet of the Creator. The emergence of the Shudras from the feet probably indicates their low position in society of that time. Similarly, the Brahmanas are declared to be occupying the highest position because they were created from the mouth and assigned to be priests and teachers. Next are the Kshatriyas to rule and protect the society as kings and warriors since they were created from shoulders and arms. The Vaishyas were assigned to supply food and collect taxes and they formed the common masses. Being created from the feet, the Shudras were assigned to transport people and commodities. The Satpata Brahmana uses the term varna to describe the four divisions or classes. Varna means color and initially it was used to differentiate color of Arya from Dasa, but the later use of the term referred to occupational differences. The earlier distinction of Arya and Dasa later appears as Dvija or twice born and Akaja or once born. Also the first three varnas need to go through initiation ceremony which signifies rebirth. But this honor is not entitled to the Shudras.

By the end of Vedic period (1500 BC to 600 BC) Hindu society had clearly defined varna system in terms of distinct religious and occupational duties besides marriage practices. However there were certain flexibilities in occupational restrictions that a Kshatriya could achieve Brahmana status or a Brahmana could change into Kshatriya varna by acquiring skills in warfare. The example of Vishvamitra, a Kshatriya by birth, achieved the status of Brahmana and was officiated as a priest. Parashurama, a Brahman by birth, excelled Kshatriya through his military prowess. Though marriage of an upper varna female with the male from a lower varna (-pratiloma-) was prohibited, marriage of upper varna male with a woman from a lower varna- (anuloma-) was tolerated.

2.3.3 The post-Vedic period 600 BC extending to 300 BC

The post-Vedic period (600 BC – 300 BC) is significant for the consolidation of the four varnas and the Nishads. The sacred laws of Aryas defined duties of four varans under 'varna-dharma'. The first part dealt with 'ashrmas' –the four stages of life and duties associated with them. The second part describes laws such as 'dharma of Brahmanas', 'dharma of Kshatriyas' and 'dharma of Vaishyas'. There is no mention of 'dharma of Shudras' in detailed manner in these texts since they are outside the 'dvija' fold. Shudra was denied to perform sacrifice and recite Vedic texts. Later texts like Mahabharata says that the Shudra can have no absolute poverty because his wealth can be appropriated by his master at will. Shudra trying to listen to Vedic texts shall have his ears filled with molten tin or lac. Shudra committing adultery with women of the first three varnas shall suffer capital punishment. Shudras thus had civil or religious rights. Though theoretically the position of Shudras was very low there is evidence to show that many of them were well to do. Some of them succeeded in marrying daughters of royal families. In Ramayana, for example, Sumitra- one of the four wives of Dasaratha- was a Shudra. Emperor Chandragupta was a Shudra. Patanjali mentioned about Abhiras who ruled over Deccan was neither a Kshatriya nor Shudra but in between the two. It is Patanjali (around 200 BC – 150 BC) who uses the term 'jati' for the first time to identify numerous groups other than varnas. Mention has also been made on the presence of other occupational groups such as Blacksmith, Goldsmith, Leather worker, Barber, Physician, Merchant and Chariot-builder. The Bhagavad Gita mentions that its religious doctrines can lead even the Vaishyas and Shudras to salvation. By the time of Bhagavad Gita there is emphasis on performance of duty according to the varna dharma which shall lead to individual salvation.

2.3.4 The period of Dharma-shastras from 300 BC to 11th century

In his Dharmasutra, law giver Gautama mentioned that the jati (caste) has to follow the duties as prescribed and will be born again in excellent countries, castes, families and endowed with beauty, wealth, long life, right to learn Vedas and wisdom. According to Apastamba, sinful persons are born in low jati, even as animals.

However, towards the end of post-vedic period, the Brahmins had strongly entrenched themselves subduing the Kshatriyas. The Kshatriyas break away from the fold and revolt against the Brahmanic supremacy. Both Jainism and Buddhism are movements started by Kshatriya asserting social superiority of the Kshatriya over the Brahmanas. Ghurye observes that Buddha and Buddhism do not advocate abolition of caste distinctions or annihilation of caste though they opposed the supremacy of Brahmanas.

Among the Dharmashastras, Manu's laws (Manusmriti) (dated sometime between 200 BC-200 AD), mentioned the supreme position of Brahmanas through whom people can communicate and reach the divine with their prayers. He provided the rules of religious and secular behavior, punishments, right to property etc. Kautilya not only provided rules of governance and justice but also suppressed the position of women, Shudras and the Panchama denying them the rights and privileges of 'Dvija'.

According to Ghurye, with functional differentiation in society there came into being separate occupational groups with distinct interests. Right from ancient and medieval times the occupation of each group tended to become customarily hereditary among its members. The tendencies of groups and spirit of solidarity and community feeling in every group emerged since there was no uniform standard of law and custom enforced by any ruler during the ancient and medieval times. Manu, in one of his Smritis, mentioned that the number of new groups, formed by unions

between the members of four varnas, and by further intermarriages within these groups and so on, is no longer the limited number that it was in the earlier period. With all this multiplicity, each group was ascribed some definite occupation. Thus, Ghurye concludes that the fission of the four varnas from the Vedic times, owing to the violation of the rule of endogamy and occupational segmentation has led to the emergence of numerous castes and sub-castes, numbering nearly 200 and 2000 respectively, found in different cultural and linguistic regions of India.

2.3.5 The modern period from 11th century to the beginning of 19th century

The eleventh and twelfth centuries were characterized by Bhakti movements either of Vishnu or Shiva worshippers. The Bhakti movement undermined the Brahmanic hold and provided opportunities to all persons belonging to all castes to worship and realize divine blessings without the mediation of Brahmin priests. Ghurye, quoting the instance of religious upheaval in Maharashtra during the thirteenth century, mentions that the Shudra castes have a considerable appreciation of their religious position by becoming an integral part of Shaivism and Vaishnavism. Though born in low castes, Namdev and Tukaram achieved saintly status owing to their outstanding spiritual personalities. In Bengal, Ramai opened up the initiation ceremony for the thirty six castes like Dom which were denied initiation.

The Islamic rule had limited impact on caste system only in some parts of India, where there has been direct contact, where the system has rigidified further unity as a contradictory faith. When the British colonized India, they saw the caste system well established especially among the large masses living in communities. According to Ghurye, castes were well defined with at least six important characteristics listed below:

➤ **Segmental division of Society**

Castes are groups with well developed life and culture of their own. Membership in any caste is exclusively through birth. A person is born a Brahmin, Maratha, Rajput, Mahar or Mang with predetermined vocation and remains so till death. A Brahmin general and a Maratha general in the Military may be of equal rank but they belong to different status-groups in their private life that there could be not be any social intercourse between them on equal basis. Each caste has its governing body called Caste Panchayat, to maintain and uphold boundaries of the caste and regulate the behaviour of its members in eating, marrying and every aspect of life in accordance with the traditional and customary practices of the caste.

➤ **Hierarchy:**

Caste groups are unequal in their religious and social statuses and are hierarchically arranged one above or below the other. Brahmin caste is on the top of the hierarchy and the untouchable castes are at the bottom of the hierarchy. All other castes are hierarchically located between the two. Along with castes their respective vocations too are hierarchically arranged on the basis of pure and impure occupations. The priestly vocation of a Brahmin caste is pure and superior to the impure vocation of a Chamar or Holeyia who deals with hides and provides footwear to members of all castes groups. Except for the caste in the middle region of the hierarchy, the positions of most of the upper and lower castes are clearly defined.

➤ **Restrictions on feeding and social intercourse:**

There are minute rules as to what sort of food or drink can be accepted by a person and from what caste. Though practices may vary from one place to another, the members of higher or upper castes are not allowed to accept any food cooked with water (Kachcha food) from member belonging to lower castes in the hierarchy. Certain type of food cooked with ghee (Pakka) is acceptable to the members belonging to the upper caste from some of the lower castes.

The idea of power of certain castes to convey pollution by touch or shadow is commonly found in most parts of the country, varying only by degree of pollution. It is more pronounced in South and central India and the upper caste (Dvija) members are often polluted by the touch of lower caste members and pollution communicated is highest if upper caste members are touched by the members of the untouchable castes. In Kerala, a Nayar (Shudra caste) may approach a Numbuthiri but must not touch, while a Tiyan must keep himself at a distance of thirty-six steps from the Brahmin.

➤ **Civil and religious disabilities and privileges:**

Segregation of a different caste in a village is the most obvious mark of civil privileges and disabilities. Different quarters of a village are occupied by different caste groups, each forming its own cluster. The untouchable caste has their living quarters on south eastern of the periphery of village. In Maharashtra, the untouchable caste of Mahar had to carry earthen pot around their neck for spitting so that their spitting does not pollute the upper caste members. Lower caste members are denied the permission to build certain type of houses and houses are called by different names depending on the caste of the person. The village well is out of reach for all untouchable castes. Similarly, entry into houses of upper castes, temples, eating places, is denied to the members of the lower castes, especially the untouchables.

➤ **Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation:**

Generally a caste is associated with a hereditary occupation from which the members are restricted from changing some other occupation even if it is more lucrative. Since occupations are ranked along with the caste associated with it, to pursue occupation of a lower caste is defiling and that of upper caste is denied. No caste will allow its members to take any calling which was either degrading or impure. The vocation of priesthood is not allowed for any purpose not born a Brahmin.

➤ **Restrictions on marriage:**

An important feature of caste is its restrictions from marrying a person from outside. In other words, principle of strict endogamy is a dominant aspect of caste society so much so that endogamy has been regarded as the 'essence of caste system'. Violation of the rule of endogamy is met with punishments ranging from excommunication to penalty for committing the offence.

The caste thus emerged from the Vedic times still exist in India today, forming a unique system of social stratification. Efforts of social reformers and the Indian Constitutional mandate have only partially overcome the inequalities among the castes.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Define Indology.

Q2: What was the name of Ghurye's essay that won him a foreign scholarship?

Q3: Name some sociologist, who used the Indological approach.

Q4: Mention the periods into which India society is divided by G.S Ghurye.

Q5: Why endogamy is regarded as the essence of caste system?



2.4 LET US SUM UP

- Indology makes use of ancient texts and scriptures of India thereby helping sociologists to understand the social and cultural life of India.
- G.S. Ghurye focused on the indological approach in the study of social and cultural life in India and elsewhere.
- Ghurye in 'Caste and Race in India', has examined the emergence of 'caste through the ages' capturing every detail possible to give a picture of Hindu caste society.
- According to Ghurye, the Rigveda mentions about the two-fold division of society during the early Vedic period which distinguishes the Arya Varna- the fair conquerors, with those of Dasa varna- the indigenous dark people.
- The earlier distinction of Arya and Dasa later appears as Dvija or twice born and Akaja or once born.
- The sacred laws of Aryas defined duties of four varans (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra) under 'varna-dharma'.
- According to Ghurye, functional differentiation in society brought separate occupational groups with more or less distinct interests.
- The Bhakti movement undermined the Brahmanic hold and provided opportunities to all persons belonging to all caste to worship and realize divine blessings without the mediation of Brahmin priests.



2.5 FURTHER READING

- 1) Ghurye, G.S. Caste and Race in India, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 2004.



2.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Indology refers to the study of India and her culture from the early Sanskrit works on Indian civilizations and philosophical traditions such as Vedas, Dharma Shastras, Epics and other manuscripts and archaeological artifacts.

Ans to Q No 2: Bombay as an urban centre.

Ans to Q No 3: G.S.Ghurye, Radhakamal Mukherjee and B.K.Sarkar.

Ans to Q No 4: a) The Vedic period from 1500 BC to 600 BC
b) The post Vedic period from 600 BC extending to 300 BC
c) The period of Dharma-Shastras from 300 BC to 11th century
d) The modern period from 11th century to the beginning of 19th century

Ans to Q No 5: Endogamy is regarded as the essence of caste system because violation of the rule of endogamy is met with punishments ranging from excommunication to penalty for committing the offence.

2.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: Write a short life sketch on G.S.Ghurye.

Q2: Explain briefly the Vedic period from 1500 BC to 600 BC

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1: Elaborate four characteristics of the caste system as given by G.S.Ghurye.

Q2: Describe the period of Dharma-shastras from 300 BC to 11th century in your own words.

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UNIT 3: STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE TO THE STUDY OF INDIAN SOCIETY

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 3.1 Learning Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Structural Functional Perspective: An Overview
- 3.4 M.N Srinivas and his Approach
- 3.5 S.C Dube and his Approach
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Further Reading
- 3.8 Answers to check your progress
- 3.9 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- know about the basics of Structural Functional Perspective
- understand M.N Srinivas's approach to study Indian Society
- explain S.C Dube and his Approach

3.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units we have learned about how sociology has emerged as a discipline in India and how the indologists' study and analyse Indian Society. By now we have also known that there are several other perspectives on Indian Society apart from the Indological Perspective. All of these perspectives present different views and understandings of the Indian Society. They give us an idea about the different approaches through which we can examine and understand Indian Society. In this unit we shall discuss about one of them i.e the Structural Functional Perspective to study Indian Society. The Structural Functional Approach talks about Order, Stability, Harmony of society, and in India, the key advocates of this perspective or

approach are M.N Srinivas and S.C Dube. In this unit we shall try not only to understand the theoretical and methodological perspective of each of these thinkers but also to gain knowledge of the different concepts developed by each of them.

3.2 STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE: AN OVERVIEW

In the paper on Sociological Perspectives and Theories, we all have learned in details about the Functionalist Perspective. The Functionalist perspective views society as a composite functional whole; comprising of various interrelated and interdependent parts, each having their own functions to play for sustaining the society and maintaining Social order and Harmony. This approach was initiated originally in biological sciences and was borrowed later on by the social scientists to examine society. The central focus of this perspective is order, equilibrium and consistency in society and it emphasises on the understanding of the 'order' and 'patterning' of the social world. Its basic proposition is that behaviour of individuals in society is structured and their relationships with the other members of the society are governed by certain norms and values and hence social behaviour and social relationships are organized in society in conformity to certain societal rules and norms and are therefore patterned and recurrent. This in turns gives stability and consistency to the larger social structure. Thus the functionalists assume society to be a stable, integrated and persistent system. Conflict and contradictions finds no space in their understanding of society. The key thinkers of this school of thought are: Radcliffe Brown, Durkheim, R.K. Merton, Davis and Moore, Talcott Parsons etc.

As we have mentioned above, there are many Indian Sociologist who have used this perspective to examine and analyse Indian society. The significance of this perspective lies in its field view approach to understanding social reality. This perspective puts stress on fieldwork and hence is of enormous importance in comprehending the reality at the grassroots. This perspective aims at:

- Understanding the functional unity of the different parts of the society
- Understanding the patterning of social relationships and social institutions and their functional role in maintaining the larger social structure.
- It focuses on analysing and understanding the significance or functional importance of particular social phenomena within the larger social context.
- It laid stress on fieldwork and thereby relied more on empirical and contextual understanding of Indian society.
- It also gave importance on comparative understanding of the different social institutions and taking into consideration various variations and their implications on wider society.

M.N Srinivas can be said to be the pioneer in introducing the structural-functional analysis in sociological and social anthropological research in India. He developed some very important concepts to understand Indian Society which we will be learning about in this unit. Thinkers like S.C Dube, have also used this perspective to analyse Indian Society. Let us now discuss about each one of them in the following sections.

3.4 M.N SRINIVAS AND HIS APPROACH

Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas (1916–1999) was a renowned Indian sociologist. A PhD holder from Bombay and DPhil from Oxford, M.N Srinivas was Professor of Sociology at M.S. University, Baroda and University of Delhi. He was the student of a world-renowned sociologist G.S Ghurye. M.N Srinivas, apart from being an earnest and passionate researcher, was also an institution builder. He was the man behind the development of Department of Sociology, M.S University, Baroda and had also made significant contribution to the setting up of Department of Sociology at Delhi University.

M.N Srinivas has been credited for his immense contribution to Indian Sociology with his works on caste and caste system, social mobility, social stratification so on and so forth. His works have covered a wide array of themes from caste, religion to social change. He was mainly engrossed

with issues of caste, its various forms; dimensions and its changing patterns. He had developed several important concepts like Sanskritisation, Dominant Caste etc. for understanding Indian society. He made a remarkable contribution to the intellectual domain with his highly significant and applauded books like *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, *Caste in Modern India*, *The Remembered Village*, *Village, Caste, Gender and Method*, *Social Change in Modern India*, *The Dominant Caste and Other Essays* (ed.) amongst many others. His structural functionalism was a blend of approaches used by Radcliffe Brown and Evans Pritchard. He used theoretical structural functionalism of Brown and field view of Pritchard. He blended theoretical structural functionalism with empirical work

The gem of Srinivas's essays is his rich empirical facts combined with theoretical analysis. Blending of theory and practice enriched his writings and hence considered remarkable. His field view approach and thrust on empirical findings enabled him to portray a nuanced picture of how social institutions functioned in various societal contexts. His view on caste was shaped by inferences from innumerable field studies. Though textual narratives of caste also helped in shaping his understanding of caste but it was the operational dynamics of caste that formed the core of his thought and arguments. Thus the striking feature of his approach was the linking or amalgamation of theory and practice. The use of direct observation method while studying the Coorgs of Mysore also testifies ethnographical initiative in his works.

Srinivas like other functionalists viewed Indian society as a system and analysed it in terms of the patterns of social relationships and social institutions and how their functions contribute to sustenance of the society. He examined and interpreted social phenomenon like – caste, family, religion etc in their functional terms within a larger context of Indian society. However Srinivas was not only concerned with order and stability but also change. While he viewed order in terms of caste, village, religion etc.. he also portrayed with his empirical evidences, how social change was taking place in Indian society. He emphasized upon understanding cultural changes, leading to change in Indian society. He tried to analyse how micro level changes like Sanskritisation could lead to greater changes.

- **Srinivas's views on Religion and Society:**

“Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India” is a work having *strong theoretical framework in the line proposed by Radcliff–Brown i.e. the structural functionalism*. The concept of structural functionalism originated with Radcliff Brown and was further elaborated and developed by Evans-Pritchard. According to this concept, a society is an organism. It is a system of parts, all of which serve a function together for the overall effectiveness and efficiency of society. It sees society as built-upon order, and interrelation and balance among parts as a means of maintaining the smooth functioning of the whole. Structural Functionalism views that shared norms and values are the basis of society; it focuses on social order based on tacit agreement between groups and organizations, and it views social change as occurring in a slow and orderly fashion. Functionalists acknowledge that change is sometimes necessary to correct social dysfunction, but that it must occur slowly so that people and institutions can adapt without rapid disorder.

Srinivas, in his book has shown the complex interrelationship of ritual and social solidarity as a part of the social system, and discussed the crucial notions of purity and pollution as a basis for the organization of social life. With details he showed that although religion is virtually reduced to life-cycle rituals, yet it played its role and contributed to the maintenance of the social order.

- **Srinivas's views on Caste:**

As mentioned above, insights from field studies rather than only textual elements had a greater influence on Srinivas's understanding of caste. His view was shaped from the operation of caste in various societal contexts. For Srinivas Caste is a segmentary system with each caste being divided into a number of sub castes. The sub castes according to him are Endogamous units and Units of social and ritual life. Members of a particular sub caste have common occupation, common culture and are being governed by same authoritative body. Apart from these the other important attributes of caste according to him are hierarchical structure, Restrictions on commensality, Notions of Purity and Pollution, and Caste panchayats.

This attributes determine the rank or the position of a particular caste and also determine the nature of inter caste relations.

Now let us understand some of the concepts developed by him in details:

Sanskritisation: All of us know that Caste system is hierarchical i.e. not all castes are accorded the same position. Some castes, on the basis of the notion of purity and pollution are accorded a superior position in the caste hierarchy and some others an inferior position. Those caste groups placed at the bottom of the caste hierarchy tries to emulate the life-style of the upper caste in order to elevate their social status. Srinivas termed this process as Sanskritisation and according to him “Sanskritization is a 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, a “twice” born caste. It is followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than traditionally concealed to the claimant caste by the local community. Such claims are made over a period of time, sometimes a generation or two before they are conceded.” We shall discuss in details about Sanskritisation when we talk about Mobility in Caste System in Unit 6

Dominant Caste: Village is one of the key aspects of Srinivas study. It was Radcliffe Brown, his mentor, from whom he got the idea that Village can be an interesting area of exploration. His study on village was conducted in Rampura, a village in Mysore, the findings of which has been elaborately documented in his book *The Remembered Village*. Here he discusses the social and political changes that have taken place in Rampura. The idea of Dominant caste emerged from his study of Rampura and he developed it fully in his paper “*Dominant caste in Rampura*”, published in the American Journal “*American Anthropologists*” (Vol: 61 No 1). His long association with the village Rampura by way of fieldwork provided him the idea that one basic feature of the rural life in many parts of India is the existence of a dominant land owning caste. For a caste to be dominant, it should own a sizable amount of arable land locally available, have strength of numbers, and occupy a high place in the local hierarchy. In his words, “A caste may be said to be dominant when it preponderates numerically over other castes

and when it also wields preponderant economic and political power. A large and powerful caste group can be more easily dominant if its position in the local caste hierarchy is not too low. Thus according to him a caste becomes a dominant caste in a village when it is economically stronger, politically powerful and also numerically stronger.

3.5 S.C Dube and his Approach

We have already mentioned above that S.C Dube is one of the key advocates of Structural-Functionalism like M.N Srinivas. In this section we shall discuss his methodological approach as well as his works. But prior to that let us first have a brief idea about his academic journey and accomplishments.

S.C Dube, a noted anthropologists and sociologists has made significant contribution to the study of Indian Society. With his remarkable professional career, Professor S. C. Dube has made a distinct place for himself in the academia. He was a Masters in Political Science from Nagpur University and pursued research thereafter on the Kamar's— A tribe of Madhya Pradesh engaged in Shifting Cultivation. He began his teaching career at Bishop College, Nagpur, Maharashtra. From there he went to Lucknow University where he taught Political Science and later he joined Osmania University, Hyderabad as a Reader in the Department of Sociology. He was also the Deputy Director in Anthropological Survey of India at Nagpur. Further he was the Vice-Chancellor of Jammu University from 1978-1980. Apart from that he held several other significant positions like Director of Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, President of Indian Sociological Society, and Chairman of Madhya Pradesh University Grants Commission so on and so forth.

Let us now try to understand S.C Dube's theoretical and methodological approach..

S.C Dube focused on the changing nature of Indian Villages. He viewed Indian Village as changing and evolving rather than being static and changeless. He regarded Indian Villages as semi-autonomous rather than

independent and completely autonomous. For him, Village is just one unit in a wider social system and is a part of an organized political society. Having a multidisciplinary orientation, Dube, emphasised on the importance of interdisciplinarity. He stressed upon analysing social reality from different interdisciplinary perspectives. Since Indian society is a mix of different cultures, therefore he suggested that in order to have a comprehensive and holistic understanding of Indian society, we need to have a more comprehensive frame of reference to study the complex cultures of India. He applied deductive-positivistic rather than inductive inferential-approach, based on null situations, like no change in modern India, or India's unchanging villages. His work titled *Indian Village*, where he has given a detailed description of the rural social-structure and institutions, is a reflection of the descriptive and exploratory nature of research. Dhanagare while opining about Dube's work, mentioned that, as his work was descriptive in nature, it did not contain analytical insights. Dube too did any alternative conceptual framework for understanding Indian rural Society.

Dube's Structural Functional approach to understand Indian society is clearly manifested in his work on *Indian Village*. In this book, where he has given a comprehensive description of life in an Indian village named Shamirpet in Hyderabad, his key argument was that to have an accurate and holistic understanding of Indian Village it is necessary to examine and analyse the different units which comprise a village and through which the village community is organized. To acquire an integrated understanding of the village and its different socio-economic dimensions, he collected the field data from various perspectives which include historical, geographical, political and sociological perspectives. This work is a clear testimony of his interdisciplinary as well as structural-functional approach where he has depicted the functioning of the different institutions in the village and how it contributes to the smooth operation of the Village.

Having explored the different facets of Indian society, Dube wrote extensively on the varied dimensions of Indian society and culture. His works covered multiple themes which include tribes, rural social structure, rural life, community development, modernization so on and so forth. He has

immensely contributed to the body of knowledge on Indian society by writing number of books, articles and research papers. All his writings reflect multidisciplinary approach. Some of his significant works are as follows—

- The Kamar, Indian Village (1955)
- India's Changing Villages (1958)
- Institution Building for Community Development (1968)
- Contemporary India and its Modernization (1974)
- Tribal Heritage of India (1977)
- Understanding Society (1977)
- Modernization and Development (1988)
- Tradition and Development (1990)
- Understanding Change (1990)
- Indian Society (1990)

By looking at the names of the works mentioned above, we can clearly understand that the key interest and the prime focus of S.C Dube's works was the changing nature of Indian society particularly Indian Rural Society. Here it is worth mentioning that though S.C. Dube belongs to the functional school of thought which stresses on order, stability and harmony, S.C Dube's approach was slightly different. Even though like the other structural functionalists he too was interested in social structures and social institutions he looked at it not solely from the perspective of order and stability but also from the perspective of change.

Thus to summarise Dube's Theoretical and Methodological Approach it can be said that he emphasised on interdisciplinary approach to understand social reality. He focused both on structure and change of Indian society. Further he followed the Deductive-Positivistic Method and examined the different dimensions of Indian Society to derive a holistic understanding about it. He too, like M.N Srinivas, stressed upon field investigations and most of his works reflect a descriptive and exploratory approach.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Define Hierarchy?

Q2: Which theoretical framework is predominant in M.N Srinivas's work titled '*Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*'?

Q3: When was Srinivas's work "The Remembered Village" published?

Q4: Where did Srinivas conduct his doctoral field study?

Q5: Fill in the blanks:

a. The concept of dominant caste was first fully developed by

b. The concept of dominant caste was developed in the published work entitled _____.

Q6: State whether the following is true or false:

a. Secularisation is a process whereby things which were previously regarded as religious now cease to be so.

b. The process of westernization in India has been the result of the British rule in India.



3.6 LET US SUM UP

- Srinivas' major contribution was the concept of Sanskritisation, which enables us to explain the process of social change in a caste based social structure.

- It also explains how the tribal communities seek to emulate the cultural patterns of the higher castes, and in the process acquire a new identity for themselves, with an amalgamation of the tribal and caste culture patterns.
- Srinivas have discussed the complex interrelationship of ritual and social solidarity as a part of the social system, and discussed the crucial notions of purity and pollution as a basis for the organization of social life.
- Westernization refers to the changes brought about in the Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule.
- Through the concept of westernization, Srinivas referred to the impact of the British rule in India.
- Secularisation means absence of any religious domination.
- Srinivas believes that the British rule brought with it a process of secularization of Indian social life and culture.
- The process of Secularisation was strengthened after independence when the Constitution of India declared India as a secular nation providing equality of all citizens before the law.
- For a caste to be dominant, it should own a sizable amount of arable land locally available, have strength of numbers, and occupy a high place in the local hierarchy.
- S.C Dube focused on the changing nature of Indian Villages.
- For him, Village is just one unit in a wider social system and is a part of an organized political society
- Having a multidisciplinary orientation, Dube, emphasised on the importance of interdisciplinarity.
- He focused both on structure and change of Indian society.
- He followed the Deductive-Positivistic Method and examined the different dimensions of Indian Society to derive a holistic understanding about it.



3.7 FURTHER READING

- 1) Srinivas, M.N. (1966). *Social Change in Modern India*, Berkeley, California University Press
- 2) Nagla, B.K. (2008). *Indian Sociological Thought*. New Delhi. Rawat Publications

3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Hierarchy refers to the vertical arrangement of caste groups in order of their rank.

Ans to Q No 2: Structural Functionalism was the predominant theoretical framework is in M.N Srinivas's work titled '*Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*'

Ans to Q No 3: Srinivas's work 'The Remembered Village' was published in 1976

Ans to Q No 4: Srinivas conducted his doctoral field study among the Coorgs of Mysore

Ans to Q No 5: (a) M.N. Srinivas (b) Dominant Caste in Rampura

Ans to Q No 6: (a) True (b) True



3.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: What do you understand by Sanskritisation?

Q2: Distinguish between Sanskritisation and Westernisation.

Q3: How can a Caste become dominant?

Q4: What is meant by Secularisation?

Q5: How did M.N Srinivas characterise the Indian Caste System.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1: What are the major contributions of M.N.Srinivas to the study of Indian society?

Q2: Discuss S.C Dube's approach to study Indian Society.

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UNIT 4: MARXIST APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF INDIAN SOCIETY

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 4.1 Learning Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Marxist Perspective: Meaning and Definition
 - 4.3.1 Scholars of Marxist Perspective
 - 4.3.2 D.P. Mukherjee : His life sketch and methodological approach
 - 4.3.3 R.K. Mukherjee: His life sketch and methodological approach
 - 4.3.4 A.R. Desai: His life sketch and methodological approach
- 4.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.5 Further Reading
- 4.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 4.7 Model Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- know about the life of the three important Marxist scholars of India
- understand their methodological approaches
- develop an interest in explaining their contribution to Marxist approach.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

The Marxist approach has been based on the theories of German philosopher Karl Marx. According to Karl Marx, the foundation of every social system rest on two structures- namely infrastructure which include the real economic relations and Superstructure which include culture, politics, religion, ideology etc. Marx believed that superstructures were built on top of the infrastructure thereby emphasizing the importance of the infrastructure. As human beings and social actors, we share various

relations with other members of the society. These relations are carried out in order to survive and also to maintain cohesion in the society. According to Marx, it is the mode of production which determines the social relations among the members of a society. The Marxist thinkers examine and analyse social relation in the light of the Mode of Production that prevails in a particular society. This is the Marxist approach which has been identified as one of the best method by various Indian Scholars to study the Indian society and its various social institutions. The Marxist approach can help us to study and analyze social reality through the mode of production. The Marxists were of the opinion that a society could retain the solidarity among its members by the system of production which involves members of the society in the production process of materials. The means and relations of production gave rise to new stages of societal development where people made new discovery with the resources for producing something new.

In the previous unit we have discussed the Functionalist Approach to understand Indian Society which emphasises an order, stability and harmony in society. In the unit we shall discuss about the Marxist Approach to understand Indian society which focuses on conflict and change in society.

4.3 MARXIST PERSPECTIVE: OVERVIEW

Marxism aims at providing a scientific study of society from the class structure. The Marxist thinkers in India believe that the emergence of Indian society and her unique institutions could be best examined from the Marxian perspective than any other approach since the only reality is that of material phenomenon that determines everything else. The material mode of production forms the basic structure of any society and the socio-cultural domain comprising of social relationships and institutions form the 'superstructure'. D.D.Kosambi was one of the well known Marxist historians who tried to employ the Marxian dialectical method to analyze 'materialism' of Indian social system. He argued that human beings cannot live without 'bread' or food. An aggregate of human beings become society only when the people develop the most essential relations, viz. the relations developed through production and mutual exchange of commodities.

The nature of interaction of people with natural surroundings depends on the technique of production. Surplus depends on the means of production and the distribution of surplus among various members is a matter for the relations of production. What matters is who owns the tools of production and controls the distribution of surplus. Marxist believes that society is held together by bonds of production. For Kosambi, history is the 'presentation in chronological order of successive developments in the means and relations of production'. He argued that materialistic analysis provides a systematic understanding of Indian culture and society.

In the Marxian approach, the main task is to identify the successive developments in the means and relations of production that truly mirror the life of people at any stage in history. Kosambi proposed a general theory of history founded on dialectical materialism and undertook what he called 'purely materialistic reconstruction of history and stages of societal development' in India. Study of religion, superstition, rituals and myths may be undertaken to examine the underlying means and relations of production, for they form ideological superstructure. Study of superstructure sometimes reveals the changes occurring in the base. However, he emphasized that economic considerations are important even in the explanation of religions. He argued that the productive base as a source of explanation rather than emphasizing on the superstructure to understand the social reality.

4.3.1 Scholars of Marxist perspective

There are many scholars like M.N.Dutta, D.D.Kosambi, P.C.Joshi and others who have studied the Indian society from the Marxian perspective. But the work of scholars likes D.P. Mukherjee, R.K.Mukherjee and A.R.Desai are considered significant who have adopted the dialectical-historical approach for studying Indian society.

4.3.2 D.P.Mukherjee: His Life Sketch and Methodological Approach

➤ **Life sketch:**

Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee or D.P. Mukherjee was one of those who laid the foundation of Sociology in India and to have made

an attempt to analyze Indian history from the dialectical perspective of Karl Marx. He was born on 5th October, 1894 in a middle class Bengali Brahmin family with a long tradition of involvement in higher education. He joined the University of Lucknow as a lecturer in Economics and Sociology in 1924. He came to sociology via history and economics, and retained an active interest in a wide variety of subjects ranging across literature, music, film, western and Indian philosophy, Marxism, political economy and development planning. His reputation as a teacher was highly acknowledged in those times. He wrote many books in English and Bengali.

➤ **Methodological Approach:**

D.P. Mukherjee was deeply interested in understanding the nature and meaning of Indian social reality in the Indian tradition. He followed Marxism as a method of analysis. His dialectical analysis of Indian history suggested that tradition and modernity, colonialism and nationalism, individualism and collectivism could be seen as dialectically interacting with each other in contemporary India. He preferred to call himself 'Marxologist' rather than 'Marxist' and attempted a dialectical interpretation of the encounter between the Indian tradition and Modernity which unleashed many forces of cultural contradiction during the colonial era.

According to D.P. Mukherjee, to understand individual in social science theories is a narrow concept. So it is better to understand individual through a holistic approach or through psycho-sociological approach. So the 'synthesis of the double process of individuality and the socialization of the uniqueness of individual life, this perfect unity is called as **personality**.

D.P. Mukherjee was of the opinion that India is born out of the union of various culture, elements etc and that the British rule in India has been a turning point for the Indian society. He believed modernization as a process can never be achieved by mere imitation but can be achieved through the process of expansion, elevation, revitalization of traditional values and cultural patterns. He also

discussed about Tradition and classified the Indian tradition into three types viz. Primary Tradition (Traditions which are primitive and authentic to Indian culture), Secondary Tradition (which emerged with the arrival of Muslims in India) and Tertiary Tradition (which reflected the differences among various traditions in India). He was of the opinion that Indian culture is very flexible in nature which can blend various cultures within it; thereby Indian would not vanish like the primitive tribes as a result of western culture.

Mukherjee's ideas on tradition and modernity reflect a dialectical relation between the two which ends in two ways i.e. conflict and synthesis. Thus the Indian society in his opinion is the outcome of the interaction between tradition and modernity. While discussing the history of India, he emphasized on two points i.e. 'specificity' and 'crisis'. Specificity points to the importance of the encounter of traditions and Crisis to its consequences. Again while talking about the process of modernization, Mukherjee emphasized the role of self-consciousness which individuals need to have in order to accept the change in the traditional values and embrace the new ones. Even to study the historical process of the relation between tradition and modernity, D.P.Mukherjee focused first on tradition and then on the change.

4.3.3 R.K.Mukherjee: His Life Sketch and Methodological Approach

➤ **Life Sketch:**

Radhakamal Mukherjee or R.K.Mukherjee was born on 7 December, 1889 in Berhampur (Murshidabad) to a Bengali Brahmin family. Study of history greatly interested him. Having his early education in Berhampur, he later got into Presidency College, Calcutta, through an academic scholarship where he came in contact with distinguished scholars like M.Ghosh, H.M.Percival and Harinath De. He was deeply inspired by the works of Comte, Herbert Spencer, Hobbhouse, Giddings and others. The patriotic feeling and

eagerness to help the suffering masses was caused by the Renaissance and partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon. This ultimately drove him to choose Economics and Sociology over history. He was awarded the Premchand Raychand scholarship in 1915 and PhD degree in 1920 by Calcutta University for his study on "Socio-Economic Changes in the Indian Rural Community".

➤ **Methodological Approach:**

R.K.Mukherjee put forward each order of reality from physical to metaphysical, a unified triadic principle of dialectical interaction which links one level of reality with other and which also gives one level of concepts or categories significant and meaningful to other levels. According to him, dialectics is a process more prominent of harmony and freedom which links one level of reality with another.

He differs from Marxist notion of dialectics. According to him, dialectic is the capacity of man to exceed through interplay of opposite forces to higher and higher planes of ethical and cognitive awareness. This transcendence is mediated by the society. He said, "It is the nature of man to transcend himself because of the immanence in him of the not-self, the neighbor, the whole universe". He draws from Hegel, Vedanta, Buddhism and Taoism to form his notion of dialectics. To maintain the societal modes of solidarity, Mukherjee suggests the principle of individual freedom and dignity of common man from the liberal ideology and excess to societal resources and sharing in it by the working classes, as advocated by Marxism.

To study the society, R.K.Mukherjee focused on interdisciplinary or trans disciplinary approach towards the understanding of human life. He emphasized on developing a general theory of society which could be achieved by first breaking the barriers between physical or natural sciences and sciences relating to man's social and psychological aspects and secondly by constant interaction among the social sciences like Sociology, Psychology and Economics. To appreciate the multi dimensions of human personality and its

interaction with the natural and social environment, mutual exchange of ideas between physical and natural sciences is important.

Commenting on personality of an individual, he saw it as an agent who takes decision, make choices and seeks value-fulfillment. Man makes choices and act accordingly in terms of self, other and the cosmos. Individuals are influenced by many aspects like nature, environment, biological needs and man's psychological impulses. Added to it, man is also influenced by the pressure and activities of the society.

4.3.4 A.R. Desai: His Life Sketch and Methodological Approach

➤ **Life Sketch:**

A.R.Desai, born on April 16, 1915 at Nadiad, Gujrat, may be regarded as one of the pioneers in introducing the modern Marxist approach to empirical investigations involving bibliographical and field research. He studied the works of Marx, Engels and Trotsky. He advocated and applied dialectical-historical model in his sociological studies. He rejected the interpretation of tradition with reference to religions, rituals and festivals which are a secular phenomena and it finds its place in family, village and other social institutions. He does not find the origin of tradition in western culture. He considers the emerging contradictions in the Indian process of social transformation arise mainly from the growing nexus among the capitalist bourgeoisie, the rural petty-bourgeoisie and a state apparatus all drawn from similar social roots.

A.R.Desai was one of the students of Dr.G.S.Ghurye at the Bombay University who was later privileged to serve as the Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology. Desai was one of the founding members of the "Indian Sociological Society" and also a life member.

➤ **Methodological Approach:**

A.R.Desai in his sociology studied the macro and meso Capitalism, nationalism, classes, agrarian structure, the state and peasant movements among other things. Desai in his Marxist sociology used the historical method to give the specific meaning to the Marxist notion of structure and the various elements in its constitution in India such as capitalism, feudalism, the relationship between class and nation, peasants and working class, the post colonial state and the rights of the deprived . He framed an interdisciplinary sociology where he used the method of participant observation and fieldwork to understand the structural pattern and processes of change of the Indian society.

The British conquest in India resulted in the transformation of Indian society from feudal economy to capitalist economy. Old economic system and old land relations in India ceased to function with the introduction of new economic system and modern land relations and industries. With the shift in economic system, new class group emerged which included agricultural laborers, tenants, merchants etc. With the introduction of new land revenue system, commercialization of agriculture; fragmentation of land etc transformed the Indian village. This followed poverty, exploitation of classes by land owners in rural areas and in urban society, there were capitalist industrial working class, petty traders, lawyers etc. In short the changes and infrastructural development during the reign of British led to the development of Indian nationalism which ultimately led to nationalist freedom movement.

A.R.Desai had studied various movements of Indian society like rural and urban, caste and class structure, social mobility and others through Marxist approach in general and the historical-dialectical materialism in particular. He had also discussed that the traditional background of Indian Nationalism was the by-product of material conditions created by the British through the process of industrialization and modernization and this did not exist in pre-British

India. Desai holds the view that the consequent changes in the traditions come up if the economic relations are closely associated with the traditions which also bring change in economic conditions. So there was also the disintegration in traditional caste system of Indian society due to the new social and material conditions like industries, economic growth, education etc. according to Desai, and the state formed in post-Independence period is a capitalist state where the administration plays the dual role of protecting the propertied classes and suppressing the struggles of the exploited classes.

Desai views the Marxist paradigm as the most relevant framework that can help in understanding the changes taking place in Indian society and its various sub-systems. Marxist approach helps to raise questions to conduct the researches in right direction and assists to evolve proper concepts etc. According to Marx, "men can be distinguished from other animals by consciousness, by religion, or by anything one likes". Men begin to distinguish themselves when they produce the means of subsistence. Because in producing the means of subsistence they produce the material life.

The Marxist approach demands to understand social reality, nature of means of production, the techno-economic division of labor and social relations of production. It considers property relations as crucial for they shape the purpose, nature, direction and objectives underlying the production. Marxist approach also calls for studying a specific society as a changing system comprised of contradictory forces some of which sustain and others which alter the society. Thus, Marxist approach gives central importance to property structure in analyzing our society. It provides historical location and specification of all social phenomena. Unlike other approaches, Marxist approach gives central emphasis on the 'mode of production of material life'.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Q1: How the Marxist approaches can help us?

Q2: What is the aim of Marxism?

Q3: Who was D.D. Kosambi?

Q4: Name the important Marxist scholars from India.

Q5: In the opinion of Marxist, how can the solidarity of a society be maintained?

**4.4 LET US SUM UP**

- The Marxist approach has been based on the theories of German philosopher Karl Marx.
- According to Karl Marx, the foundation of every social system rest on two structures- namely Base and Superstructure.
- The relations developed through production and mutual exchange of commodities makes the aggregate of human beings into a society.
- The main task in the Marxian approach is to identify the successive developments in the means and relations of production that truly mirror the life of people at any stage in history.

- According to D.P.Mukherjee, the perfect unity of the synthesis of the double process of individuality and the socialization of the uniqueness of individual life is called as personality.
- According to R.K.Mukherjee, dialectic is the capacity of man to exceed through interplay of opposite forces to higher and higher planes of ethical and cognitive awareness.
- R.K.Mukherjee saw the personality of an individual as an agent who takes decision, make choices and seeks value-fulfillment.
- A.R.Desai used the method of participant observation and fieldwork to understand the structural pattern and processes of change of the Indian society.
- A.R.Desai focused on subjects like the macro and meso Capitalism, nationalism, classes, agrarian structure, and the state and peasant movements among other things.



4.5 FURTHER READING

- 1) Singh, Yogendra. Ideology, Theory and Methods in Indian Sociology (1952-1977)

4.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The Marxist approach can help us to study and analyze social reality through the means of production.

Ans to Q No 2: Marxism aims at providing a scientific study of society from a class angle.

Ans to Q No 3: D.D.Kosambi was one of the well known Marxist historians who tried to employ the Marxian dialectical method to analyze 'materialism' of Indian social system.

Ans to Q No 4: Mukherjee, R.K.Mukherjee and A.R.Desai are considered significant who have adopted the dialectical-historical approach for studying Indian society.

Ans to Q No 5: The Marxists were of the opinion that a society could retain the solidarity among its members by the system of production which involves members of the society in the production process of materials.



4.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: How did R.K.Mukherjee study the society?

Q2: What do you understand by the Marxist perspective?

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1: Write briefly on the life sketch of D.P.Mukherjee and elaborate his methodological approach.

Q2: Write briefly on the life sketch of A.R.Desai and elaborate his methodological approach.

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UNIT 5: SUBALTERN APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF INDIAN SOCIETY

- 5.1 Learning Objectives
- 5.2 Introduction
- 5.3 Subaltern Approach
 - 5.3.1 Ranajit Guha and His Subaltern Approach
 - 5.3.2 B.R.Ambedkar and His Subaltern Approach
 - 5.3.3 David Hardiman and His Subaltern Approach
- 5.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.5 Further Reading
- 5.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 5.7 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- understand the subaltern approach to study society
- explain the subaltern perspective of Ranajit Guha, B.R.Ambedkar and David Hardiman
- discuss the differences of the perspective given by the three scholars.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

You will observe that the rich, powerful and elite section of the society mostly get an opportunity to stay in the limelight. But when it comes to the lower classes or the subordinate masses, it may not be the same always. We have a tendency to ignore the contributions made by the lower sections of the society either being a natural way or simply because it does not catch our attention. In contrast to this ordinary view, the subaltern studies or perspective has been an important initiative to reanalyze history taking into account the role of the subordinate. This approach under the main aegis of Ranajit Guha, stood as a critique to Colonialist, Nationalist, Marxists

interpretation of history and it wanted to “rectify the elitist bias characteristic of academic work” in Indian studies and therefore make way for new studies and discussion of subaltern themes. Guha pointed out that the subalterns acted “on their own, independently of the elites”, trying to show how the efforts of the subalterns had been denied by elite perspectives. Guha and other subaltern studies gave a different representation of Indian history based on people’s consciousness, giving us the possibility to hear their voices, even if Indian peasants have left no written sources or documents from which their own voice can be heard. In the previous unit we have discussed the Marxist Approach to study Indian Society. In this unit we shall discuss about the Subaltern approach to understand Indian Society. Here contributions of Ranajit Guha, B.R. Ambedkar and David Hardiman shall be discussed.

5.3 SUBALTERN APPROACH

Subaltern approach gave a new analysis to Indian nationalism. To restore a balance, the subaltern approach highlights the role of politics of the people as against elite politics played in Indian history. Thus, ‘elite’ and ‘people’ are viewed as binary domains to constitute a structural dichotomy or opposites. Supporters of this approach state that the role played by elites in building Indian nationalism has always been highlighted but the contributions made by the people (masses) on their own and independently of the elites, have failed to get acknowledged. Parallel to the elite politics, there has always existed throughout colonial period another domain of people namely the ‘subaltern’ classes and masses of the laboring population. Subaltern historiography regards ‘people’ (subalternity) as an autonomous domain that originates neither from elite politics nor depends on them. Therefore, the mobilization in elite politics is achieved vertically whereas in subaltern politics it is achieved horizontally.

Historians who use the term ‘subaltern’, has taken the word from Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist and Communist who was imprisoned for a long time by Mussolini’s police until his death. In prison, Gramsci wrote notebooks on politics, history and philosophy. He declared that the subaltern

was the subjected underclass in a society on whom the dominant power exerts its hegemonic influence. The word 'subaltern' generally means subordination, an inferior status or rank which can be in the field of caste, class, age, gender or any other way. Thus the subordinate people submit themselves to the people above them. The subalterns are rendered voiceless by oppression. The whole thrust of subaltern historiography is on reconstruction of the other history, i.e. history of people's politics and movements and attempts to make their own history. Subaltern approach conveys 'view from below', i.e. a view or understanding from the bottom of society or the flow of knowledge from below.

This is an important approach to study tribal peasant movement. The subaltern scholars have claimed that they unfolded the incapacity of nationalist and elitist historiography to incorporate the voices of the weak into the project of history re-writing. Subalternists focused their attention on the circle of elite politics and have emphasized the insurrectionary activities and potential of the 'subaltern' classes (artisans, poor peasants, landless labourers, tribals, etc) to help themselves possess self-consciousness and develop the quality of resistance directed against the rich peasants and urban traders. The noted proponents of this subaltern approach in India are Ranajit Guha, B.R. Ambedkar, David Hardiman, Kapil Kumar and others.

5.3.1 Ranajit Guha and His Subaltern Approach

Ranajit Guha, while analyzing the tribal and peasant insurgencies in colonial India and also the social movements, made use of the tradition of scientific Marxism in his study. Guha believes that the task of historiography (the writing of history, the study of history-writing) is to interpret the past in order to change the present world and that such a change involves a radical transformation of consciousness. He therefore warns social scientists and activists not to view peasant or tribal insurgents merely as 'object' of history but to treat them as 'makers' of their own history- endowed with a transformative consciousness of their own. Guha was interested on those peasant studies i.e. on peasant movements including

revolts or insurgencies which have emphasized 'organization', 'leadership' and 'ideology' as the key elements in the formation of rebels' consciousness and have tended to treat the insurgencies as 'pre-political' phenomena.

Guha insisted mostly the writings of historians mostly focused on the Indian National Movement and it is seen mostly from the notion or perspective of the leaders of the movement. According to him, the history of our society was either left untouched or not examined enough or examined only as an addition of the national movement. Guha was in support of the subaltern perspective which was needed to study the society from the notion or view of the downtrodden.

Guha's main objective in studying insurgencies of the colonial period is to show how patterns of subordination and insubordination has run on parallel tracks throughout the colonial history of India, and how affirmation of domination or resistance, or insurgency and counterinsurgency have strengthened each other. Guha used subaltern historiography as a method for his study of peasant insurgency. Guha has given some common forms and ideas in the rebel's consciousness. They are the following: negation, ambiguity, modality, solidarity, transmission and territoriality.

The first form of peasant or insurgent tribal consciousness is '**negation**' which implies formation of negative identity. Negation results in selective violence only against the perceived enemies. The peasants learn to recognize him not by the properties and attributes of his own social being but by the diminution and negation of those of his superiors. Guha seems to assume that the principles of a highly structured mode of domination and subordination has been internalized at the elite and subaltern levels of Indian society. These principles were devised by the ruling groups and imposed upon the subalterns. Negation also governs the insurgent practice of inversion, of turning the world upside down. The peasants, passive because of the dead hand of ruling class's culture and values,

reverse the codes which make for their passivity when they embark on insurgency .

The second form of peasant consciousness is '**ambiguity**' which in Guha's scheme draws on the basic difference between 'crime' and 'insurgency', although the two have often been used synonymously in colonial historiography. To Guha, crime tends to be an individualistic or small group-oriented, but secretive or conspiratorial action. In contrast, insurgency has a mass character which manifest publicly. The two acts derive from two different codes of violence, but since in the overt form the acted violence may be similar, there is an ambiguity in violence as an internal or external part of insurgency.

The next aspect of peasant character or tribal insurgencies is '**modality**'. During the phase of Deccan riots (1875) and Santhal hool (1855), Guha has shown how the insurgents have searched for an alternative source of authority by electing 'rebel-nawabs' and the like. Also in the act of mobilization during insurgency, sentiments of kinship or ethnic community ties and feelings do play a significant part. It is also to be noted that rebel activity takes place in many forms where motive of economic gain is no exception. Instances like plunder of goods and looting of cash by the Kols in Chotanagpur has a reference to the point of economic gain. Tribal or peasant insurgents do not simply aim at destroying the cultural insignia (sign) and symbols of power but they also care for economic gains if and when opportunities come their way.

'**Solidarity**'- the next form in which the peasant or tribal insurgent's self-consciousness manifests itself- signifies separation of his own identity from that of his enemies. Although this form overlaps with negativity considerably, Guha made two important points here. First, the quality of 'collective consciousness' varies from one phase of insurgency to another. Secondly, class 'solidarity' or solidarities (i.e. those emerging from ethnic, religious, caste ties) are not mutually exclusive, they overlap. Guha characterizes the

duple character of insurgency in which sometimes class and religion are intertwined (e.g., as in the Moplah uprisings) and sometimes ethnicity and class identities get fused (e.g., Birsa Munda Movement).

In '**transmission**' as a form/aspect of peasant or tribal insurgency, Guha deals essentially with the pattern of spread of insurgency. Through iconic and symbolic signs or even rumors, other subaltern sections/groups are also contacted and drawn with uprising. Whether the rebels organized prayer meetings, beat their drums, flutes or horns, distribute branches of Sal trees, or a fiery torch, or whether they distribute chapattis, oil or sindur (vermillion powder), all these were the most effective instruments of this transmission in the Kol, the Santhal and the Birsaites movements, in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, and also in the Moplah rebellion of 1921.

Lastly, '**territoriality**' acts as the aspect of peasant/tribal consciousness. The insurgents get together by blood ties (consanguinity) on the one hand and by local bond (contiguity) on the other. A sense of belongingness to a common lineage and to a shared habitat overlaps with one another which implies that ethnic space and physical space as constituents of territoriality.

5.3.2 B.R. Ambedkar and His Subaltern Approach

B.R. Ambedkar was instrumental in paving way for changes in the lives of Dalits. Being a byproduct of the Ambedkar movement, Dalit indicates a social and political awareness. The Ambedkar movement was to free or emancipate the dalits from their dehumanised position in the society. The word Dalit is commonly used for the untouchables who are regarded as the downtrodden and oppressed class of the society or occupying their position at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and dalit or untouchables. Dalit includes all those persons who are poor and exploited at the hands of the other sections of the society. It does not restrict itself merely to economic exploitation in terms of appropriation of surplus. It is also related to the suppression

of one's (Dalit) culture, way of life, value systems and more importantly Dalits are denied the dignity to lead a life. It emerged as a political category and changes in the structure of the society is called for to give a space to the Dalits. The word Dalit indicates struggle for an egalitarian order.

B.R.Ambedkar wanted to liberate the Dalits from the social scenario oppressing their honor and status and thus create an equal social order. But he was also aware that it was not possible within the fold of Hinduism which lowered the position of Dalits to the bottom. He thereby asserted that the Dalits should come forward and fight for their own cause; otherwise no one would be able to lessen their problems and grievances. The slogan or mantra given by Ambedkar to the Dalits was- 'educate, organize and agitate'. The Dalits themselves should be aware of their plight and have to garner the potential to tackle their own state of affairs. He believed the quality of self-awakening would give the necessary strength and help the downtrodden section to fight the evils of the society. "Ambedkar (started) exercising the spirit of despair from the minds of dumb millions who had been forced to live the life of sub-human beings. Here was a liberator preaching them the grand universal law that liberty is received neither as a gift; it has to be fought for. Self-elevation is not achieved by the blessing of others but only by one's own struggle and deed. Those inert dormant masses lacked courage and needed a vision and a mission. Ambedkar was inspiring them to do battle for their human rights. He was driving them to action by acting himself..... Ambedkar was displaying energy by his own action; arousing their faith by showing faith". (Keer, 1971)

Ambedkar's subaltern perspective brought the face of the Shastras to limelight which was against the downtrodden. He also realized that caste and Brahminic Hinduism strengthen each other to differentiate the lower sections from the mainstream Hinduism. In his view, the Vedas, Smritis and Shastras were all instruments of torture used by Hinduism against the untouchables. He also

emphasized the fact that Srimitis and Shastras were not the symbol of religion rather they played a role in depriving the untouchables of their rights and needs in the society. He did not hesitate to say that Hinduism as a religion has no right for its existence and should be destroyed for it looks down upon its own people as untouchables and deny equal status.

Ambedkar wanted to safeguard the rights of the Dalits or the untouchables and see them prosper on their own will as against the other castes. Another approach of his subaltern approach resides in formation of the Indian nationalism as opposed to the dominant discourse of Hindu nationalism of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, B.G.Tilak and others. Ambedkar wanted to empower the downtrodden, free them from the clutches of caste discrimination and encouraged them to destroy the evils which were obstructing their struggle to assert their identity as human beings.

5.3.3 David Hardiman and His Subaltern Approach

David Hardiman in his study has shown that the Devi movement was a response to the impact of the colonial rule on tribal society. The Adivasis were peasants and practiced shifting cultivation. The Adivasis led an isolated life but there was the impact of non-tribal moneylenders and Shaukars on the life of the tribals.

The subaltern perspective was used by David Hardiman in his study 'The Coming of Devi'. The Devi Movement took place in South Gujarat i.e. in the western Maharashtra region. It was a movement among the adivasis of western India who wanted a change in the established way of life. It was led by the adivasi people themselves and was directed towards bringing a social reform among the life of the tribals. The adivasis were lured by the rural elite section and Bhajan-Mandal groups of the village to consume liquor which was a highly taxed commodity. Cost of liquor was rising high and being unavoidable for the tribals, they were falling to drinking debts. They were slowly exploited and were landing in a state of

pauperization. In an effort to reform their life by abstaining from drinking habit and also to fight against the domination of Parsi liquor vendors, landlords and moneylenders (Shaukars) with whom they were brought to face debts and burden, the adivasi people involved themselves in a social reform movement.

The adivasis of western India were to be commanded by a goddess or Devi who was supposed to have come from the mountains to Kanpur village of the adivasis in the year 1922. The Devi Salabai gave a call to change their life as to refrain from drinking liquor, to boycott the Parsis who were running the liquor trade, advised men and women to take bath regularly etc. The Devi was accompanied by a collective of people holding red clothes in their hand and later the Devi, who was a girl, was offered coins and gifts as a mark of respect. This gathering of adivasi people before the Devi had immense influence on the former and a sense of consciousness was awakened. It encouraged the adivasi people to divert their way from the clutches of Parsis and the moneylenders and ultimately it inspired them to raise their living standards.

But this movement to drift away from the Parsis, moneylenders or landlords did not result in complete success. The domination of the Parsis was replaced by the hegemonic domination of the elite among the adivasis. Therefore what started as a religious movement with respect to the commands of the Devi, turned into a struggle for adivasi assertion. The adivasis were placed before the increasing capitalist invasions in the hands of the colonial government but they have managed to retain their self control and dignity.

The Devi managed to rule for a couple of years. The tribals resorted to drinking again but the realization to bring a change by their own efforts has influenced them which were later encouraged by Gandhiji, Kishan Sabhas etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: How are elite and people viewed?

Q2: How subaltern historiography treats people?

Q3: Who is Antonio Gramsci?

Q4: Who are the noted proponents of subaltern approach in India?

Q5: What is the task of Historiography according to Ranajit Guha?



5.4 LET US SUM UP

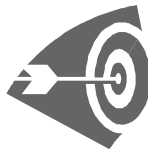
- Guha pointed that the subalterns acted "on their own, independently of the elites", trying to show how the efforts of the subalterns had been denied by elite perspectives.
- Subaltern approach highlights the role of politics of the people as against elite politics played in Indian history.
- Guha was interested on those peasant studies which have emphasized 'organization', 'leadership' and 'ideology' as the key elements in the formation of rebels' consciousness.
- The forms of peasant consciousness in Ranajit Guha's studies are negation, ambiguity, modality, solidarity, transmission and territoriality.

- The Ambedkar movement led by B.R. Ambedkar was to free or emancipate the dalits from their dehumanised position in the society.
- B.R Ambedkar wanted that the Dalits themselves should be aware of their plight and have to garner the potential to tackle their own state of affairs.
- David Hardiman's famous work was 'The Coming of Devi', where he emphasized the adivasi consciousness awakened by the Devi to free them from the moneylenders and Parsis.



5.5 FURTHER READING

1. Dhanagare, D.N, "Themes and Perspectives in Indian Sociology", Rawat Publications, 1993



5.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: 'Elite' and 'People' are viewed as binary domains to constitute a structural dichotomy or opposites.

Ans to Q No 2: Subaltern historiography regards 'people' (subalternity) as an autonomous domain that originates neither from elite politics nor depends on them.

Ans to Q No 3: Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist and Communist who was imprisoned for a long time by Mussolini's police until his Gramsci's death.

Ans to Q No 4: The noted proponents of the subaltern approach in India are Ranajit Guha, B.R. Ambedkar, David Hardiman, Kapil Kumar and others.

Ans to Q No 5: Guha believes that the task of historiography (the writing of history, the study of history-writing) is to interpret the past in order to change the present world and that such a change involves a radical transformation of consciousness.

5.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: Write a short life note on the subaltern approach.

Q2: Explain briefly the Devi movement as given by David Hardiman.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1: Elaborate the four forms of consciousness given by Ranajit Guha.

Q2: Describe the plight of the Dalits and B.R.Ambedkar's Subaltern Perspective.

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UNIT 6: THE CASTE SYSTEM

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 6.1 Learning objectives
- 6.2 Introduction
- 6.3 The Caste System: Meaning, Characteristics and Origin
 - 6.3.1 Meaning of Varna
 - 6.3.2 Varna and Jati
 - 6.3.3 Meaning of Dominant Caste
 - 6.3.4 Mobility in the Caste System
 - 6.3.5 Jajmani System
 - 6.3.6 Constitutional provisions
- 6.4 Conclusion
- 6.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.6 Further Reading
- 6.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 6.8 Model Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- understand the caste system of India
- explain origin of caste system and its characteristics
- learn different concepts like varna, jati and dominant caste
- examine the changes that occurred in the caste system with the passage of time.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

The caste system is a form of social stratification that characterizes the unique social structure of India. It has been reported that similar institutions like “caste”, which govern the culture, tradition and lifestyle of the individuals, also exist in countries like Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and others where Indians have migrated in large numbers. The caste system in

India has been traced to have existed from the ancient times. And since then, it has sustained the constant changes occurring in the society. With the advent of forces such as industrialization, modernization, western influence, education, secularism and so on, it too has started experiencing and accepting the changes relatively fast. These forces, however, could not erase the system, the traditions and customs of which most have critiqued as being utterly superstitious and derogatory. Despite rigorous attempts by social reformers, the inequality generated by the caste system still persists in a large scale. In fact, the system has now succumbed to new roles which have led to the emergence of complex modes of propagating inequality. These complexities are such that even the scholars, both Indian and western, who have been discussing and debating on these issues, still find it hard to grapple with the concept of the system in its entirety.

The previous units of this course discussed the different approaches to study or understand Indian Society. This unit shall focus on one of the important and unique aspect of Indian Society i.e its caste system. Here we shall not only discuss about meaning and characteristics of Indian Caste System but also about its other aspects like mobility in caste system, Jajmani system, constitutional provisions so on and so forth.

6.3 THE CASTE SYSTEM: MEANING, CHARACTERISTICS AND ORIGIN

Every society is stratified. An unstratified society, with complete equality among its members, has never been discovered in the history of mankind. The forms and proportions may vary, but the essence is permanent. Stratification, in general, is the ranking of members of a society according to the unequal distribution of desirable rewards, such as wealth, prestige and power. This stratification may be economic (class) or social (caste). The civilized, industrialized and literate societies of the world today are basically stratified in terms of caste and class. The caste or a class of an individual determines his/her position in a society. Earlier, the terms 'caste' and 'class' were used synonymously; in the sense that since one is born in a particular caste, one's class/ economic status too will remain the same for generations later. For example if a person's parents work as laborer and

are poor, their children will also have to earn their livelihood in the same way. This means that caste is a social structure in which classes are determined by heredity. Caste as a system of stratification has been viewed in two ways. Some sociologists have treated caste as a cultural phenomenon. Therefore, they treat caste as a system of ideas, values and beliefs. On the other hand, others have considered caste as a structural form. They, thus treat caste as a system of roles and status.

Caste is an essential ingredient of rural social structure. However, due to its complexity its scholars find it difficult to define. Nevertheless, a few definitions given below can be taken in to consideration to understand the concept.

According to **Ketkar**, "A caste is a group having two characteristics, i). membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born, ii). the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group.

D.N. Mazumdar and T. N. Madan have said that caste is a 'closed group'.

C. H. Cooley: "When a class is somewhat hereditary, we may call it a caste."

A. W. Green: "Class is a system of stratification in which mobility up and down the status ladder, at least ideally does not occur."

MacIver and Page: "When status is wholly predetermined, so that men are born in their lot without any hope of changing it, then class takes the extreme form of caste."

Sir Herbert Risley: "Class is a collection of families, bearing a common name, common descent from a mythical ancestor, human and divine, professing to follow the same hereditary calling and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogenous community."

M. N. Srinivas: "Caste is a hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concepts of pollution and purity and generally, maximum commensality occurs within the caste."

Andre Beteille: “caste may be defined as a small and named group of persons characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership and a specific style which sometimes includes the pursuit, by tradition, of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system based on concepts of purity and pollution.”

Many more thinkers and scholars of sociology have tried to define the caste system. However, due to its complex nature, they have failed in those attempts.

● CHARACTERISTICS

G.S. Ghurye, in his book *Caste and Race in India*, holds that the caste system is basically characterized by six different aspects. These aspects are the main traditional features of the caste system. Even though we have learned about these characteristics in Unit 2, a discussion about the same here will enable us to gain more clarity. Hence they are elaborately described below:

➤ **Segmental division of society:** A society is most often heterogeneous in nature. So is a Hindu society, which is divided in a number of segments called castes. Each of these castes is a well-developed social group. The memberships in these groups are determined by birth and not by selection or by accomplishments. This means that a child is born with a caste of his/her parents. The caste status that an individual possesses after birth, remains unchangeable and untransferable. In fact, no amount of power, prestige or wealth can alter his/her membership in the caste group. Moreover, each of these caste groups have their own customs, traditions and rituals. It is generally believed that there is no social mobility. However, M. N. Srinivas had pointed out that with changes in society, a low-caste has been able to raise itself upwards in the social ladder by acquiring wealth, power and by adopting the Brahmanical customs and traditions.

➤ **Hierarchical division of society:** As already mentioned, a Hindu society is divided into a number of segments called castes and sub-castes. The caste system in a Hindu society believes in ranking and gradation between the castes. Hence, the sense of superiority and inferiority is associated with this gradation, forming a hierarchy. At the top of this hierarchy are the

Brahmins, who are regarded as 'pure, supreme or superior'. The Untouchables are placed at the bottom of this hierarchical ladder and they are considered to be polluted, inferior and degraded. They are also called Harijans or Dalit. In between lies the intermediary castes, whose relative positions are not always clear. As such, disputes among the members of these castes over the social precedence of their respective castes are quite common.

➤ **Restrictions on food and social intercourse:** Certain restrictions have been imposed on the members of a caste with respect to what kind of food they must consume and how. These restrictions differ from caste to caste. A Brahmin consumes "kaccha" food (prepared with the use of water) only from their own caste i.e, Brahmin or any caste ritually higher than their own. . On the other hand, a Brahmin can accept "pakka" food (cooked in ghee) also from the lower castes. While there are restrictions on Brahmins accepting food from lower castes, any kind of food prepared by a Brahmin is acceptable to all other castes.

The caste system put restrictions on the range of social relations too. There exists the concept of pollution and purity within this system, where the upper castes are considered to be pure and the lower castes, especially the Untouchables, to be polluted. The upper castes stay away from the touch or even the shadow of the Untouchables, lest it pollutes or defiles them. There are many examples around the country of how an Untouchable carries pieces of wood and claps it on his way to a public place, in order to make the upper castes aware of his presence. The upper caste distances themselves at the sound of the wood pieces. If, in any case, an upper caste touches an untouchable, he/she has to undergo a strict *parikrama* and immediately take a bath to purify themselves again.

➤ **Civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections:** In the traditional caste society, people belonging to lower castes, especially the Harijans, suffered from a set of civil, social and religious disabilities. They are generally made to live in the outskirts of the village. They are forbidden to make use of public wells, roads, hotels, schools or cremation grounds. In the early days, even the public lecture halls, temples and theatres

were not kept open for the lower castes. Beside these, legal rights and political representation were also denied to them for a long time. These restrictions vary from region to region. In south India, the lower caste people were allowed to construct only a particular type of houses. There were limitations with regard to ornamentation also. Again, in Malabar the lower castes were not allowed to milk cows, to wear gold ornaments and to carry umbrellas. They also had to bow down to the upper castes even if they see the latter from far away. In all, since these castes are at the lowest stratum, they are made to suffer all kinds of disabilities in order to remind them time and again of their unprivileged state.

While the lower castes are restricted from a number of things, a higher caste, especially a Brahmin, enjoys all the privileges that exist in the society. They were given the liberty to move freely, anywhere they want. They were also given educational facilities and legal rights. Most of the teachers and the political representatives in the early days were from the higher castes. Not only did they enjoy social, religious and political rights, but were saluted and worshipped by the lower castes as gods. It was said that the Brahmins did not even bow down to the deities of the lower caste people. The greatest privilege of the Brahmins was that they were allowed to chant the Vedic mantras, which amplified their godly status in the society. All these privileges were bestowed on the upper caste because they were believed to be born *pure* and *superior*.

➤ **Restrictions on occupational choice:** The caste system is gradational or divided on the basis of ranking and this ranking is made with respect to the occupational service an individual offers to the society. Each member of a caste is depended on others for occupational services. However, they maintained an amount of distance from each other because they believed that certain occupations were superior and sacred and others were inferior and degraded. Each caste had its own specific occupation. The occupations were almost hereditary, as they were expected to continue the same for generations. This means that the occupations were fixed.

Sweeping, shoe-making, washing clothes, barbering, pottery, weaving, oil-grinding, etc. were considered to be inferior and degrading. On

the other hand, teaching and priesthood were considered to be prestigious professions, pursued mainly by the Brahmins. Individual talents, aptitudes and interests were not taken into consideration. However, occupations like military services, farming or trade were open to all castes.

➤ **Restrictions on marriage:** There are certain restrictions with regard to marriage in the caste system. Endogamy, which refers to marriage within the caste, is the essence of the caste system. All members of a caste or a sub-caste were supposed to marry someone of their own caste. Inter-caste marriages were strictly prohibited and anyone found violating the rule was severely punished by being ostracized and losing his/her caste. Even today, the concept of inter-caste marriages is not easily accepted by the members. This has led to close in-breeding. It has been believed that the rule of endogamy has been strictly followed because the members, especially the upper castes, sought to maintain their purity.

However, the caste system also follows exogamy on three exceptions. Exogamy means marriage outside the caste, clan or group. In the Hindu caste system, there exists the *Sapinda*, *Sagotra* and *Sapravara*. According to *Sapinda*, two individuals of the same *pinda* cannot marry each other because they are believed to have the same parents. *Pinda* means common parentage and according to Brahaspati, offspring from five maternal and seven paternal generations constitute *Sapinda*. Therefore they have to marry someone outside the *pinda*. However, this rule is not followed unanimously throughout the country.

An individual also cannot marry someone from the same *gotra*. Since individuals of one *gotra* are believed to have the same blood, they are restricted from intermarrying. *Sagotra* exogamy is mostly prevalent among the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas.

Again, the Brahmins follow *Sapravara* exogamy. A *pravara* is a sort of religious or spiritual bond and the people who utter the name of the common saint at religious ceremonies are said to belong to the same *pravara*. Therefore those Brahmins who belong to the same *pravara* are prohibited from marrying each other.

Besides these characteristics, the caste system is also characterized by other aspects. Firstly, each caste has a distinct tradition, culture and customs of their own which distinguish them from the other castes. The food habits and way of life of each caste is unique on their own. Secondly, the caste system also consists of a panchayat or a council which deals with matters related to the norms and regulations of castes such as killings of cows, non-payment of debts, adultery, illicit relations with other castes, etc. the infringement of any norm leads to punishment of some kind. Thirdly, the caste system is a closed group. Exogamy, fixity of occupation, hereditary and unique culture makes it so.

● ORIGIN OF CASTE

Many Scholars have given different views regarding the etymology of caste. Of them all, S. V. Ketkar's views seem the most authentic. He considers the word 'caste' to have been attributed to the Spanish or the Portuguese origin. The Spanish word 'casta' means lineage or race. The word 'casta' is again derived from the Latin word 'castus', which means pure. However, it was the Portuguese who employed the term in the primary modern sense. They applied it to the thousands of endogamous, hereditary social groups which they encountered upon their arrival in India in 1498.

It has been estimated that there are more than 2800 castes and sub-castes, each having its own respective characteristics. Caste system existed and still exists in various religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, Christianity, etc. The rigidity, usage and prevalence of the system varies but the most renowned one is that which still exists in Hinduism.

The origin of caste system lacks any substantial historical backing. There are religious, biological and historical theories which vary in many respects. According to the Bhakti school, castes were originally created by Krishna based on the three modes of the natural, material and work. With respect to these modes, the four divisions in the Hindu society were created. Another theory states that the caste system originated from the Indian deity named Brahma. He is the creator of the world and it has been theorized that the different categories in the Hindu caste system were created out of the different parts of His body. Hence, all divisions are supposed to maintain

an amount of distance between each other, failing which they commit a grave crime.

A number of factors have endorsed the growth and the prevalence of the Caste system in India. Firstly, the Indian peninsula has remained a geographically isolated region for a long time. Hence, the age-old customs, beliefs, superstitions and traditions that the people followed, fostered the growth of the rigid system. Secondly, since each race or category intended to maintain its purity, they established more stringent laws which disassociated the 'other'. Thirdly, religious beliefs in the doctrine of reincarnation and karma, further facilitated the existence of the system. Fourthly, the unchanging rural social structure of our country has also led to its persistence. Along with these factors, the most important is the lack of education which has made the people orthodox. The people implicitly and unloathingly accept all norms imposed by caste, so much so that all beliefs have now been internalized as the natural way of life.

6.3.1 Meaning of Varna

The term 'varna' originated from the Sanskrit word *varna*, which means "to cover, to envelop, count, classify, consider, describe or choose". The word appears in the Rigveda, where it means "color, appearance, exterior form, figure or shape". In the Mahabharata, it means color, tint, dye or pigment. The word, however, contextually means race, tribe, species or nature of an object or people in some Vedic and medieval texts. Brahminical books like the Manusmriti includes the term Varna with respect to the four social classes already discussed above.

The caste system in India divides the Hindus into four main categories- Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras. Many believe that the groups originated from Brahma, the Hindu God of creation. The Brahmins are at the top of the hierarchy. They are mainly teachers and intellectuals because they are believed to have come from Brahma's head. The Kshatriyas are in the second position. They are warriors and rulers and they supposedly came

from his arms. In the third position comes the Vaishyas, who are traders and are created from his thighs. The Shudras, who are the lowest category, supposedly came from Brahma's feet and are laborers and service providers. Besides these categories, there exists another category which remains outside the Hindu caste system. They are the Dalits or the untouchables, also known as achhoots. As consigned by the Hindu hierarchy to the lowest occupation, these people remained segregated from the main village. The concept of 'purity' and 'pollution' hold a great significance in the caste system. The upper castes who sought to maintain the purity of their caste, laid down certain restrictions to be followed by the untouchables. Since they were considered to be polluted, they were not allowed to draw water from the public wells, not allowed to enter temples, any public hall or theatre and refrained from educational facilities. They were also supposed to stay far away from the higher castes lest even the former's shadow fall on the latter and pollute them. This hierarchical arrangement has been followed since centuries and it has dictated almost every aspect of Hindu religious and social life. Hence, a lot of privileges have been bestowed on those who are at the top of this hierarchical order.

6.3.2 Varna and Jati

It can be said that *Varna* is the appropriate term to understand the peculiarity of caste system in India, and it is not to be confused with the much more nuanced *Jati* or the European term "caste". This is so because both the terms *varna* (theoretical classification based on the division of labor) and *jati* (sub-caste) are two distinct concepts. Both the words are important while understanding Indian social system and they both play an important role in the life of a Hindu.

Though the word *varna*, when translated into Hindi, literally meant color, it had nothing to do with the color of the skin of an individual. As mentioned earlier, it was used to signify the

classifications based on a person's attributes and economic or social contribution to the society. With time, however, the system got debauched by the evils of caste system as witnessed in the modern times. As a result, the varna of a person was decided on the basis of his birth rather than his attributes or qualities. Inequality, corruption and hegemony of the higher castes procreated from the constant practice of caste related customs and beliefs.

The term 'jati' has been derived from the Sanskrit word 'jata', which means 'born into existence'. It was a subdivision of communities in the Indian social order which was broadly divided into four varnas. This meant that a jati is a sub-caste within the varna system. The need for an authentic or specific identity brought about the development of the Jati. It helped in identification of an individual within a varna. It was used to reflect the trade or profession of a particular community. For example, there are various kinds of traders within the Vaishya caste. One of them is the jati named Gandhi, who deals in perfumes. They have been named so because Gandhi comes from the word 'gandha', which means smell. This system of classification continued till the modern times. It is on the decline now due to occupational mobility and various socio-political and economic changes.

6.3.3 Meaning of Dominant caste

It was M. N. Srinivas who first defined the term 'dominant caste'. The term refers to the caste in a village which is numerically strong and also wields the greatest economic and political power. In simple terms, in order to be dominant in a region, a caste should possess a sizeable amount of arable land, should be a majority in number and occupy a higher place in the caste hierarchy. At present, with the onset of modernization, new factors have contributed to the dominance of a caste group, overshadowing the old ones. They are- western education, jobs in administration or urban sources of income and political involvement. Presence of these factors in a

caste group give them legal administrative, social and political powers which will automatically raise their position in the locality and make them dominant. By being dominant, a caste group exercises control in all fields of social life. The members of the dominant caste enjoy certain privileges too. Therefore, the lower castes hold them in reverence and try to imitate their beliefs, customs and way of life. In this way, the dominant castes play an important role in cultural transmission and social mobility in an area.

6.3.4 Mobility in a Caste system

By definition, caste is a closed social group with a unique culture of its own which follows a certain kind of code of conduct and restrictions on food, marriage, social intercourse and occupation to maintain its purity and to distinguish them from the other castes. Caste system has been always known to be rigid and only those members in the upper caste have been enjoying the privileges of being in a higher status. However, from 21st century onwards, with modernization, industrialization, urbanization, spread of education, social movements and enactment of legislative measures, the caste system could not remain as rigid as before. A process of social mobility has been witnessed. Mobility in caste system is generally a vertical movement either upwards or downwards. M. N. Srinivas had explained the process of mobility in the system through the concept of 'sanskritisation' and 'westernisation'. He was of the view that a low caste could raise, in a generation or two, to a higher hierarchical position by imitating the rituals, customs, beliefs etc. of the upper castes and giving up their own. This process was termed by Srinivas as Sanskritisation. Lynch and Barnett termed this process as 'elite emulation' and 'kingly model' of emulation respectively. Srinivas however states that the untouchables cannot emulate themselves above the Shudras.

Sanskritisation is a two-way process in the sense that a caste not only takes from the upper caste but in turn also gives something to it. A mere adoption of Brahmanic customs, beliefs and change in

occupation does not necessarily lead to mobility. The process involves certain factors such as awareness of industrialization, science and technology, spread of education, giving up of evil customs and social practices and so on.

Along with sanskritisation, the process of westernization has also led to mobility. According to this process, a higher caste imitates or adopts the ideology, values, institutions and lifestyle of the western society. Srinivas introduced the term westernization to explain the changes that have taken place in Indian society and culture due to the western influence since British rule. Therefore, in simple terms, westernization primarily meant British impact. It has accelerated the process of sanskritisation. With the increase in westernization of the Brahmins, the number of lower castes getting sanskritised is also increasing. This means that while the lower castes are taking up Brahmanical customs and traditions, the Brahmins themselves are discarding them. However, it should be noted that while sanskritisation implies mobility within the framework of caste, westernization implies the same outside.

6.3.5 Jajmani System

The term Jajmani comes from the Sanskrit word 'yajman' which means the patron who holds the *yajna* or *yagya* or fire of worship i.e the Brahmin. The Jajmani system is a system of traditional occupational obligations present in rural India. It is essentially based on the caste system. According to the system, the lower castes had to provide services and products to the higher castes. In return, the lower castes were either paid in cash or in kind such as grains, fodder, clothes, milk, butter and other animal products. The castes who were served are called jajmans. They were mainly the food producing families who owned large plots of land. The servicing castes are called kamins. In some parts of the country, they are also called Parjan, Pardhan, Balutedar, etc. Nais (Barbers), Kumhars (potters), Lohars (blacksmiths), Dhobis (washermen), etc. were

some of the kamins. The jajmani system can be defined as a jajman-praja relation, which has rendered the Indian village as a self-sufficient community.

6.3.6 Constitutional Provisions

The existence of caste system in India has led to a large scale discrimination of the lower castes, i.e the Shudras and the Untouchables. They were denied all kinds of rights. Therefore the drafting members of the Indian Constitution sought to protect and uplift the weaker section of the society by providing them certain privileges. On a political basis, the lower caste groups are usually termed as Scheduled Castes or Backward classes. The Constitution has not exactly defined the term Backward classes, but it is understood that whoever is inadequately represented in the state can be called Backward class.

- According to Article 15 (4), nothing shall prevent the state from making any provisions for the advancement of any socially and economically backward classes of citizens or for SCs and STs.
- Art. 15 (5): This clause allows the state to make provisions for backward classes or SCs and STs for admissions in private educational institutions, aided or unaided.
- Art. 16 (4): this clause allows the state to reserve vacancies in public service for any backward classes of the state that are not adequately represented in the public services.
- Art. 14 (4A): This allows the state to implement reservation in the matter of promotion for SCs and STs.
- Art. 16 (4B): This allows the state to consider unfilled vacancies reserved for backward classes as a separate class of vacancies not subject to a limit of 50% reservation. ‘
- Art. 17: This clause abolishes untouchability and its practice in any form.
- Art. 19 (5): It allows the state to impose restriction on the freedom of movement or of residence in the benefit of STs.

- Art. 40: This provides reservation in 1/3 seats in Panchayat to SC/ST.
- Art. 330/332: This allows reservation of seats for SC/ST in the parliament as well as in state legislatures.
- Art. 335: This clause allows relaxation in qualifying marks for admission in educational institutions or promotion of SCs/STs.
- Art. 338/338A: This establishes a National Commission of SCs and STs.
- Art. 339: This allows the central govt. to direct states to implement and execute plans for betterment of SCs/STs.
- Art. 340: This allows the President to appoint a commission to investigate the condition of socially and economically backward classes and table the report in the parliament.

6.4.1 Conclusion

The prevalence of the caste system can be seen to be thriving even today, in fact in a much more complex form. Though modernism brought a lot of changes in the society, instead of erasing its existence or its ill effects, it has intensified further. The use of caste in various social activities has only contributed to violence, cruelty and inequality among the people. There are numerous examples of inter-caste honor killings every day. Some societies still hold on to the rigid codes and customs of caste. Even today, the Dalits are avoided and discriminated against from various civil and social privileges. Moreover, the existence of the caste system has given large scope for new instruments of corruption. Various political parties use caste to generate vote banks by favoring certain communities more than the others. All these prove the irrelevance of the caste system. However, it still thrives in the country for all the wrong reasons. The only solution to eliminate the ill effects of the caste system, that have been afflicting the society since time immemorial, is by changing the mindset of the people and making it free from all the prejudices notions about divisions among people.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Who first coined the term “dominant caste”?

Q2: What do you understand by the term “dominant caste”?

Q3: Into how many Varnas are the Hindus divided? What are they?

Q4: Under the Jajmani system, who are the Jajmans and who are the Kamins?

Q5: Who first came up with the concepts of “Sanskritization” and “Westernization”?



6.5 LET US SUM UP

- Caste is a social structure in which classes are determined by heredity.
- M. N. Srinivas: “Caste is a hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concepts of pollution and purity and generally, maximum commensality occurs within the caste.”

- The characteristics of the caste system are: segmental division of society, hierarchical division of society, restrictions on social intercourse and food habits, civil and political disabilities and privileges, etc.
- Varna is theoretical classification based on the division of labor and Jati is the sub-castes or the sub division of communities in the Indian social order.
- In order to be dominant in a region, a caste should possess a sizeable amount of arable land, a majority in number and occupy a high place in the caste hierarchy. At present, with the onset of modernization, new factors have contributed in the dominance of a caste group, overshadowing the old ones. They are- western education, jobs in administration or urban sources of income and political involvement.
- When a low caste raises, in a generation or two, to a higher hierarchical position by imitating the rituals, customs, beliefs etc. of the upper castes and giving up their own, the process is termed as Sanskritisation.
- When a higher caste imitates or adopts the ideology, values, institutions and lifestyle of the western society, it is termed as Westernization.



6.6 FURTHER READING

- 1) Rao, C. N. Shankar. *Sociology of Indian Society*. S. Chand Publishing, 2004, Print.
- 2) Rao, C. N. Shankar. *Principles of Sociology*. S. Chand Publishing, 2007, Print.

6.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: M. N. Srinivas

Ans to Q No 2: The term “dominant caste” refers to the caste in a village which is numerically strong and also wields the greatest economic and political power.

Ans to Q No 3: The caste system divides the Hindus into four Varnas. They are: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras.

Ans to Q No 4: The castes that were provided with services were called the Jajmans. They usually were the Brahmins. The service providers were known as the kamins. They were usually the Dhobis, Kamars, Lohars and so on.

Ans to Q No 5: M.N. Srinivas



6.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

- Q1:** Explain the Concept of Varna.
Q2: What is meant by Dominant Caste?

B) Long Question (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

- Q1:** Write a note on the characteristics of the caste system. Give a humanistic approach on the discrimination of the untouchables from the right to a decent life.
Q2: Write down the provisions laid out by the Constitution in the name of the welfare of the weaker sections of the society, particularly Dalits. With respect to the present scenario, give your opinions as to how those provisions worked, if at all it did.
Q3: Give a detailed discussion on the process of mobility involved in the caste system.

*** **

UNIT 7 CLASS IN INDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 7.1 Learning Objectives
- 7.2 Introduction
- 7.3 Concept of Social Class: An overview
 - 7.3.1 Definition and Meaning
 - 7.3.2 Characteristics of class
 - 7.3.3 Factors or Conditions for Determination of Class
 - 7.3.4 Classification of Social Class
- 7.4 Comparison between Caste and Class
- 7.5 Class in India: An overview
 - 7.5.1 Agrarian classes
 - 7.5.2 Non-agrarian classes
- 7.6 Emergence of the Middle Class in India
- 7.7. Dominant caste
- 7.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.9 Further Reading
- 7.10 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 7.11 Model Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to –

- define class and identify its characteristics
- understand the factors that determine class
- delineate the agrarian class from the non-agrarian class in India
- explain the emergence of the middle class in India and its spread in the society
- elucidate the nature of dominant caste and its relation with class characteristics

7.2 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 6, we have discussed about a type of stratification called caste system, which is the characteristic feature of Indian society. In this Unit, we will begin with the concept of another form of social stratification called class. In reality, class and caste are the two broad categories of social stratification found in human societies. In so-called non-stratified societies or acephalous societies, there is no concept of social class, power, or hierarchy, beyond temporary or limited social statuses. In such societies, every individual has a roughly equal social standing in most situations.

Each and every society can be divided into different types of groups and categories, based on age, sex, kinship, race, territorial proximity and such other criteria. This arrangement is called **social differentiation**. It separates people into distinctive categories or groups on the basis of similar and dissimilar characteristics. In simple societies, these different groups are considered as more or less equal to each other. But as societies became more complex, people tend to arrange these different groups and individuals into various layers having high and low status or positions. This is social stratification.

The word stratification has originally been derived from geology, which studies different layers or strata of the earth. Social stratification stands for the placement of individuals and groups in strata, in a ranked order/ hierarchy. The basis of such hierarchy is social differences in income, occupation, status, and kinship, among others. In different societies, the emphasis is on different bases.

7.3 CONCEPT OF SOCIAL CLASS: AN OVERVIEW

Class and caste are the two main types of social stratification. We have already studied about caste. Here we will deal with Class in some details.

7.3.1 DEFINITION AND MEANING

The word class is used in different situations in different ways. In sociology, however, the word social class has its special meaning. Definitions of social class: Let us now consider a few definitions of social class given by different scholars.

- Ogburn and Nimkoff : *A social class is the aggregate of persons having the same social status in a given society.*
- Maclver and Page : *A social class is any portion of the community marked off from the rest by social status.*
- Max Weber : Social classes are aggregates of human beings *“who have the same opportunity of acquiring goods, the same exhibited standard of living”.*
- For Marx, class involves two criteria: The members share a set of long-term economic interests, especially ownership or non-ownership of the means of production. The members must have some perception of their similarity and common interest. Marx termed this Class consciousness. A class’s consciousness is not, in general, objectively accurate, but Marx considered it an important determinant of the class’s actions.
- Anthony Giddens: Class can be defined as *“a large large-scale grouping of people who share common economic resources, which strongly influence their life style they are able to lead.”*

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

7.2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF CLASS

- Class is based on status. It is basically a **status group**. Different statuses arise in society because people are engaged in different activities and vocations. When we consider class as a status

group, it becomes easy to be applied to any society having social stratification.

- It is based mainly on **achieved status**. In case of class system, status is achieved status and not ascribed status. In this case, status is not fixed at birth. There is scope for an individual to improve one's class position in society through one's performance.
- **Income, occupation, wealth, education, "life-style"** are some of the factors that determine class.
- Class is **found in most of the human societies**. It is a phenomenon that is absent only in the smallest and simplest societies. At the present times, all societies have some or the other form of social class.
- Modes of feelings: In a class system **three modes or types of feelings** may be observed. These are as follows:
 - There is a feeling of *equality* in relation to the members of one's own class.
 - There is feeling of *inferiority* in relation to those who occupy the higher status in the socio-economic hierarchy,
 - There is a feeling of *superiority* in relation to those who occupy the lower status in the hierarchy. Such kinds of feelings lead to class consciousness and finally results in class solidarity.
- Class system is **hierarchical in nature**. Classes are arranged in the order of high and low.
- **Prestige elements**: We have seen that each class has its own status in society, and status is generally associated with prestige. In the society, the relative position of a class arises from the degree of prestige attached to status. In this way, the status or the prestige enjoyed by the ruling or the wealthy classes is superior to those of the common or poor people. This is true for all societies. Now let us know how prestige is determined. Prestige is measured by our evaluations on the basis of knowledge, race or descent, religion, wealth, heroism, bravery and such other qualities. Those qualities which are considered

desirable by the society have a high degree of prestige. The more are the desirables, the higher is the prestige. It must be remembered that these qualities vary from society to society and from time to time.

- **Stability:** A social group is more or less a stable group. Unlike a crowd or a mob it is not transitory and unstable. Status, in a class system may change from time to time, yet it is relatively quite stable over the time.
- **Life style or mode of living:** A social class is distinguished from others by its culture or customary modes of behaviour. This is referred to as life style of a particular class. Now what constitutes a person's life style? One's life style include such matters as the mode of dress, the type of house and neighbourhood, means of recreation, books, magazines and TV programme to which one is exposed, one's friends, mode of traveling, and communication, and ways of spending money, and so on. Special preferences, tastes and values of a class are reflected in their life style. Each class has a sub-culture.
- Social classes are **open group**: Social classes represent an open social system. Vertical social mobility is possible in case of open class system. As class status is achieved, there are very little or no restriction on the part of an individual to move upward in the class hierarchy through one's own effort.
- Social classes are based mainly on **economic criteria**. But the importance of other factors should not be ignored. There are two types of criteria: Subjective criteria and Objective *criteria*. Subjective criteria include class consciousness, class solidarity and class identification, while objective criteria include such elements as wealth, property, income, education, occupation
- **Class Consciousness:** As we have just noted, class consciousness is associated with class system. Class consciousness implies the sentiment of togetherness that characterizes the relations of men towards the members of their own and other classes.



LET US KNOW

Lloyd Warner shows how class distinctions contribute to social stability. Veblen analyzed the consumption pattern of the rich class by the concept of conspicuous consumption.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Answer the following:

- a) Define class.

- b) What is class consciousness?

Q2: Choose the correct option:

- c) Class is based on ascribed/ achieved status.
 d) A class is a close/ open group.
 e) The class system is egalitarian/ hierarchical.

7.3.3 FACTORS OR CONDITIONS FOR CLASS DETERMINATION

In this section let us discuss the factors of class determination. We have already seen that social classes are determined either on subjective or objective criterion, or both.

- **Subjective criteria** include class conscious, class solidarity and class identification. Such subjective criteria are basically psychological. The members who have common interests and attributes have a sense of in-group solidarity. They feel that their socio-economic opportunities are almost equal.

Warner and Lunt have made a study on the American class system and have observed that subjective elements are quite important

factors for class determination According to them, such important subjective elements include:

- belonging to the right family
- doing the right things
- knowing how to act properly
- associating with the right people
- living in the right section of the town
- one's beliefs and feelings concerning certain things

All these *have their impact on the status of individuals* according to which their class is determined. They also observed that mere possession of wealth by itself is not a sufficient qualification for being admitted to the upper class.

➤ **Objective criteria** : Objective criteria include the following:

- wealth, property or income
- family or kinship
- location of residence
- occupation
- level of education
- physical features such as skin colour, height, etc.

Many sociologists put more emphasis on the objective criteria, as these could be clearly observed and recorded. Karl Marx has placed premium on the objective characters, particularly the economic ones.

Thus, in societies where classes exist, one's class is **determined largely** by the objective criteria of personal or household per capita income or wealth / net worth, including the ownership of land, property, means of production, etc. occupation, education and qualifications, and family background .

Those who can attain a position of power in a society **will often adopt distinctive lifestyles** to *emphasize their prestige* and to further rank themselves within the powerful class. Often the adoption of these stylistic traits (which are often referred to as cultural capital)

is as important as one's wealth in determining class status, at least at the higher levels:

- costume and grooming
- manners and cultural refinement. For example, Bourdieu suggests a notion of high and low classes with a distinction between bourgeois tastes and sensitivities and the working class tastes and sensitivities.
- political standing vis-à-vis the church, government, and/or social clubs, as well as the use of honorary titles
- reputation of honor or disgrace
- language, the distinction between elaborate code, which is seen as a criterion for "upper-class", and the restricted code, which is associated with "lower classes" .

These are reflective of the class status of individuals. When we come across someone, we subconsciously tend to identify the class status of a person. We may not immediately be able to figure out the occupation and wealth, the educational attainments, income level, etc. of the person. Still, we can assume the class status by taking recourse to the easily visible criteria, as the dress, manners, style of speech, use of transport, etc., which immediately enables us to have an idea of the person's class status.



LET US KNOW

Elaborate code is the type of language usage which is complete and full of detail, such that even an outsider of the group can understand it. Restricted code is shortened, and condensed and require prior information to understand the meanings. Basil Bernstein, a sociolinguist from Britain, introduced the above mentioned typology of language codes. Based on his research, he concluded that the upper class use elaborate codes, while the working class uses the restricted code. The middle class uses both the codes.

As the working class has confined, close-knit communities, with low social mobility, the members share common experiences. As such, due to shared understanding, the assumptions become understandable to the members of the group (restricted code). On the other hand, the middle class has higher social mobility, diversity of experiences and much more individualistic. As such, assumptions do not become understandable to all. These need to be specified and elaborated upon (elaborate code).

7.3.4 CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIAL CLASS

Different scholars have tried to classify social classes in different ways. Sociologists have given a three-fold classification of classes which consists of - upper class, middle class and lower class.

- Sorokin has spoken of *three major types* of class stratification - they are economic, political and occupational classes.
- Warner has classified classes into *six types*- upper-upper class, upper-middle class, upper-lower class, lower-upper class, the lower middle class and lower class.
- Anthony Giddens's three class model is the upper, middle and lower (working) class. Thus, we may say that most sociologists have used a three fold classification with sub classes under each class.
- Karl Marx, however spoke only about *two major social classes* - the haves and the have-nots or the rich and the poor, or the capitalist and the workers, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

7.4 COMPARISON BETWEEN CASTE AND CLASS

Caste and class are the two main forms of social stratification. Let us now discuss the points where they differ.

- Caste system with all its peculiarities is *unique to India*. It is not universal.

On the other hand Class system is *universal*. It is found almost in all societies of the world.

- Caste status of an individual is *ascribed at birth*. Birth, not achievement is the criterion of caste. Status can neither be changed nor be improved.

However, in case of class system, *status is achieved* by the individuals. There is scope for achieving higher status. Hence, in class system, status can be changed or improved.

- It must be remembered that caste is a *closed system*; it restricts social mobility (movement) from one social status to the other. By contrast, class is an *open system*. It provides opportunity to improve one's social status (which is called mobility) Individual can, move from lower to a higher class by dint of their achievement.
- Caste system is *not secular* like the class system. It is believed that caste system had a divine origin. It is closely linked up with Hinduism, although caste is found among some other religious groups.

On the other hand class system is *secular*. It has no significant connection with any religion.

- The *concept of purity and impurity (pollution)* is ingrained in the caste system. Some castes are pure or clean while some other castes are unclean, impure or even untouchables.

In case of class system, although there is a feeling of disparity between different classes, the question of *purity and pollution does not arise*. Hence, there is no untouchable group in class system.

- Caste system *regulates the activities and relations* of its members to a great extent. It fixes the role of a man in society. The class system on the other hand limits the range of contact and communications of its members. Individuals are *freer in a class*. It also regulates the daily activities of its members.

- Comparatively *greater social distance* is kept between different caste groups, while there is less social distance between different classes. Members of a *class are more tolerant* than others.
- Caste system *tends to become more conservative*, orthodox, and reactionary. On the other hand, social classes are *more tolerant and progressive* than the caste system. It allows its members to achieve higher status or great mobility.
- Caste is an *endogamous group*. As we all know, it means caste members have to choose their marriage partners from within the group.

It is not the case with class system. *Classes are not endogamous*.

- Caste system is a *complex system*. The fact that more than 2800 castes and sub castes are found in India shows how complex it is.

On the other hand class is its simplicity. Broadly speaking, there are only three classes namely, the upper, middle and the lower class. Therefore the class system is *not as complex as that of castes*.

- In a democratic country like India *caste consciousness is more dangerous than class consciousness*. Casteism has been a great hindrance to national integration.

On the other hand class system never restricts the spirit of democracy.

In the Indian society, both castes and class exists side by side. At times, they also overlap.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3: Answer the following:

- Is class solidarity an objective criterion?
- Mention two objective criteria of class.

Q4: State whether the following is true or false:

- c) A caste is an open system.....
- d) Class system does not allow mobility from one class to another.....
- e) Class is a secular structure.....

7.5 CLASS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

Villages in India has nearly 74 percent of the Indian population. The nature of social stratification in Indian villages reveals the manner in which the caste and class affiliations tend to overlap. Let us now discuss the nature of this overlapping.

- Generally, we find that the members of the *higher castes tend to belong to the propertied class wielding power*. This has been amply pointed out by the anthropologist Miriam Sharma. According to her, “Large landholders who employ hired labour are overwhelmingly from the upper castes, while the agricultural workers themselves come from the ranks of the lowest—predominantly untouchable—castes.”
- She also points out that household-labor-using *proprietors* come from the ranks of the *middle agricultural castes*.
- Distribution of other resources and *access to political control* follow the same pattern of caste-cum-class distinctions.
- In an analysis of class formation in India, anthropologist Harold A. Gould points out that a three-level system of stratification is taking shape across rural India. He calls the three levels as:
 - o Forward Classes (higher castes),
 - o Backward Classes (middle and lower castes), and
 - o Harijans (very low castes)

Members of these groups stand in approximately the *same relationship to land and production*—that is, they are large-scale farmers, small-scale farmers, and landless laborers respectively.

- As the caste groups share common economic concerns, they develop a consciousness of belonging to a similar socio-economic-

political standing. These caste groups may have different ritual positions, but they *cooperate to further their common class interests*. The spectrum of the higher castes is broad enough. Different castes have different relative ritual ranking, but they all belong to the higher strata of the caste hierarchy. Some of these different caste groups are drawing together, within regions, across caste lines in order to work for *political power and access to desirable resources*. For example, since the late 1960s, some of the middle-ranking cultivating castes of northern India have increasingly cooperated in the political arena in order to advance their common agrarian and market-oriented interests. Their efforts have been spurred (driven) by competition with higher-caste landed elites. This shows that common economic concerns have brought different caste groups under a common class banner.

- However, as class is based on economic forces and power equations rather than the ritual positions. Therefore, there is a tendency for class formation to occur independent of caste, especially in the cities. With marketable economy and the spread of modern means of production, modern class system has become a social reality even in rural India.

In cities, other groups having vested interests crosscut caste boundaries, suggesting the possibility of forming classes in the future. These groups include *prosperous industrialists and entrepreneurs*, who have made successful efforts to push the central government toward, a pro-business stance; *bureaucrats*, who depend upon higher education rather than land to preserve their positions as civil servants; *political officeholders*, who enjoy good salaries and requisites of all kinds; and the *military*, who constitute one of the most powerful armed forces in the developing world

Economically far below such groups are members of the *menial underclass*, which is taking shape in both villages and urban areas. As the privileged elites move ahead, low-ranking menial workers remain economically insecure. Were they to join together to mobilize politically across lines of class and religion in recognition of their common interests, Gould observes, they might find power in their sheer numbers.

7.5.1 AGRARIAN CLASSES

The term *Agrarian* class structure refers to the type of class structure that prevails in an agricultural society or set up. Scholars have stated that the agrarian classes did exist in pre-independent India. The agrarian social structure consists of agrarian classes which represent different social groups in rural India. An analysis of the post independent rural set up reveals the existence of four classes. They are:

- o land owners
- o tenants
- o labourers
- o non-agriculturists

According to **A.R.Desai**, land owners constitute about 22%, tenants about 27% agricultural labourers about 31% and non-agriculturists about 20% in rural India.

➤ **Daniel Thorner** had classified rural classes into three categories. These are:

- **Maliks or land owners:** The maliks are of two types; namely the *absentee landlords* and the *rich resident landlord*. Absentee land lords do not stay in the village, but in a far away town or city. They get the cultivation through the managers or supervisors. These land lords who have their rights over lands spread over several villages. The Rich Resident land owners reside in the village in which they own land. These people also do not work in the land personally, but get the work done by others.
- **Kissans or working peasants** Kissans or working peasants occupy the intermediate position in the three tier agrarian class structure. This class consists of small land owners. They own land which is considerably smaller in size than that of the maliks. Unlike the maliks, the kisan and his family members actually take part in the cultivation work in the field. They very rarely use outside labourers as their income level is quite low.

- **Majdoors:** The Majdoors or the labourer constitutes the major component of agrarian class system in India today. The term 'majdoor' refers, in the rural context, to the landless villagers who work as labourer on wage basis. The class of majdoor may consist of poor tenants, share croppers, and landless labourers. The landless labourers receive wages in cash and sometimes in kind also. When they fail to get work they have to migrate to other villages or districts or towns and cities in search of livelihood. Sometimes they become construction or industrial workers. Some of them even turn out to be petty traders in the informal sector. In this way they come outside the agrarian class structure. They become integrated into the non-agrarian class stratification.



LET US KNOW

Sharecropping is a system of agriculture or agricultural production in which a landowner allows a tenant to use the land in return for a share of the crop produced on the land (e.g., 50 percent of the crop).

7.5.2 NON- AGRARIAN CLASSES

As the term suggests, this class structure is based in a non-agrarian system of production. Manufacturing and service sector related economic activities create a social structure that is different from that of an agrarian structure. Accordingly, the class system also differs.

The non-agrarian class system is characteristically a feature of the urban society. But, with non-agrarian productive system coming up in the rural areas, non-agrarian classes have emerged in the rural areas as well.

As we have already discussed, class structure has three basic classes: the upper/higher, middle and the lower.

- In India, the members of the non agrarian **upper class**, constituting around 1 percent of the population include the industrialists, former maharajas, and top executives. They are the owners of large properties, members of exclusive clubs, and vacationers in foreign lands. Their counterpart in the agrarian structure is the rich landlord class.
- Below the upper class is the **middle class**. The middle class is bracketed on either side by the upper and lower echelons. They constitute around a third of the population. They are the trades people, artisans, workers, and includes a wide variety of professional people in the non agrarian structure. In the agrarian structure, the middle class is represented by the peasants.
- At the bottom of the economic scale are the poor, who comprise the **lower class**, estimated at 320 million, some 45 percent of the population in 1988, who live in inadequate homes without adequate food, work for pittance, have undereducated and often sickly children, and are the victims of numerous social inequities. The agricultural labourers constitute the agrarian counterpart of the lower class.

7.6 EMERGENCE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS IN INDIA

In about the 1770s, when the term “social class” first entered the English lexicon/vocabulary, the concept of a “middle class” within that structure was also becoming important. The Industrial Revolution was allowing a much greater portion of the population to have time for the kind of education and cultural pursuits once restricted to the upper class sections of the European feudal division which comprised of aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and peasantry (which in that period would have included what later became the industrial proletarians of the towns and cities).

● FEATURES

India’s rapidly expanding economy has provided the basis for a fundamental change, and that is the emergence of a new class. This new class is increasingly dictating India’s political and economic direction. This

group is India's new middle class—mobile, driven, consumer-oriented, and, to some extent, forward-looking. It is hard to define the Indian middle class precisely. It is not a single stratum of society. But it spreads across towns and countryside, making its presence felt everywhere. It encompasses prosperous farmers, white-collar workers, business people, military personnel, and a lot of others, all actively working toward a prosperous life. Ownership of cars, televisions, and other consumer goods, reasonable earnings, substantial savings, and educated children (often fluent in English) typify this diverse group. Many have ties to kinsmen living abroad who have done very well.

● GROWTH

There is no single set of criteria defining the middle class, and estimates of its numbers vary widely. However, it may be stated that the new middle class is booming, at least partially, in response to a doubling of the salaries of some 4 million central government employees in 1986, followed by similar increases for state and district officers. Unprecedented liberalization and opening up of the economy in the 1980s and 1990s have been responsible for the growth of part of the picture.

The middle class appears to be increasing rapidly. It has spread across different religious and ethno-linguistic groups. Once, it was constituted by primarily urban Hindu and aristocratic families. At present, the phenomenon of the consuming middle class is burgeoning among Muslims and prosperous villagers as well. According to V.A. Pai Panandikar, director of the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, cited by Dubey, by the end of the twentieth century, 30 percent—some 300 million—of India's population will be middle class.



LET US KNOW

In August 1990, Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap (V.P.) Singh announced his intention to enforce the recommendations of the Backward Classes Commission issued

in December 1980 and largely ignored for a decade. The report, which urged special advantages for obtaining civil service positions and admission to higher education for the Backward Classes, resulted in riots and self-immolations and contributed to the fall of the prime minister.

7.7 DOMINANT CASTE

The concept of dominant caste presents the interplay of economic, political and other social factors in determining the dominance of a caste group in an area. In this, we see the interplay of caste and class. The dominant caste, like any other caste has a ritual hierarchical position in the caste structure. But, its dominance in an area over other castes is influenced by factors that determine class status.

This concept given by M.N Srinivas holds that a caste is dominant when it is numerically higher than the other castes. In the Mysore village he described that the peasant Okkalinga composed of nearly half of the population made up of nineteen jati group. The Okkalinga were the biggest land owner. Besides numerical strength, there are some other criteria of domination as well. The chief criteria of a caste being dominant are:

- Economic strength
- Political power
- Ritual purity
- Numerical strength

The dominant caste also wields economic and political power over the other caste groups. Numerical strength becomes the basis of power in the region. The dominant caste may not be ritually high, but enjoy high status because of wealth, political power and numerical strength. The presence of educated persons and high occupation rate also play an important role in deciding its dominance over other caste groupings. Sometimes, a single clan of dominant caste controls a number of villages in an area. The dominant caste settles dispute between persons belonging to their own and other jati/caste groups. The power of the dominant caste

is supported by a norm discouraging village from seeking justice from area, government official, court or police located outside the village. The members of the dominant caste, particularly those from the wealthy and powerful families, are representatives of their village in dealing with the officials.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q5: Fill in the blanks :

According to Daniel Thorner:

- a) The absentee landlords and the rich resident landlords belong to the class of
- b) The small landowners belong to the class of or
- c) Poor tenants, share croppers, and landless labourers belong to the class called

Q6: Answer the following:

- d) The dominant caste always has a high ritual status in the caste hierarchy. Is this statement True or False?
.....



7.8 LET US SUM UP

- In the non stratified societies, there is hardly any concept of social class. Social hierarchy is limited, and is usually based on ascribed qualities.
- In complex societies, where the distribution of power, property and prestige is unequal, class structure becomes an evident aspect of social structure.
- One's position in a class is dependent on achieved qualities like as education, income, vocation, wealth and property, power, and family standing and influence. The latter determines one's access to power in the society. These aspects shape the lifestyle of the members of the class.

- Each class has a relative position of superiority and inferiority in relation to other classes. The more of the desirable qualities that a class possesses, the higher is its position over the classes which possess less of the social desirables.
- The members of the same class have an equal position in reference to the class and they share a class consciousness.
- In India, we have both agrarian and non agrarian class.
- In India, class and caste overlap and interplay.
- A caste which is economically rich and wiled power on account of its wealth, influence or numerical strength becomes the dominant caste in their area.



7.9 FURTHER READING

- 1) N. Jayapalan : *Indian Society and Social Institutions* (Volume I), Atlantic, New Delhi
- 2) K.L.Sarma: *Social Stratification in India*, Sage, Delhi.



7.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- Ans to Q No1:** a) A class is a large large-scale grouping of people who share common economic resources, which strongly influence their life style they are able to lead.
- b) It implies the sentiment of togetherness that characterizes the relations of men towards the members of their own and other classes.

Ans to Q No 2: a) Achieved b) open c) hierarchical

Ans to Q No 3: a) No b) wealth and income

Ans to Q No 4: a) False d) False
e) True

Ans to Q No 5: a) Malik b) kissan, peasant c) Majdoors

Ans to Q No 6: a) False



7.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) SHORT QUESTIONS (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: Define and discuss the meaning of class.

Q2: Who are the Kisans?

B) LONG QUESTIONS (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1: Discuss the characteristics of class. Classify social class.

Q2: What are the factors of class determination?

Q3: What are the distinctions between class and caste?

Q4: Elucidate the class structure of Indian society.

Q5: Explain how caste and class affiliations overlap.

*** **

UNIT 8: TRIBE

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 8.1 Learning Objectives
- 8.2 Introduction
- 8.3 Tribe: Meaning, definition and characteristics
 - 8.3.1 Tribe-Caste Interaction
 - 8.3.2 Regional variation in tribe-caste interaction
 - 8.3.3 Constitutional Provisions
- 8.4 Conclusion
- 8.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.6 Further Reading
- 8.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 8.8 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- understanding the meaning of ‘tribe’ and its characteristics.
- explain the interaction between tribe and castes and how their interaction varies from region to region.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

India is the homestead of a numerous indigenous tribes. Most of these tribes are socially and economically backward. Though some of them have been influenced by urbanization, spread of education and other effects of modernization, most of them still have a primitive way of living and earning for their daily subsistence like hunting, food gathering, fishing etc. Tribal communities are at different levels of social, economic and educational development. While some tribals communities have adopted the mainstream way of life. At the other end of the spectrum, there are certain Scheduled Tribes who are still characterized by pre-agricultural level of technology, stagnant or declining population, extremely low literacy and subsistence

level of economy. Therefore they are considered to be the poorest section of the society. Some of the tribal communities of India are Bhils, Khasis, Gonds, Ao, Angami, Apatani, Adivasis, etc. In this unit we shall learn about the meaning and definition of tribe, tribe-caste interaction and also about the constitutional provisions for the Scheduled Tribes of India.

8.3 TRIBE

- **Meaning**

The tribals, who are said to be the original inhabitants of India, are spread over the length and breadth of the country. India constitutes the second largest population of tribals next to Africa. Many of them still continue with a primitive stage of living and are far from the effects of modern civilization. The tribals are an important social group of the country and they are recognized by the term, given by the constitution, 'Scheduled Tribes'. This term was introduced in the Constitution by the chairman of the drafting committee of the Indian Constitution, i.e. B.R. Ambedkar. He preferred the term 'Scheduled Tribes' rather than the other terms such as 'primitives', 'adivasis', 'vanavasis', etc. which are used to refer to the tribals. Article 366 (25) of the constitution defines scheduled tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of the Constitution". The Scheduled Tribes come under the backwards classes. Therefore the constitution has provided them with certain provisions for the welfare of their community. It has also provided them with certain rights in order to protect their tribal culture and also themselves from any kind of discrimination based on their race, color or socio-economic status. Tribals in India originally come from two racial groups- the Dravidians and the Mongoloids.

The Scheduled Tribes are notified in 30 States/Union Territories and the number of individual ethnic groups notified as Scheduled Tribes constitute around 705 in number. According to the 2001 census, the tribals constituted 10.43 crore, which accounts to 8.6% of the total population of the country. Out of the total tribal population, 89.9% live in rural areas and the rest 10.3% in urban areas. From 2001 census to 2011, the decadal population growth

of the tribals has been 23.66% against 17.69% of the entire population. Moreover the sex ratio of the STs is 990 females per thousand males against 940 females per thousand males of the over population. The Scheduled Tribes broadly inhabit two distinct geographical areas of India, vis a vis, the Central India and the North-eastern India. More than half of the Scheduled Tribe population is concentrated in Central India. Madhya Pradesh constitutes 14.69%, Chhattisgarh 7.5%, Jharkhand 8.29%, Andhra Pradesh 5.7%, Maharashtra 10.08%, Orissa 9.2%, Gujarat 8.55% and Rajasthan 8.86%. The other distinct tribal belt is the North-eastern part of India which constitutes the states of Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. The region has 27% indigenous (ST) people in its population. The literacy rate in different states is variable. Of all the states, Mizoram has the highest literacy rate with 93% of its total population being enumerated as literate.

● Definitions

The term 'tribe' has variable definitions. No proper definition has been found in the constitution for the term 'tribe'. In general sense too, different sections of people have different views regarding the meaning of the term. For a lay man, the term 'tribe' denotes the simple folk living in the hills amidst forest and far from the influence of modernization. To those who are a little informed, the term brings to mind a colorful (with respect to their attire) section of the society, who has a rich culture of their own with folk dance and songs. Similarly, to an administrator, tribes signify a particular section of the society who is given special rights for their protection against discrimination and special provisions for the welfare of their communities. And to an anthropologist, tribes become a field of study of a social phenomenon. All these definitions and assumptions are correct in their own way but they do not provide for a single all-encompassing definition for the term. In fact, these different assumptions have only led to the use injudicious use of terms to refer to those communities. Verrier Elwin has been found to have used the term 'aboriginals' in most of his research work on the tribes of North-east India. A census officer, Sir Bians, called them the "hill tribes". G.S. Ghurye used the term 'Backward Hindus'. The International Labor

organization (ILO) used the term 'indigenous people' to refer to the tribal communities. M. K. Gandhi used the term 'girijans' and the Constitution of India has accepted the term 'Scheduled Tribes' to signify those communities which are economically backward. Along with these terms, the tribal communities are sometimes also known as Vanavasis, aranya vasis and so on.

According to the **Backward Classes Commission**, "the Scheduled Tribes lead a separate excluded existence and are not fully assimilated in the main body of the people. Scheduled tribes may not belong to any religion. They are listed as Scheduled Tribes because of the kind of life led by them". In this definition, the peculiarity of the tribal way of life is given more emphasis. As already mentioned above, the Constitution of India has defined the "Scheduled Tribes" in Art. 366 (25) but not the term 'tribe'. Therefore in order to understand the sociological meaning, definition and characteristics of the term 'tribe', let us examine the attempts made by the various anthropologists and sociologists.

D. N. Mazumdar defines a tribe as "a collection of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligation."

Imperial Gazetteer of India: A tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory, and is not usually endogamous, though originally it might have been so.

S. C. Dube: A tribe is "an ethnic category, defined by real or putative descent and characterized by a corporate identity, and a wide range of commonly shared traits of culture."

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

W. J. Perry: A tribe can be defined as "a group speaking a common dialect and inhabiting a common territory."

Andre Beteille: “We have described the tribe as a society with a political, linguistic and somewhat vaguely defined cultural boundary; further as a society based upon kinship, where social stratification is absent.”

● **Characteristics**

A few of the characteristics of a tribe have already been pointed out in the definitions mentioned above. Nevertheless let us elaborate on the characteristics of the tribal community, including the tribals in India.

- **Common territory:** The tribal community is known to have a unique feature of residing in a definite territory. The members of a particular tribe settle down together in a common territory. In India, it is found that the Ao, Angami, Rengma, Sema and other sub-groups of the Naga tribe are seen to reside in the state of Nagaland. Similarly, the Bhils are found in Madhya Pradesh, Garos and Khasis in Meghalaya, Todas in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamilnadu, Adivasis in Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, etc. The lack of a common but definite territory will lead the tribal communities to lose other characteristics of a tribal life, such as common language, community sentiment, etc.
- **Common name:** All tribes possess a common name by which they are known to others. The name itself represents the distinct culture, language or way of life of the particular tribe, which distinguishes them from the others.
- **Collection of families:** As the Imperial Gazetteer of India describes, a tribe is “a collection of families bearing a common name...” These families usually have blood ties among themselves. They may have various sizes and could be either patriarchal or matriarchal in nature.
- **Common language:** The tribal communities have a common language of their own. The different tribal groups have different languages. The presence of a common language develops the community feeling among them. However, the absence of a script of most of these languages has made the access of education quite problematic for them. In many respects, the languages spoken by most of the tribal communities are not even considered to be languages. The speech used by them for communication is mostly

referred to as dialects. There has been a long standing debate about which of them are languages and which are dialects. And it is now accepted by many that those that have been nationally recognized (mentioned in the Constitution, in case of India), can be considered as languages and the rest are dialects. In most cases it might not be true because there may be a language which have not been recognized nationally (therefore called a dialect) but is spoken by a large chunk of the majority in a particular region.

- **Common ancestor:** The tribals, who are bound by kinship bonds, claim that they have a common ancestor. The presence of a common ancestor means that they are bound by blood ties and this brings a feeling of unity among them.
- **Common religion:** With a common ancestor, the tribals usually worship or muse on them before/on every auspicious occasion. Along with it, nature also plays an important role in their lives, therefore they worship nature too. Other such religions followed by them are fetishism, animism and totemism. Based on the religion they follow, the political and social organizations also function. The participation in these religious proceedings brings the community together. Now-a-days, there has been a widespread conversion of the tribals to Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions due to the proselytization.
- **Prevalence of dormitories:** Dormitories or common sleeping chambers are an important aspect of the tribal way of life. The young girls and boys of a community maintain a dormitory where they engage in various activities like folk dance, songs, paintings and so on. They attempt to preserve these and also their legends and seek to educate the others on this regard. They maintain a kind of secrecy about their matters and these members reside together in one dormitory until they get married. They are expected to strictly follow the rules and regulations of the dormitory.
- **Organization of clans:** A clan is a kin-group which includes all relatives, fathers or mothers and children of the same ancestor.

They are considered to be bound by blood relationship, therefore they can trace their origin to one ancestor. The descendants of a clan can be either matrilineal or patrilineal. There exists mutual helpfulness among these clans. Thus, it becomes an important part of a tribal organization.

- **Simple and self-sufficient life:** The tribals of the earlier days were self-sufficient and their lives were simple in nature. Their daily subsistence depended only on hunting, fishing and gather of food like honey, tubers, fruits, nuts, berries, milk and various other forest products. They were neither depended on the civilized world nor desired for the comfort and the facilities of that world. They were not interested in education nor wanted to raise their standard of living. They were self-satisfied and contented with the life they led. However, due to the gradual increase in population, they can no longer depend on the primitive way of life. They are now more depended on the influences of modernization and have started to ask the government for more and more assistance. Their economic interests have now changed and many of them have even shed their tribal way of life completely.
- **Endogamous group:** The tribals are a largely endogamous group. They are not allowed to marry outside the tribe. The reason for practicing an endogamous marriage is because they seek to keep the purity of their blood, cultural peculiarities and in order to preserve the property within the tribe. However, due to influences from the other (civilized) societies, they too have started practicing exogamy outside the tribe. The tribals also practice exogamy, when it is about a clan. Clans are kin-groups who have the same ancestor. This means that they are of the same blood and thus have kinship bonds. Therefore the members of the same clan are not allowed to marry each other. They have to marry individuals of other clans. In this way they practice exogamy too.

8.3.1 Tribe-Caste interaction

The questions relating to tribe and caste have differed among scholars. As we have already discussed, caste originated on the basis of division of labor. Tribe, on the other hand, evolved on the basis of community feeling among its members inhabiting in a definite geographical territory. The various differences between tribe and caste have been known and distinguished. However, the tribe-caste interaction has been witnessed with a gradual change in society. A tribe can enter the Hindu society by adopting the clan and name of a caste. Some tribes even managed to settle down at the peripheries of villages and accepted menial jobs from caste Hindus. Then they eventually got into the Hindu fold. Members of the tribal groups may also adopt the surname or *gotra* of a caste and marry into the caste. Some rich tribal people managed to enroll themselves in high caste with the help of caste priests. Tribes when enter the caste fold, lose their identity.

We can better understand the tribe-caste interaction by looking at the similarities and differences, as pointed out by the sociologists. It has been noticed that the basic features of the tribe and the caste do not differ much.

- N. K. Bose was of the view that the customs between tribes and castes are quite similar. In both cases, they practice endogamy, but within the clan or *gotra* they practice exogamy.
- Ghurye is of the view that tribal people are backward Hindus differing only in degrees from the other segments of Hindu society.
- Both the tribes and the castes for cremation or burial for the disposal of the dead body.

In contrast to the above views,

- Andre Beteille regards that there are certain common differences between tribes and castes. She argues that while a caste society is hierarchical, the tribal society is egalitarian.

- Max Weber says that a tribe is a local group because its significance lies mainly on its territory. On the other hand, when a tribe loses its territorial existence, it becomes a caste. In that way, a caste is a social group.
- According to Bailey, the caste members have a definite profession because their functions are already determined by the society, whereas the members of a tribe can take up any profession that they wish to. Their occupation is not fixed.
- D.N. Majumdar holds that while the Hindu rituals are quite unfamiliar to the tribals, they are a necessary part of religion in the caste system.

The tribals and the caste Hindus have been in constant contact for years. This contact has had an influence on both the communities. But the extent of contact and the nature of participation of both the groups have been different in different regions. In most cases, it is the tribals who have been more influenced because ethnographic records have established that most of the lower caste Hindus now, are converts from the tribal strata. Most of them have been found to completely assimilate into the caste system.

The tribes and the castes do not form the two different ends of the interaction because there is a considerable overlapping in between the two.

8.3.2 Regional variation in tribe-caste interaction

The tribe-caste interaction varies in different regions. Many tribes adopted certain traits of the regional Hindus into their traditional cultures in order to assimilate into the Hindu caste system. But despite this practice of assimilation, they have failed to occupy any rank in the hierarchy. However, some others have integrated into the system and have been accepted as a member of the lower caste. In some cases, the tribes have also been accepted among the twice born castes. For example, the two tribes of the Central Himalayan, i.e. Tharu and Khasa, have been accepted as Kshatriyas. They have continued to practice the ways of life and

culture based on the Rajputs and the Brahmins living in the nearby areas. They have not only had long and continuous social connections with the regional Hindu castes of the plains, but have also adopted Hindu names. Thus, they have been gradually given the status of Rajput castes.

Many tribes are also seen to enter into jajmani relationships. For example, the Oraons of Chhota Nagpur are the aboriginal tribes of the region. They call themselves Kurukh and speak a Dravidian language similar to *Gondi*. Like the Hindu castes, the Oraons also follow a significant social-economic relationship with other tribes. The Oraons, are in need of the servicing castes or the kamins. Therefore, the Julahas and Turis supply them clothes and earthenware pots and tiles for roofing, the Lohars supply and repair the iron implements and the Ahirs tend their cattle. Many other tribes such as the Mahlis, the Koras, the Banjaras, the Baigas, etc. serve the tribes and casts of Chhota Nagpur and have jajmani relations with them. Such kind of jajmani relations also existed between the tribals of the Nilgiri Hills. This shows that there exists a considerable interaction between the tribes and the castes, however the nature and extent of tribe-caste interaction varies from region to region.

8.3.3 Constitutional Provisions

During the British rule, the administration was only concerned with the revenue and regulation of land in the tribal areas. They tribals were otherwise left to live in isolation. It was only after Independence that the government initiated various welfare measures for the development of these people. Since equality and justice are the ideals of the Indian Constitution, it has sought to protect the weaker sections of the society, especially the backward classes like the Scheduled tribes, from any kind of discrimination based on race, color, place of birth or religion. Therefore, the Constitution provided them with certain special provisions which are intended to aid them in their development and welfare. The protective rights provided by the Indian Constitution can be classified under the following heads.

- Educational and Cultural Rights [Articles 15 (4), 29, 46 and 350]
 - Art. 15(4): This allows the state to make special laws for relaxation of minimum qualifying marks for admission of SCs/STs.
 - Art. 29: This clause gives the right to any section of the citizens residing in any part of the country, to preserve and practice their own language, culture or script through educational institutions.
 - Art. 46: it empowers the state to promote education and economic interest of the weaker sections of the society, especially the SCs/STs, with special care. It also protects them from social injustices and all forms of exploitation.
 - Art. 350: This gives every person the right to submit a representation for the redressal of grievance to any officer or authority of the Union or State in any of the languages used in the Union or in the States as the case may be.
- Social Rights (Articles 23 and 24)
 - Art. 23: This prohibits the system of bonded labor.
 - Art. 24: It prohibits employment of children below 14 years of age in any hazardous services or factories.
- Economic Rights (Articles 244 and 275)
 - Art. 244: It deals with the administration of Scheduled Areas or Tribal Areas.
 - Art. 275: It empowers the parliament to make special grants given to the states which undertakes schemes of development for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the scheduled tribes or raising the level of administration of the scheduled areas.
- Political Rights [Articles 164 (1), 243, 330, 334 and 371]
 - Art. 164 (1): This gives the power to the State to establish a special ministry for Scheduled Tribes in the States like Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, etc.

- Articles 243, 330 and 334: These deal with the reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha and the Panchayats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Art. 371: This deals with the special provisions with respect to the North-eastern States.

In a significant Judgement, a five judge bench of the Supreme Court held that a person belonging to ST/SC, bearing the same nomenclature (name) in two states, is entitled to the rights, privileges and benefits only in the state of his origin but not entitled to those rights and benefits in other states though they are specified in the SC/ST list of the State (Articles. 341 and 342).

- Employment Rights of the Tribals [Articles 15 (4), 16 (4, 4A)]
 - Art. 15 (4): This provides reservations to the STs in educational institutions.
 - Art. 16 (4 and 4A): This provides reservations to the STs in employment and also in promotions.

Along with these, the Fifth and the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution also deals with provisions provided for the welfare of the SCs/STs. The fifth schedule of the Indian Constitution contains the provisions relating to the administration and control of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in any State, other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. Accordingly, under the Sixth schedule, the provisions relating to the administration of the tribal areas in the state of Assam, is present. It also provides for the provision of forming autonomous districts and regions. Again, according to Art. 244 (A), the Parliament has the power to form an autonomous region in the State of Assam which comprises of tribal areas. It also has the power to create local legislatures or Council of Ministers for such States.

With the 89th Amendment of the Constitution in 2003, a new Article (338A) has been added to Art. 338. According to the amended Article, a national Commission for the STs was established. The Commission consists a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and three other

members. All of them are appointed by the President. The duty of the Commission is to investigate and evaluate the matters relating to the safeguards of STs under the Constitution. They are supposed to check whether the safeguards are working properly or not. They also have to present a report to the President upon the workings of the safeguard, annually or at such other times when the Commission deems fit. It is the duty of the Commission to inquire into the complaints of the STs with respect to the deprivation of their rights or safeguards. They also make recommendations on the measures that can be taken by the Centre or the States for the effective implementation of those safeguards. Other measure for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the STs can also be recommended by the Commission. According to Art. 339 (1), the President may, at any time, and shall at the expiration of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution, appoint a Commission to report on the administration of Scheduled areas and Scheduled Tribes in the State.

8.4 CONCLUSION

The list of provisions provided for the tribals signify that the government, both state and Central, have taken ample interest in the welfare programs and schemes, but very mediocre result has been received out of those attempts. Most of the tribal communities still remain in the periphery with respect to all the facilities of a civilized world like access to improved technology, education and so on. Despite various plans and programs, they still have not achieved a socially and economically improved status in the society. Even the Sixth Five Year Plan document notes that “three decades of development have not had the desired impact on the socially, economically and educationally handicapped section.” In fact, till the recent Plan too, things have not improved radically. The reason for such an ineffective result is due to lack of trained management, lack of preparedness for large investments, procedural delays, deficiency in accounting systems, lack of proper monitoring and evaluation and inadequacy in administrative machinery. In order to get better results out of the schemes implemented,

there has to be a strong political will and bureaucratic commitment in the administrators. Moreover, instead of using political policies while preparing the list of Scheduled Tribes, the economic, social, cultural criteria must be considered. Unless and until the political interference is minimized, these welfare programs and policies will never procure satisfactory results. A detailed study on the individual problems of the tribal communities also should be done so that it brings out long standing solutions. The objective of these studies should be not only to bring a panacea to these issues but also to help the tribal communities maintain their cultural ethos.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Name a few tribes found in India.

Q2: Write one similarity between a tribe and a caste.

Q3: Write one different between a tribe and a caste.

Q4: According to 2001 census, what was the percentage of tribes in india, of its total population?

Q5: Write one of the definitions of tribe.



8.5 LET US SUM UP

- India is the homestead of a numerous indigenous tribes. Most of these tribes are socially and economically backward.

- While some tribal communities have adopted the mainstream way of life, at the other end of the spectrum, there are certain Scheduled Tribes who are still characterized by pre-agricultural level of technology, stagnant or declining population, extremely low literacy and subsistence level of economy.
- Article 366 (25) of the constitution defines scheduled tribes as “such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of the Constitution”.
- The Scheduled Tribes are notified in 30 States/Union Territories and the number of individual ethnic groups notified as Scheduled Tribes constitute around 705 in number.
- Since the Scheduled Tribes have lot of socio-economic problems, therefore the constitution has provided them with certain provisions for the welfare of their community.



8.6 FURTHER READING

1. Bhushan, Vidya and D.R. Sachdeva. *An Introduction to Sociology*. Kitab Mahal, 2014, Print.
2. “Sociology Guide-A Student’s Guide to Sociology”, 2017, Web.<http://www.sociologyguide.com/tribal-society/tribal-caste-continuum.php>.
3. Kumar, B.B. “Tribe-Caste Continuum”, *Dialogue: A Quarterly Journal of Asha Bharati* 1.1 (July-Sep. 1999). Web. http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_July99/bbk.htm.

8.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Bhils, Khasis, Gonds, Ao, Angami, Apatani, Adivasis, , etc

Ans to Q No 2: Both tribes and castes practice endogamy, but within the clan or gotra they practice exogamy.

Ans to Q No 3: A caste society is hierarchical, but the tribal society is egalitarian.

Ans to Q No 4: Ans: 8.6%

Ans to Q No 5: D. N. Mazumdar defines a tribe as “a collection of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligation.”



8.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: Mention the important constitutional provisions laid out for the welfare of the tribal population.

B) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1: What do you understand by the term “tribe”? Give a brief description of its characteristics.

Q2: Do you think the process of social mobility in a caste system also affected the tribals? If so, how?





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