



Block 3
Interrogating Indian Society-II

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BLOCK 3 INTRODUCTION

In **block 3, Interrogating Indian Society II** we will present to you the detailed discussion and analyses of social institutions, such as, Family, Marriage and Kinship, Religion and Society, Race and Ethnicity, Polity and Society, and finally, Economy and Society. In all these discussions in different units, we have tried to explain these different institutions of society and the changes that have shaped them from time to time.



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UNIT 10 FAMILY, MARRIAGE AND KINSHIP*

Structure

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10.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- define the concept of family, marriage and kinship;
- list the main characteristics of family, marriage and kinship;
- discuss the functions of family;
- explain the significance of marriage;
- describe the rules of marriage and degree of kinship; and
- discuss the types of family and marriage found in India.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Block, Interrogating Indian Society-I, you learnt about the aspects of Indian Society, such as, caste, tribes, village, town and city, agrarian classes

* Adapted from ESO-12, Society in India by Archana Singh

and Industry and Labour. Here in this Block, Interrogating Indian Society-II; we are going to further explain to you some more aspects of, Indian society such as, family, marriage and kinship, religion and society, etc.

The present unit focuses on the major social institutions of all societies like, family, marriage and kinship. A student of sociology knows that these three institutions are at the core of all communities; learning about the main characteristics of these institutions; their definitions and social significance becomes a must to understand any society, especially society in India.

10.2 THE INSTITUTION OF FAMILY

The word 'family' has been taken from the Roman word, 'famulus', which means a servant and the Latin word 'familia' meaning 'household'. In Roman law, the word denotes the group of producers and slaves and other servants as well as members connected by common descent. The family is one of the most primary groups in society. The family is a universal and the oldest among the other social institutions. The family is an institution in this sense that it gives the framework of relationship which is guided by certain rules and procedures which are at the root of the family. The meaning of family we can understand better by understanding the following definitions:

- i) Family is a more or less durable association of husband and wife with or without children.
- ii) It is a group of persons whose relations to one another are based upon consanguinity (i.e. those kins who are related by blood, such as, mother and child) and who are therefore kin to one another.
- iii) Family is a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children.
- iv) It is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction.
- v) Family is a biological social unit composed of husband, wife and children.
- vi) Family is the basic primary group and the natural matrix of personality.
- vii) Family is a system of relationships existing between parents and children.

Broadly speaking, it refers to the group comprising parents and children. It may also refer, in some places, to a patri-or matrilineage or to groups of cognates, that is, persons descended from the same ancestor. In some other cases, it may refer to a group of relatives and their dependants forming one household. All this refers to the compositional aspect of this institution. Another aspect is that of the residence of its members. They usually share a common residence, at least for some part of their lives. Thirdly, we can also speak of the relational aspect of the family. Members have reciprocal rights and duties towards each other. Finally, the family is also an agent of socialization. All these aspects make this institution different from other units of social structure.

Family is one of the most important social institutions. Most of the world's population lives in family units. The specific form and behavior patterns found within a family have shown variations through time across countries of the world and even within a country. Sociology looks at the institution both in terms of an

ideal type and a reality. He/she ascertains the ideals of the family system partly a set of norms which are passed from one generation to another. A sociologist also studies the actual way in which a family is patterned and re-patterned within a society, in a particular group through time. She will also try to identify the forces, which have been responsible for changing certain aspects of the family units in a particular manner. (IGNOU: 2017 ESO-12, Family, Marriage and Kinship, Pg. 6)

10.2.1 Salient Features of Family

The salient features or characteristics of the family in society are as follows:

- i) **Universality:** Family is a universal social unit and existed in every age and in every society. Every person is a member of one family or the other.
- ii) **Financial Provision:** Every family makes some kind of financial provision so that all the basic requirements of the family can be met of the members of family.
- iii) **Limited Size and Nucleus:** Family is considered to be smallest kinship group and basically made up of a husband, wife and their unmarried children. It is limited in size and its membership is confined to those who are related by either marriage (these are also referred to as affianes or by blood ties (called consanguine). There are joint families or extended families, as well, which have at least three generations of parents and their children along with their own elderly parents and sons and their spouses living together.
- iv) **Emotional Basis:** The members of family are emotionally bound to each other and share pleasures and pains with one another. The integration of bonds in a family is mutual affection and blood ties and they provide love, care and protection to each other.
- v) **Social Regulations:** In a family, the members are trained through socialization to follow social norms, customs and social conduct in the



Nuclear Family



Joint Family

process of socialization. Among the family members interrelationship and interactions are guided by social and legal regulations.

- vi) The nuclear family of husband wife and their unmarried children grow into a joint family when the children grow up and get married and have their own children. The family then becomes joint till the children leave or parents die.
- vii) A Fixed or common Habitation: Every family has a fixed place of habitation and members usually share a common residence in which husband, wife, their children and other relatives live together.

10.2.2 Functions of Family

Sociologists have tried to divide functions of family differently. Ogburn and Nimkoff divided function of family into six categories. These six categories are:

- 1) Affectional function, 2) Economic function, 3) Recreational function, 4) Protective function, 5) Religious function, and 6) Educational function.

These functions are:

- 1) Satisfaction of sex needs or Biological Functions – The first and foremost biological functions of family is the satisfaction of sexual desire in a greater degree between husband and wife in an orderly and socially approved manner.
- 2) Production and rearing of children – The next important biological function of family is procreation. Family is an institution par excellence for rearing of children and gets a new generation which inherits the family legacy.
- 3) Provision of home and minimum basic facilities or Economic Function – Family fulfils some basic facilities and needs of its members to a certain extent by providing them food, clothing and shelter.
- 4) Giving love and sympathy or Psychological Function – All members of family are supposed to provide each other emotional support, sympathetic and caring attitude, stability and security to its members. For example, children require love and affection from their parents, husband and wife want love from each other, love and affection to the elderly from the family members and so on.
- 5) Socialization – The most important function of family is socialization. Through the family, a child is able to learn language, customs, traditions, etiquette, norms and value, beliefs and social roles of the society. It is the family that socializes the new generation and transmits the moral ideas of group to its members.
- 6) Protection of young – The essential function of family is to protect and give physical care to every member formally right from the new-born baby to the elderly without their facing any risk and danger.

10.3 TYPES OF FAMILY

Normally the basic unit of social structure contains the two primary links of kinship. These are of parenthood and siblingship (see Figure 10.0). In simple

terms, a family usually comprises various combinations and permutations of these relationships. In the Indian context, we generally speak of the contrast between nuclear and joint family types.

A classification of families into joint and nuclear types is usually based on the way in which families are organised. For instance, the most popular definition of a nuclear family is to refer to it as a group consisting of a man, his wife and their unmarried children. The joint family is commonly defined as the nuclear family plus all kin belonging to the side of husband, and/or wife living in one homestead.

Frequently, the term 'extended' family is used instead of the term joint family to indicate that the combination of two or more nuclear families is based on an extension of the parent-child relationship. Thus, the patrilineally extended family is based on an extension of the father-son relationship, while the matrilineally extended family is based on the mother-daughter relationship. The extended family may also be extended horizontally to include a group consisting of two or more brothers their wives and children. This horizontally extended family is called as the fraternal or collateral family.

In India, the family whether extended vertically and/or horizontally is called the joint family, which is strictly speaking also a property-sharing unit. Thus, the concept of joint family in India has legal and other references as well. This will be discussed further in the following sections.

10.3.1 Nuclear and Joint Family

The above definitions of the nuclear and the joint family are limited in the sense that they do not say anything more than the compositional aspect of the family. When we look at the wide variations through time in patterns of family living based on region, religion, caste and class in India we find that the nuclear and the joint family organisation cannot be viewed as two distinct, isolated and independent units but as a continuum, as something interrelated in a developmental cycle.

10.3.2 The Continuum of Nuclear and Joint Family Systems

We say that the nuclear and the joint family systems have to be viewed as a continuum. This means that these two types of family systems have to be looked at as something interrelated in a developmental cycle. The structure of a family changes over a time period in terms of size, composition, role and status of persons, the family and societal norms and sanctions. There probably is rarely a family in India, which remains perpetually nuclear in composition. Often additional members like an aged parent or unmarried brothers and sisters may come to live with a man, his wife and unmarried children. The nuclear family then, is a stage in a cycle with other structural types of families. Even when certain forces have enjoined the establishment of nuclear household, for a relatively long period of time, the ritual, economic and sentimental link with relatives who compose a joint family are often maintained. We shall discuss about these forces and impact of these forces in the next section.

While discussing the nature of nuclear family in India, Pauline Kolenda (1987) has discussed additions/modifications in nuclear family structure. She gives the following compositional categories.

- i) **Nuclear family** refers to a couple with or without children.
- ii) **Supplemented nuclear family** indicates a nuclear family plus one or more unmarried, separated, or widowed relatives of the parents, other than their unmarried children.
- iii) **Subnuclear family** is identified as a fragment of a former nuclear family for instance a widow/widower with her/his unmarried children or siblings (unmarried or widowed or separated or divorced) living together.
- iv) **Single person household**
- v) **Supplemented subnuclear family** refers to a group of relatives, members of a formerly complete nuclear family along with some other unmarried, divorced or widowed relative who was not a member of the nuclear family. For instance, a widow and her unmarried children may be living together with her widowed mother-in-law. In the Indian context, it is easy to find all these types of family. However, in terms of societal norms and values, these types relate to the joint family system.

Much has been written about the joint family system, especially the Hindu joint family system. The **patrilineal, patrilocal** (residence of the couple after marriage in the husband's father's home), property owning, co-residential and commensal joint family, comprising three or more generations has been depicted as the ideal family unit of Hindu society. M.S. Gore (1968: 4-5) points out that ideally, the joint family consists of a man and his wife and their adult sons, their wives and children, and younger children of the paternal couple. In this ideal type the oldest male is the head of the family. The rights and duties in this type of family are laid down to a great extent by the hierarchical order of power and authority. Age and sex are the main ordering principles of family hierarchy. The frequency and the nature of contact/communication between members vary on the basis of sex. A married woman, for instance works in the kitchen with her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law. Younger members are required to show respect to the older members and can hardly question the authority or decision taken by elders even when it directly concerns them. Children of the joint family are children of all the male members in the parental generation.

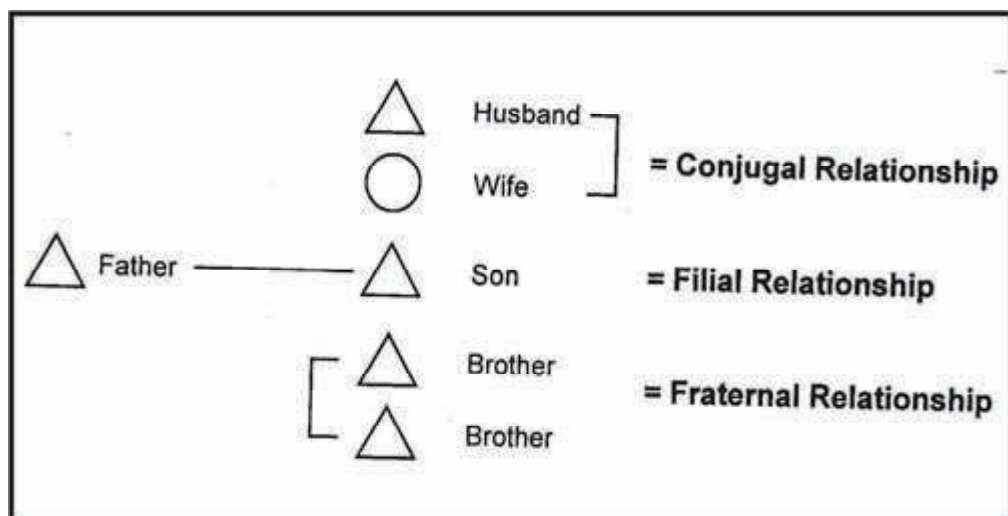


Fig. 10.0: Family relationships

Emphasis on conjugal ties (i.e. between husband and wife) is supposed to weaken the stability of the joint family. The father-son relationship (filial relationship) and the relationship between brothers (fraternal relationship) are more crucial for the joint family system than the husband-wife or conjugal relationship. The conjugal, filial and fraternal relationships can be expressed in simple kinship diagrams in figure 10.0: family relationships.

In a nuclear family the husband and wife relationship is important for the survival of the system. Hence, in M.S. Gore’s view, it would be inappropriate to look at the joint family system as a collection of nuclear families. Having said that joint families are not merely a collection of nuclear families we must examine what constitutes jointness. For this purpose, in a separate section we will discuss the nature of joint family in India. This will also make it clear how and why Indian society has a continuum of nuclear and joint family systems and not two distinct forms of nuclear and joint family.

Check Your Progress I

- i) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark T for true or F for false against each statement.
 - a) Joint family in India constitutes a mere collection of nuclear families.
 - b) The nuclear and the joint family can be looked at as a continuum in terms of a developmental cycle.
- ii) List the four major additions/modifications in the nuclear family structure, as suggested by Kolenda.

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Nature of Joint Family in India

There are two aspects of joint family system in India based on

- i) What constitutes jointness?
- ii) Who constitutes a joint family?

Both the sub-sections will show us how the seemingly nuclear families in India are actually parts of larger family groups, which share the idea of ‘jointness’.

What Constitutes Jointness?

Let us look at what is jointly shared by the members of a joint family. Their jointness is reflected in the factors of **commensality**, common residence, joint ownership of property, cooperation and sentiment of jointness, ritual bonds like worship of common deity. We shall discuss them one by one.

- i) **Commensality:** Most of the studies of joint family use commensality (eating together) as a defining criterion. The joint family is the hearth group; members cook and eat food from the same kitchen.
- ii) **Common Residence:** In some studies the joint family as the residential family group is stressed. Though it is possible to find a joint family having the same hearth but not sharing the same dwelling or vice versa, by and large commensality and common residence are taken as essential ingredients of jointness (refer to Cohn 1961, Dube 1955, Mukherjee 1969, Kolenda 1968).
- iii) **Joint Ownership of Property:** Some scholars have regarded joint ownership of property or **coparcenary** as the essence of jointness, irrespective of the type of residence and commensality. In legal terms, this is the most crucial factor used for defining a joint family.
- iv) **Cooperation and Sentiment:** Scholars like I.P. Desai (1964) and K. M. Kapadia (1958) point out that jointness should be looked in functional terms. A functionally joint family lays stress on fulfilment of obligations towards kin.

A patrilineal joint family may consist of a number of households headed by males related through the father. They may be located even at distant places and may not even have property in common. But what is common is that they identify themselves as members of a particular 'family', cooperate in rituals and ceremonies, render financial and other kinds of help; and they cherish a common family sentiment and abide by the norms of joint living.

- v) **Ritual Bonds:** The ritual bonds of a joint family are considered to be an important component of jointness. A joint family, thus, is bound together by periodic propitiation of the dead ancestors. The members perform a '*shraddha*' ceremony in which the senior male member of the joint family propitiates his dead father's or mother's spirit, offering it the '*pinda*' (balls of cooked rice) on behalf of all the members.

Another ritual bond among joint family members can be a common deity worship. In many parts of South India, each joint family has a tradition of worshipping a particular clan or village deity. Vows are made to these deities in times of joy and trouble. The first tonsure, donning of the sacred thread, marriages etc. are celebrated in or near the deity's temple. Srinivasa of Tirupathi and Subramanya of Palani are two well-known Hindu deities who have a large number of South Indian families attached to them (Srinivas 1969:71).

Still another important bond is pollution. Birth and death results in pollution and the group observing pollution consists of the members of the joint family, patrilineal or **matrilineal**. The bonds created by ancestor worship, family deities and observation of pollution persist even after the joint family has split into separate or smaller residential and commensal units (Srinivas 1969: 71).

From the above discussion of joint family it becomes clear that common kitchen or hearth, common residence, joint rights to property and the fulfillment of obligation towards kin and ritual bonds have been outlined as the main criteria for defining what constitutes jointness. Many scholars have pointed out that of

these dimensions, co-residence and commensality, are the immediately identifiable characteristics of a joint family. Such a consideration, they feel, would also accommodate family patterns found in non-Hindu communities like the Muslims, Christians, etc. It would also accommodate families, which hardly have anything by way of ancestral or immovable property (Dube 1974).

Who Constitute a Joint Family?

We can look at this issue in terms of

- i) kin relationship between the members
- ii) the number of generations in one unit
- iii) the sharing of common property.

i) Kin Relationship between the Members

We can say that a joint family may consist of members related lineally or collaterally or both. There is more or less an unanimous agreement that a family is essentially defined as “joint” only if it includes two or more related married couples. Also it has been observed that these couples may be related (i) lineally (usually in a father-son relationship or occasionally in a father-daughter relationship), or, (ii) collaterally (usually in a brother-brother relationship/or/ occasionally in a brother-sister relationship). Both these types refer to the compositional aspect of the patrilineal joint family. In matrilineal systems, found in South-west and North-east India, the family is usually composed of a woman, her mother and her married and unmarried daughters. The mother’s brother is also an important member of the family; he is the manager of the matrilineal joint family affairs. The husbands of the female members live with them. In Kerala, a husband used to be a frequent visitor to the wife’s household and he lived in his mother’s household.

Pauline Kolenda (1987: 11-2) presents the following types of joint family on the basis of the relatives who are its members.

- a) **Collateral joint family:** It comprises two or more married couples between whom there is a sibling bond. In this type, usually a brother and his wife and another brother and his wife live together with unmarried children.
- b) **Supplemented collateral joint family:** It is a collateral joint family along with unmarried, divorced or widowed relatives. The supplemented relatives are generally the widowed mother of the married brothers or the widower father, or an unmarried sibling.
- c) **Lineal joint family:** Two couples, between whom there is a lineal link, like between a parent and his married son or some times between a parent and his married daughter, live together.
- d) **Supplemented lineal joint family:** It is a lineal joint family together with unmarried, divorced or widowed relatives who do not belong to either of the lineally linked nuclear families; for example, the father’s widower brother or the son’s wife’s unmarried brother or sister.
- e) **Lineal collateral joint family:** In this type three or more couples are linked lineally and collaterally. For instance we can have a family consisting of

parents and their two or more married sons together with the unmarried children of the couples.

- f) **Supplemented lineal - collateral joint family:** In this type are found a lineal collateral joint family plus unmarried, widowed, separated relatives who belong to one of the nuclear families (lineally and collaterally linked), for example, the father's widowed sister or brother or an unmarried nephew of the father.

Activity 1

Classify fifteen families in your neighbourhood into the categories in terms of the relatives who compose it.

ii) **The Number of Generations in One Unit**

A joint family is also seen in terms of generations present in it. Some researchers, like I.P. Desai (1964) and T.N. Madan (1965) emphasise that the number of generations present in a family is important for identifying a joint family. A joint family is commonly defined as a three generational family. For instance a man, his married son and his grand children constitute a joint family.

The Sharing of Common Property

Researchers, like F.G. Bailey (1963), T.N. Madan (1961), have advocated the limitation of the term joint family to a group of relatives who form a property owning group, the coparcenary family. M.S. Gore (1968), for instance, defines a joint family as a group consisting of adult male coparceners and their dependants. The wives and young children of these male members are the dependents.

The female members have not been included in the category of the coparcenary. They have rights of residence and maintenance only as dependents. In 1937 an attempt was made to confer the same right, i.e., the right of inheritance of property on a Hindu widow as her son would have in the estate of her deceased husband. The Act enabled her to enjoy the income only from the immovable property of her husband during her lifetime.

Until the passing of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, two systems of inheritance dominated among patrilineal Hindus. In one system (called the Mitakshara school, adopted in most regions) a son has a vested interest in his father's ancestral property from the moment of his birth. The father cannot give away any part of this property to the detriment of his son's interest. Under the other system (the Dayabaga school, adopted in Bengal and Assam) the father is the absolute owner of his share and has a right to alienate his property the way he wants.

Among the patrilineal Hindus, some movable property is given to the daughters at the time of marriage as *stridhana*. With the passing of the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, a uniform system of inheritance has been established. The individual property of a male Hindu, dying intestate (having made no will), passes in equal shares between his son, daughter, widow and mother. Male and female heirs have come to be treated as equal in matters of inheritance and succession. Another important feature of the Act is that any property possessed by a female Hindu is

held by her as her absolute property and she has full power to deal with it the way she likes. This Act has also given a woman the right to inherit from the father as well as from the husband. However the benefit conferred on a woman is limited when compared to the rights of the male members who still have rights to coparcenary ancestral property by birth. Daughters are not part of the coparcenary and have no birthrights.

The difficulty of looking at joint family as a coparcenary family unit is that it does not take into account those joint families, which possess little in the form of immovable or moveable property.

Variability in and Prevalence of Joint Family Living

i) **Variability:** We identified a joint family in terms of what is shared and who shares it. We went through this exercise in this manner so that we can identify and analyse the multitude of factors that make a joint family. But we must remember that a joint family is a composite whole of both the “who and what” components. The exact composition or members and what is actually shared by these members in a particular family will vary through time and will also vary between families.

The following factors relating to the compositional aspect explain these variations within a family and between families:

- a) **The culturally patterned time of break-up:** It differs across caste, community and region. The time, when a married son or brother breaks away to form a separate residential and commensal unit, may vary within a family and between families.
- b) **Demographic profiles:** Based on such factors like average life expectancy, average age at marriage, average number of children born per couple, age of father at the birth of various children etc., we will again find variation in the pattern of joint family living.
- c) **The influence of education, spatial mobility and diversification of occupation** also bring about variation (CSWI 1974: 59).

ii) **Prevalence:** By comparing seventy six studies which included family types across villages, caste communities and other population, Pauline Kolenda (1987: 78) outlined the pattern of prevalence of joint family in India. She observed that (a) joint family both lineal and collateral was more characteristic of higher twice-born castes and least characteristic among the economically poor and the erstwhile untouchables, (b) there are regional differences in the proportion of joint families. For instance, the Gangetic plains showed higher incidence of joint families than Central India, i.e., in Madhya Pradesh, Western Rajasthan, parts of Maharashtra, and (c) there seem to be differences in the customary time of break-up of the joint family in various groups and places in India.

In conclusion, we can say that there is something like a patterned cycle of rearrangement of family living through time. As mentioned before, the family in India has to be viewed as a process, in terms of a developmental cycle. Some studies have described the Indian family types as stages in a family cycle (Desai 1964, Madan 1965, Cohn 1961).

Check Your Progress II

- i) List out the five criteria of jointness. Use two lines for your answer.

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- ii) Name in three lines, the six major types of joint family structures as shown by Kolenda.

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Emerging Patterns of Family Living

Today there are varied patterns of family living. In urban areas both male and female members of the family may go for gainful employment outside the home. In some families the parents of the husband may live with his wife and children. While in some others, members of the wife's family may be living with the couple and their children. With both the husband and the wife going outside the home for gainful employment and with the absence or limited availability of child care facilities, presence of kin members to look after the home and children comes handy for the smooth functioning of the household. Those working couples who prefer to live in nuclear families and who fear or resist interference from kin members, try to organise their household with professional help from outside the family (like cooks, maid servants, crèches).

Aged parents, who formerly used to look towards their eldest son or other sons for support in old age, are now adjusting themselves to the new demands of family life by making economic provisions for their old age. Even within a city parents and married sons may reside separately. Another trend in family life in India is that girls are prepared to support their parent in old age, and it is not impossible to find a widowed mother or parents staying with a married daughter (mainly, in the absence of sons) to help her to manage the household. Measures have been provided at the legal level to ensure that dependant old parents are looked after by a daughter if she is self-reliant even after her marriage. Bilateral kinship relations are more and more recognised and accepted today in many nuclear households in the cities.

Besides the above aspects, emerging patterns of family living include instances of domestic violence, utter lack of social and physical security for unmarried women (see Jain 1996a: 7).

Check Your Progress III

- i) What is meant by the cyclical view of family? Use three lines for your answer.
- ii) List in three lines some of the factors, which have negatively affected the joint family system.
- iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Make a T for true or F for false against each statement.
 - a) Migration from a village to a city has affected the size of the families in which this migration occurred.
 - b) A joint family is totally dysfunctional in industrial towns and cities.
 - c) The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 gave women the right to inherit a share of the parental property.

10.4 THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is one of the universal social institutions like that of the family. The institution of marriage and family is closely connected and complementary to each other. Marriage is the institution established by the human society to control and regulate the sex life of man in a legal and customary manner. It has different implications in different cultures. The nature, types and functions of marriage may differ from society to society, but it is present everywhere as an institution.

10.4.1 Meaning and Definition of Marriage

The Collins dictionary of sociology mention that marriage is a socially acknowledge and sometimes legally ratified union between an adult male and adult female. Many sociologists have defined marriage in different perspective. According to Horton and Hunt, “Marriage is the approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish a family”. Malinowski says that marriage is a contract for the production and maintenance of children. Edward Westermarck defines marriage as a relation of one or more men to one or more women which is recognized by custom or law; and involves certain rights and duties both in the case of parties entering the union and the children born of it. Lundberg says that marriage consists of the rule and regulations which define the rights, duties and privileges of husband and wife, with respect to each other. Harry M. Johnson defines marriage as a stable relationship in which a man and woman are socially permitted, without loss of standing in the community, to have children. Mark and Young have said that marriage is the institution or set of norms which determines the particular relation of harmony to each other and to their children.

10.4.2 Universality of Marriage in India

Marriage is an important social institution. It is a relationship, which is socially approved. The relationship is defined and sanctioned by custom and law. The definition of the relationship includes not only guidelines for behaviour relating to sex but also regarding things like the particular way labour is to be divided and other duties and privileges. Children born of marriage are considered the legitimate offspring of the married couple. This legitimacy is important in the matter of inheritance and succession. Thus marriage is not only a means of

sexual gratification but also a set of cultural mechanisms to ensure the continuation of the family. It is more or less a universal social institution in India.

The religious texts of many communities in India have outlined the purpose, rights and duties involved in marriage. Among the Hindus, for instance, marriage is regarded as a socio-religious duty. Ancient Hindu texts point out three main aims of marriage. These are *dharma* (duty), *praja* (progeny) and *rati* (sensual pleasure). That is to say that marriage is significant from both the societal as well as the individual's point of view. Marriage is significant in that it provides children especially sons who would not only carry on the family name but also perform periodic rituals including the annual "*shraddha*" to propitiate the dead ancestors. Majority of the Hindus look upon son(s) as a support in old age to parents and as the most important source of economic enrichment to the family. Marriage, in the Hindu system, enables a man to enter into the stage of a householder. Both a man and a woman are regarded incomplete without marriage. Even among other communities in India, marriage is regarded as an essential obligation. Islam looks upon marriage as "*sunnah*" (an obligation) which must be fulfilled by every Muslim. Christianity holds marriage as crucial to life and lays emphasis on the establishment of a mutual relationship between husband and wife and on their duty to each other.

The significance attached to marriage is reflected in the fact that only a very small per centage of men and women remain unmarried. The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI 1974: 81) has indicated that only 0.5 percent of women never marry in India. By and large girls are brought up to believe that marriage is a woman's destiny; married state is desirable and motherhood is a cherished achievement. Only a very small percentage of men and women remain unmarried by choice. Goals of marriage are, however, undergoing changes especially for the urban and educated sections of the population. The older notions regarding large size family, (i.e., large number of children especially sons being the source of status for parents) are being replaced by preference for small size family. Marriage for self-fulfillment rather than primarily for procreation or societal welfare is also becoming prevalent. (IGNOU 2017 (reprint), ESO-12 Society in India, Block 2, Family, Marriage and Kinship, pg. 23)

10.4.3 Rules of Spouse Selection in Marriage

Every society lays down certain rules to select their life-partners or not allowed to marry whomsoever they want. Members have to abide by the prohibitive and prescriptive rules of marriage while selecting their marital partner. Some such rules are discussed here:

1) Prohibitive Rules

Prohibitive rules are those which put restriction on men and women from entering into marital alliance with a certain category of people. Some of such rules are as follows: Some of such rules are as follows:

- a) **Endogamy:** According to Hoebel, endogamy is a social rule that requires a person to marry within a defined social group of which he is a member. Endogamy is a rule of marriage in which the life-partner

become outside the group is prohibited. Marriage is allowed only within the group, and the group may be caste, class, tribe, race, village, religious group, etc.

The purpose of endogamy are for example, to maintain racial purity, geographical separation, religious differences, cultural differences, sense of superiority or inferiority, the policy of separation, the desire to keep wealth within the group, etc.

- b) **Exogamy:** According to Hoebel, exogamy is a social rule that prohibits a person from marrying within a defined social group of which she or/ he is a member". It is the opposite form of endogamy rule. Exogamy is the practice of marriage in which an individual has to marry someone outside his or her own group. Every community prohibits its members from having marital relationship within the group. Exogamy marriage assumes various forms in Hindu of India such as gotra and sapinda. Gotra refers to a group of families which share or a common mythical marital ancestor and common blood relatives from the parental side. One marrying outside one's own 'gotra' is called gotra exogamy. Sapinda means that persons cannot inter-marry of seven generations on the father's side and five on the mother's side. In some areas of India, such as, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar etc. a girl and boy from the same village are not permitted to marry because the village is considered to be one unit and they have practice of marrying outside their village.
- c) **Incest Taboo:** Prohibition of sex or marital relationship between two persons, who are related to each other by blood ties or, who belong to same family is called incest taboo. In every society, marriage of father-daughter, mother-son, and brother-sister is prohibited. Amongst Hindu, marriage among close kins such as prohibited in North India but in the South it is prescribed to some extent.
- d) **Hypergamy (Anuloma):** It is that form of marriage in which a boy from upper caste can marry a girl from lower caste. Thus, a Brahmin boy can marry from any lower caste or Varna girl.
- e) **Hypogamy (Pratiloma):** It is that form of marriage in which a boy from lower caste marries a girl from higher caste. In traditional society such marriage were not encouraged or preferred. Hence, it was not possible for a Brahmin girl to marry a boy from lower caste or Varna and get acceptance from society.

Box 10.2

In 1980 the government of India began to take notice of the issue of dowry as oppression against women and took legal action against it. In December 1983 the Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act was passed. Section 498-A was added to the Indian Penal Code. Under this Act cruelty to a wife was made a cognizable non-bailable offence, punishable up to three year imprisonment, and a fine. Section 113-A of the Evidence Act was amended so that court could draw in inference of abetment to suicide (which most dowry deaths are claimed to be) under section 174 of the Criminal Procedure Code. (IGNOU: 2000, WED Programme, WED-01, pp. 34)

2) Preferential or Prescriptive Rules

The rules of exogamy and endogamy may be preferential or prescriptive which give preference to certain types of alliances over other. In certain cases, the individual may choose a marriage partner within a particular kin group or he may be bound to choose only one such kin. Such type of custom which prescribe as to whom one should marry or prefer to marry are called prescriptive rules. Some of these prescriptive rules are as follow:

- 1) **Cross cousin marriage:** The marriage of two individuals who are the children of siblings of opposite sex i.e. a man marries his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter it is called a cross cousin marriage. Such type of marriage is practiced among the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh and the Oraon and the Kharia tribes of Jharkhand. Such type of marriage are also found in the Southern part of India. (Hence I 1953)
- 2) **Parallel cousin marriage:** The marriage of two individuals who are the children of siblings of the same sex i.e. a man marries his mother's sister's daughter or his father's brother's daughter it is called parallel cousin marriage. Such type of marriage is seen among Muslims.
- 3) **Levirate marriage :** Levirate is the practice of custom in which a widow marries her deceased husband's brother. It is also known as Natal or Nantra. Such type of practice is prevalent among the Toda of Nilgiri Hills. It is also known as a Natal or Nantra, marriage. It was also found in some parts of Panjab.
- 4) **Sororate:** Sororate is the practice of custom in which a widower marries his deceased wife's sister.

10.4.4 Forms of Marriage

All the commonly listed forms of marriage, namely, **monogamy** (marriage of a man to a woman at a time), and polygamy (marriage of a man or woman to more than one spouse) are found in India. The latter, that is polygamy, has two forms, namely, **polygyny** (marriage of a man to several women at a time) and **polyandry** (marriage of a woman to several men at a time). In ancient texts of the Hindus we find references to eight forms of marriage.

Monogamy, Polygyny, Polyandry

In this section, we shall focus only on monogamy, and both forms of polygamy. With regard to the prevalence of these three forms, one has to distinguish between what is permitted and what is practised by different sections of the population through time.

- i) **Monogamy:** Among the Hindus, until the passing of the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, a Hindu man was permitted to marry more than one woman at a time. Although permitted, polygyny has not been common among the Hindus. Only limited sections of the population like kings, chieftains, headmen of villages, members of the landed aristocracy actually practised polygyny.

We may say that those who had the means and the power to acquire more than one wife at a time were polygynous. The other important reasons for polygyny were the barrenness of the wife and or her prolonged sickness. Among some occupational groups like the agriculturists and artisans, polygyny prevailed because of an economic gain involved in it. Where women are self-supporting and contribute substantially to the productive activity a man can gain by having more than one wife. Concerted efforts to remove this practice were made in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century by social reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati and others. After Independence, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 established monogamy for all Hindus and others who came to be governed by this Act. Some of the 'other' communities covered by this Act are the Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists. Strict monogamy is prescribed in Christian and Parsi communities. **Polygyny:** Islam, on the other hand, has allowed polygyny. A Muslim man can have as many as four wives at a time, provided all are treated as equals. However, it seems that polygynous unions have been restricted to a small percentage of Muslims, namely the rich and the powerful.

With regard to the tribal population, we find that the customary law of the tribals in general (except a few) has not forbidden polygyny. Polygyny is more widespread among the tribes of north and central India.

- iii) **Polyandry:** Polyandry is even less common than polygyny. A few Kerala castes practised polyandry until recently. The Toda of the Nilgiris in Tamilnadu, the Khasa of Jaunsar Bawar in Dehradun district of Uttaranchal and some North Indian castes practise polyandry. In the fraternal form of polyandry, the husbands are brothers. In 1958, C.M. Abraham (1958: 107-8) has reported that in Central Travancore fraternal polyandry was practised by large number of groups like the Irava, Kaniyan, the Vellan and the Asari.

The factors that are related to the prevalence of polyandry are:

- a) desire to prevent division of property within a family (especially in fraternal polyandry).
- b) desire to preserve the unity and solidarity of the sibling group (in fraternal polyandry).
- c) the need for more than one husband in a society where men are away on a commercial or military journey.
- d) a difficult economy, especially an unfertile soil, which does not favour division of land and belongings (Peter 1968).

Prevailing Patterns

What is the position today regarding these forms of marriage? Monogamy is the most prevalent form of marriage in India. However, bigamous (having two spouses at a time) marriages have been reported among the Hindus in many parts of India. It is the man who very often commits bigamy and escapes punishment by turning the loopholes of the law to his advantage. It is the wife who is often unaware of his second marriage, and even if she is aware of it, is unaware of her legal rights and accepts her fate. Social and economic dependence on husband and inadequate social condemnation of the man's actions are some of the reasons for the wife's acceptance of the husband's second marriage.

Among the Muslims it is the man who is allowed to have four wives. Among them men enjoy greater privileges than women. A Muslim woman cannot marry a second time when her first husband is alive or if she has not been divorced by him.

10.5 THE INSTITUTION OF KINSHIP

The family, marriage and kinship are closely interrelated with each other in terms of social relationship. Kinship is universal and represents one of the basic social institutions. Kinship is a method which provides the framework of social relationship. Kinship means relationship of the individual with the other members based either on marriage or blood-ties. Kinship bonds are very strong and such ties are of fundamental importance in every society all over the world. The husband, wife, son, daughter, brother and sister relationships due to either a bond of marriage or through blood are known as kinship relations. Kinship is that part of culture through which relations are socially recognized through birth and through marriage or adoption.

Murdock says that it is a structured system of relationship in which individuals are bound to one another by complex interlocking and ramifying ties. According to Radcliff-Brown, "Kinship system is a part of social structure and insists upon the study of kinship as a field of rights and obligations". Robin Fox says that kinship is simply the relations between 'kin' that is persons related by real, putative or fictive consanguinity.

10.5.1 Significance of Kinship

The kinship system refers to a set of persons recognised as relatives, either by virtue of a blood relationship technically called consanguinity, or by virtue of a marriage relationship, that is through what is called affinity.

Most of us tend to regard the kinship system into which we are born and in which we are reared as natural. It will seem natural and right to us that certain close relatives should be tabooed as marriage and sexual partners, and we feel quite certain that disastrous consequences would follow any infringement of the taboos. We may similarly think it natural that certain classes of persons be preferred as marriage partners, or we may on the contrary think it very unnatural that any persons be so designated.

10.5.2 Basic Concepts of Kinship

We have already made the general point that kinship relations are the outcome of the cultural interpretation of relations given in nature, and discussed some of the different ways in which sociologists have looked at the kinship system. In doing so, we have indirectly introduced some of the basic terms and concepts in kinship studies, which we will now set out more systematically. You certainly do not need to memorise this rather overwhelming set of technical terms, but you should try to understand the basic principles and distinctions that these key terms seek to convey.

10.5.2.1 The Principle of Descent

Descent is the principle whereby a child is socially affiliated with the group of his or her parents. In some societies the child is regarded as a descendant equally of both the father and the mother, except that titles and surnames are usually passed down along the male line. Such a system is termed Bilateral or Cognatic. The individual belongs simultaneously to several descent groups - those of the two parents, the four grandparents, the eight great-grandparents, and so on. This link is limited only by memory or by some conventionally determined cut-off point at, say, four or five degrees removal. In small intermarrying communities, membership will probably overlap, and in case of dispute or feud, the individual might find his or her loyalties divided. There are some cognatic systems where the individual has the right by descent to membership of several cognatically recruited groups, but this right is actualised only if the person is able to reside in a particular group's territory. Modern nationality laws often make this type of requirement.

10.5.2.2 Types of Descent

In other societies, by contrast and your own is most probably one of them - descent is reckoned UNILINEALLY, that is, in one line only. The child is affiliated **either** with the group of the father, that is, PATRILINEAL DESCENT, or with the group of the mother, that is, MATRILINEAL DESCENT. Theories of the physiology of procreation and conception often correlate with these different modes of reckoning descent. In the former, the father is often given the primary role in procreation while the mother is regarded as merely the carrier of the child; in systems of the latter type the father's role may not be acknowledged at all.

Additionally, in some societies one finds that the child is affiliated to the group of either parent, depending on choice, or to one parent for some purposes (for instance, inheritance of property) and to the other parent for other purposes (for instance, the inheritance of ritual or ceremonial roles). This is called DOUBLE UNILINEAL DESCENT.

The principle of unilineal descent provides the individual an unambiguous identification with a bounded social group that exists before he or she is born and that has continuity after he or she dies. Members of a descent group have a sense of shared identity, often referring to each other as 'brother' and 'sister' even when no genealogical relationship can be traced. Descent groups are also very often, (though not inevitably), characterised by exogamy. That is, marriage must be with persons outside this group. For instance, traditional Chinese society was divided among approximately a hundred 'surname' groups - you could perhaps call them CLANS - within which marriage was disallowed, and these groups further divided into LINEAGES, whose members claimed to be able to trace their descent, perhaps for several hundred years, from a founding ancestor, and then into further localised SUBLINEAGES and so on down to the individual co-resident families. Sometimes a whole village might be settled by members of a single lineage. The gotras of Indian caste society are also exogamous descent groups, segmented in rather the same way.

Activity 2

Interview or discuss with some members of your family and prepare a chart indicating five generation of your family on your fathers' side or mothers' side whichever is relevant to you. Write a note of one page on "The kinship structure of My Family". Discuss your note with other students and Academic Counsellor at your study centre.

10.6 FUNCTIONS OF DESCENT GROUPS

Apart from the function of exogamy, unilineal descent groups tend to be 'corporate' in several other senses. Their members may often come together for ritual and ceremonial functions, for instance, for collective worship of lineage gods, totems or ancestors. The descent group will have a built-in authority structure, with power normally exercised by senior males, and it may well own corporate property. An individual's economic rights and responsibilities will be defined by his or her position in the descent group. In many societies unilineal descent groups are also jural units, internally deciding their own disputes, and externally acting as a unified group in the conduct of feud, etc. For this reason, lineage structure is often coterminous with the political structure in societies lacking a centralised state structure.

Lineages cannot expand indefinitely in a single locality and often segment into smaller, more manageable and economically viable lineage segments. You can see the lines of segmentation of the ground, as it were. Consider the pattern of land ownership in an Indian village; or at the pattern of village or urban settlement; particular quarter of the village or town may be inhabited by the descendants of a single founding ancestor. Often, the large **havelis** divide among brothers or step-brothers, and these quarters are further divided among their descendants. In case a line dies out, the property would be reconsolidated. Given the range of social functions that descent groups may potentially perform, it is little wonder that concern with the principles of unilineal descent has dominated the work of many students of comparative kinship. However, even these scholars realise that unilineal descent is not the whole story. In ancient Rome, women after marriage severed all contact with their natal group. In certain slave societies, the slave has no 'family' of his or her own. In patrilineal systems, the mother's father, mother's sister, and especially the mother's brother, are important relationships which need further discussion. To take note of the importance of relationships, the scholars have identified another principle. This has been termed the principle of **COMPLEMENTARY FILIATION** which explains the significant ritual and social roles of the mother's brother(s) in the lives of their sister's children. It reminds us that, in most societies, an individual is a child of both parents, however descent is formally reckoned.

10.6.1 Inheritance Rules

Rules of inheritance tend to co-ordinate with the reckoning of descent in most societies, but not necessarily in a one-to-one manner. In fact, it is quite often the case that certain types of property pass from father to son, and other types from mother to daughter. In most parts of India, in the past, immovable property such as land and housing, was inherited only by sons. In the absence of sons, except under rare circumstances, by the nearest male relatives on the father's side. On

the other hand, movable property in the form of cash and jewellery was given to the daughter at the time of her marriage, with a certain amount of jewellery also passing from the mother-in-law to the daughter-in-law.

In addition to property of various kinds, rights and obligations, esoteric knowledge, crafts and skills, etc., might be passed on in accordance with kinship roles, succession to office to chieftainship, kingship, etc. and to other social roles and statuses, is also very often determined by kinship criteria. In such cases, the individual's status is said to be 'ascribed', not 'achieved'. It is commonly asserted that ascriptive status of "modern", industrial societies. There is a great deal of truth in this statement, but one should not underestimate the importance of kinship connections in modern societies too. Often one finds that in a family if father is a doctor or lawyer the son or daughter is also likely to choose the same occupation. Most of the Indian women who have been successful in the political domain are either daughters, sisters or wives of people who have been active in politics. One such example is the Nehru family of India.

10.6.2 Rules of Residence

Rules of residence, meaning residence after marriage, are an important variable in a kinship system, and substantially affect the quality of personal relations within the kin network. If husband and wife set up their own independent home after marriage, as is usually the case in modern western society, residence is said to be NEOLocal. Where the wife goes to live with the husband in his parents' home, residence is described as VIRILOCAL, PATRILocal, or PATRIVIRILOCAL, and where the husband moves to live with the wife, it is termed MATRILocal or Rules of residence may or may not 'harmonise' with the rules of descent. On the whole, patrilineal descent systems correlate with either neolocal or patrivirilocal residence patterns. However, matrilineal descent systems may be combined with all three types of residence. It is also combined with what is called AVUNCULocal residence, that is, residence with the mother's brother.

10.6.3 Patriarchy and Matriarchy

A society is said to have a patriarchal structure when a number of factors coincide, i.e. when descent is reckoned patrilineally, when inheritance of major property is from father to son, when residence is patrilocal, and when authority is concentrated in the hands of senior males. There is, however, no society on earth, nor any society actually known to have existed, whose features are the exact reverse of these. For even in matrilineal, matrilocal systems, which are fairly rare, major property is usually controlled by males. And authority is normally exercised by males, though women may well have a higher status in the family and greater powers of decision-making than in the patriarchal set up. Some anthropologists assert that in societies with very simple technology and minimal property, relations between the sexes are relatively egalitarian, whether descent is formally matrilineal, patrilineal or bilateral, but others insist that women, and children, have played subordinate roles in all human societies.

For this reason, the term 'matriarchy', though often found in the literature, is probably a misnomer, best avoided, and there is certainly no conclusive evidence to support the view that matriarchy was a universal early stage in the development

Check Your Progress IV

1) What is the principle of descent? Explain in one line.

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2) List the types of descent. Use about three lines for your answer.

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10.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have explained the different aspects of the social institutions of family, marriage and kinship. All three concepts are inter-related with each other and form the very core of any community or society. We defined these concepts and described their salient features to you. Also, in this unit we have outlined the significance and functions of family, marriage and kinship. When you interrogate Indian society the different aspects highlighted in this unit form the very core of society in India.

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10.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- i) a) F
- b) T
- ii) a) Supplemented nuclear family
- b) Sub nuclear family
- c) Single person household
- d) Supplemented sub nuclear family.

Check Your Progress II

- i) Commensality; Common Residence; Common Property; Cooperation and Sentiment and Ritual bonds.
- ii) Collateral joint family, Supplemented collateral joint family, Lineal joint family, Supplemented joint family, Lineal collateral joint family, Supplemented-lineal-collateral joint family.

Check Your Progress III

- i) In the cyclical view the nuclear and the joint family can be viewed as a continuum. A nuclear family develops into a joint family after marriage of a son and coming of a daughter-in-law. After the death of the father the sons may separate to form separate nuclear units. Later on each of these nuclear families may develop into a joint family.
- ii) Factors affecting the joint family system are: (a) western secular education, (b) market cash economy, (c) salaried occupations, (d) laws, and (e) urbanization.

- iii) a) T
- c) F
- d) T

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) Descent is the principle by which a person traces his/her ancestors.
- 2) The following is the list of the types of descent:
 - i) Unilineal descent including (a) patrilineal descent, (b) matrilineal descent.
 - ii) Double-unilineal descent.
 - iii) bilateral or cognatic descent.



UNIT 11 RELIGION AND SOCIETY*

Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Sociological Theories Explaining Relationship between Religion and Society
 - 11.2.1 Emile Durkheim
 - 11.2.2 Max Weber
 - 11.2.3 Karl Marx
- 11.3 Sociological Perspectives on Religion and Society in India
 - 11.3.1 Oriental and Indological Constructions of Religion in India
- 11.4 Some Religions in India
 - 11.4.1 Hinduism
 - 11.4.2 Islam
 - 11.4.3 Sikhism
 - 11.4.4 Christianity
 - 11.4.5 Buddhism
- 11.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.6 References
- 11.7 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

11.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- describe relationship between religion and society;
- discuss major sociological theories of religion and their prominent aspects;
- delineate the difference between a theological and sociological explanation of religion;
- describe the nature of religion as a social phenomenon;
- explain the emergence and nature of religions in India;
- discuss the historical factors that played decisive role in the emergence of religions in India; and finally;
- the core teachings of diverse religions of India .

11.1 INTRODUCTION

The existence of religion in human society is one of the enduring social phenomena stimulating sociological analysis. It is a social phenomenon which is woven into the fabric of everyday social life. It seems to play a solidifying function in society however religion has also been used to spread hatred and crimes against humanity. It has been one of the major sources of justifying inequality and exploitation. Still religion as an institution appears to exist in every society. Sociologists have tried to understand the meanings that religion

offers to people. Its significance in the organisation of social life is immense. It appears to help people in approaching and addressing the crisis situation in life. Scholars have argued that religion gives meaning to the human life to such an extent that it is characterised as the relief to the people who are trapped in the hardships of life. Sociologists have studied the evolution of religion from primitive to the 'modern' societies. Its role in 'modern' societies is being felt to be eroded or minimised but one may see the expansion of religious identities conflicts and movements. In this backdrop, it becomes all the more important to understand the emergence of diverse religions of India and their contemporary character.

11.2 SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES EXPLAINING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND SOCIETY

This section briefly sketches the sociological theories that explain the relationship between religion and society. A sociological understanding across theoretical frameworks certainly informs that religion is a creation of humans. Within classical sociology, religion has been seen as an important theme. Sociological explanations of religion are less concerned with the theological issues than the social contextualisation of religion. Sociologically religion is defined as a social institution. In sociology we do not attempt to prove or disprove the existence of god rather we try to understand why people believe in God. Three stalwarts in classical sociology – Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber figure prominently in explaining the relationship between religion and society. Their intellectual engagement with religion and society offers multifaceted aspect of religion as a social institution.

11.2.1 Emile Durkheim

Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, is regarded as the prolific author in the field of sociology of religion. His major contribution in this area is that he postulates the idea that religion is socially constructed and not of divine origin. The nature of religion, for him, is shaped by the prevailing social conditions. In his book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1961), Durkheim was concerned with the origins and causes of religion in society. He studied various primitive groups of Australia and North America to study the most rudimentary religious forms. He turned towards the study of elementary forms of religion (in this case **totemism**) as he wanted to make sense of religion in the complex societies through the study of organisation of religion in simple societies. According to him the most elementary form of religion would be found in those primitive tribal communities which are having an elementary social organisation.

According to Durkheim there are two basic components of religion i.e. beliefs and rites. He calls beliefs as **collective representations** which are products of the underlying social structures and rites which pertain to the operative part of the belief system i.e. various modes of action produced by beliefs. He reasoned that religion is a group phenomenon as its basic characteristic and unity is given by the group. In this way he emphasises on the positive function of religion as a force cementing the society together. The **functional theory** of religion as propounded by Durkheim hinders any study of the **dysfunctions** of religion.

This explains, for Durkheim, the reason for the ubiquity and permanency of religion. ‘Religious force’ is only the sentiment inspired by the group in its members. It is projected and objectified in outer world and the consciousness. He classifies beliefs into two separate spheres of ‘**sacred**’ and ‘**profane**’. He identifies ‘sacred’ as the most fundamental religious phenomenon. ‘Sacred’ is that part of religion which is set apart and forbidden and considered holy. ‘Sacred’ is venerated and placed in higher position to profane things. ‘Profane’ stands in opposition to ‘sacred’ and refers to the mundane aspects of everyday life. Durkheim writes that ‘all the history of human thought there exists no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated or radically opposed to one another; i.e. the sacred and the profane.

11.2.2 Max Weber

Max Weber, a German sociologist, is known to have developed a theory of religion in which the economic relevance of religion is demonstrated. In his book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1948)*, he assessed the contribution of Protestant ethics in the development of modern economic system of capitalism. For him Protestant ethics played a decisive role in the development of capitalism in the West, whereas it could not develop in Asian countries such as India. It is considered that the religious ethics of Hinduism, with regard to caste, hinders development of capitalism according to Weber. He considered Hinduism, as a ‘other worldly’ religion. Caste imposed structural restraints on economic development. (However, later scholars like Milton Singer and Bernard Cohn studied the Madras capitalists who did not subscribe to Weber’s ideas on Hinduism) He argues that there is a fundamental difference between Protestants and Catholics in terms of their inclination towards industrial and commercial actions. Protestants could acquire industrial skills and explored modern occupations and avenues of administrative positions whereas Catholics remained in traditional occupations. According to him, Protestants have methodical and ascetic norms of conduct which is the essential spirit of capitalism.

11.2.3 Karl Marx

Karl Marx, a German philosopher has developed the critical theory of religion unlike Durkheim and Weber. Marx was more concerned with how religion generate a **false consciousness** of the existing social reality thereby normalising and justifying the unequal social structure and giving people an illusory happiness. Marx was not only theorising the relationship between religion and society and how does religion affects human behaviour, but he was also addressing how to change the unequal structure of society which is disguised in religion. In this way, Marx was primarily dealing with the political aspects of religion rather than the functionality as Durkheim was. In his materialist conception of history, Marx argued that religion is actually a reflection of the material conditions of society. To quote him, “it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness (1859).” This means that ideas at the level of consciousness cannot solely determine the social structure as Weber has propounded. Religious idea can justify the prevailing socio-economic conditions but cannot produce them alone. Religion cannot exist in an isolated fashion from the socio-economic structure. In this way Marx’s thesis on religion is opposite to Weber’s understanding.

11.3 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN INDIA

India has a diversity of religions. Before one understands this diversity of religions, their emergence and core elements, it is essential for any student of sociology to grasp how studies on religion and society has been initiated in India. Orientalist and Indological approaches on religion in India have played a decisive role in the construction of a sociological understanding on religion. (some aspects of these you learnt in unit 1 of this course) Therefore, it is imperative to read these two approaches.

Activity 1

Read a book or watch a movie on religion, magic and science. Write the significance of religion and society on the basis of your ideas from it. Discuss with other students at your study center or family members the relation between all three of them.

11.3.1 Oriental and Indological Constructions of Religion in India

Orientalism as defined by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1978:3) means a discourse based on the dichotomy of East and West where the West becomes the reference point for defining progress. It has provided ideological justification to colonialism and its expansion. When West (Occident) is seen as the reference point for progress and growth, by default the East (Orient) appears as the backward and in need of 'modernization'. He has unleashed a strong critique of Orientalist discourse which was legitimising the colonial aggression and loot. It was manufacturing the ideological ground for the political supremacy of colonial powers. "Orientalism refers to those particular discourses that, in conceptualizing the Orient, render it susceptible to control and management" (King 2001:82) "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, and so on. Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient." Said's work clearly indicates towards the complicity i.e. understanding between the scholarly accounts of the nature of 'the Orient' and the hegemonic political agenda of imperialism.

In this backdrop, it is obvious that British colonials have constructed an image of the oriental India in such a manner that the subjugation of India as a colony appears as natural and inevitable. There are various studies on religion in India conducted by Britishers that served this larger goal of colonial dominance. In this backdrop Orientalism meets Indology. Indology, in simple terms means the study of Indian culture and society. It was the administrative need of the British Empire to conduct systematic studies on the nature of Indian society. Such studies were primarily based on the textual view of Indian society. Although, Britishers used survey method extensively to document the customs of people in India. But indologists saw scriptures as the major source of information on the character of Indian society. This belief was largely manufactured by the reliance of the British Indologists conducted studies on the native people with the help of mostly Brahmins. Many of the scriptural texts were translated by Indologists

with the help of local Brahmins. Consequently the understanding of religion in India was inspired by the brahmanical view. Bernard Cohn in his celebrated book *An Anthropologist Among Historians and Other Essays* (1987) has offered a detailed description of the brahmanical view of religion in India.

British indologists propagated their view of religion in India through various means such as education and their means of communication. One of the classic examples of how they have constructed an understanding of religion in India is the classification of Indian history in terms of religion of the rulers. James Mill, the British historian, in his three volume work *A History of British India* divided Indian history in three major periods - Hindu, Muslim and British. This periodisation is problematic i.e it leads to misunderstanding about India. Although, he did not name the British rule as Christian period but it does not come as a surprise that to view the religious conflicts in India as Hindu-Muslim conflict and the religious conflict in general is a colonial construction which continues even today.

The construction of Indianness in terms of Hindu identity has its roots in the oriental-indological perspectives. The core of Indian religiosity was traced through the vedic scriptures. The diversity of religious philosophies was reduced to a homogenous category of 'Hinduism'. The specific nature of Hinduism is the product of the interaction between brahmins and colonial orientalis.

Check Your Progress I

- i) Discuss the ideas of Emile Durkheim on religion and society in about five lines.

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- ii) How does Max Weber relate religion with economy?

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- iii) What does Karl Mar C believe about the role of religion in society? Explain.

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The story of the colonial expansion is based or premised on the oriental constructions of Indian society but the same oriental construction became the basis to fight against colonialism. In India the nationalist leaders have used oriental constructions in the fight against British colonialism by the Indian leaders and the people. For instance, the “orientalist presuppositions about the ‘spirituality’ of India was used by reformers, such as, Rammohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and M. K. Gandhi in the development of an anti-colonial Hindu nationalism. This reflects the level of absorption or permeation of orientalist ideas amongst the native Indians also the colonial educated intelligentsia of India. Although, the orientalist discourses did not proceed in an orderly and straightforward fashion but they were applied in ways unforeseen by those who initiated them. The orientalist discourses soon became appropriated by Indian intellectuals in the nineteenth century and applied in such a way as to undercut the colonialist agenda. One of the streams of nationalist movement was based on the Hindu nationalism propagating the idea that India is a Hindu rashtra. The homogenised category of ‘Hinduism’ generated by oriental scholars has been a prime site of the ‘othering’ of minorities in India.

Activity 2

Discuss with any two persons in your friends circle, belonging to two different religions; what they think is the core value and belief of their religion. Write an essay of one page on religion as a belief and practice. Compare your essays with those of other students at your Study Center.

11.4 SOME MAJOR RELIGIONS IN INDIA

Given the complexity and diversity of the religious traditions in India, it is difficult to enumerate and narrate them here. The Census of India identifies seven religious communities—Hindu, Muslims, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain and other religions and persuasions including unclassified sects. According to the Census 2011 following is the percentage of people belonging to these religious communities:

Hindu – 79.80 per cent

Muslim – 14.23 per cent

Christian – 2.30 per cent

Sikh – 1.72 per cent

Buddhist – 0.70 per cent

Other religions and persuasions – 0.66 per cent

Religion not stated – 0.24 per cent

Here we are going to describe only some of these major religions in India for your understanding

11.4.1 Hinduism

Sociologically there are debates on whether Hinduism is a religion or not. **Max Weber** in *The Religion of India* (1958) postulates that the term ‘Hinduism’ is a western coinage and it is not a religion. The term ‘Hindu’, according to Weber is an official designation used in the Census introduced by British colonials in India. The term was used to describe the religious complex rather than one

religion. Historians have argued that Hinduism is not a monolithic religion but an umbrella category used for a diversity of sects. Hinduism is also defined as a way of life, rather than a religion. B.R. Ambedkar remarks that Hindus find it baffling to answer the question ‘why is she/he a Hindu’ due to multiplicity of gods, beliefs, customs, and practices. Such sociological and historical enquiries stand in opposition to the contemporary political usage of the term ‘Hinduism’ as a religion practiced by Hindus. Historical method informs that the term ‘Hindu’ (with whom Hinduism is associated) originated with the Arabs who referred to people living beyond Indus River as ‘Hindu’. Historians (Thapar, 2010) have used the expression ‘syndicated Hinduism’ to address the political manoeuvring around the term ‘Hinduism’. One of the acclaimed sociological enquiries of ‘Hinduism’ in India is M.N. Srinivas’s and A.M. Shah’s essay on ‘Hinduism’ in which they argue that the doctrines of Hinduism, unlike Christianity and Islam, are not embodied in one book. It has a vast body of sacred literature. Hinduism does not have one founder. Subsequently, Hinduism does not have a god but innumerable gods. It is polytheistic in nature. They further write that there is no commonality of beliefs and practices and institutions. Hinduism contains many sects that developed historically and many a times depict contradictory practices and beliefs for example the Vaishnavite and the Shaivites sects of South India who are both part of Hinduism. Indian sociologist **T.N. Madan** in ‘The Sociology of Hinduism: Reading ‘Backwards’ from Srinivas to Weber’ (2006) argues regardless of whether Hinduism is a religion or not, it is undeniably a cultural tradition a way of life stimulating sociological analysis.

Srinivas who postulated the ‘**field view**’ as against the ‘**book view**’ criticises the ‘**bibliocentrism**’ and argues that it is essential that the textual view of Hinduism is connected with the actual behaviour of people. The normative cannot be taken as the cornerstone of any social analysis. People do not always abide by the prescribed texts as the concrete material conditions influence social behaviour. So one must look at the relationship between the text and the actual behaviour. Srinivas and Shah argue that Hinduism is entangled with Hindu social order to such an extent that it becomes difficult to demarcate them. In this backdrop, Srinivas challenges the book view of Hindu social order that describe the divine origin of four *varnas*. According to Srinivas, in reality it is not *varnas* but innumerable *jatis* that exist. “When the Hindu sacred or legal texts discuss caste, it is mostly *varna* that they have in view and very rarely *jati*.” The centrality of caste system to Hinduism is also discussed by Weber. “Caste, that is, the ritual rights and duties it gives and imposes, and the position of the Brahmans, is the fundamental institution of Hinduism. Before everything else, without caste there is no Hindu.”

Theologically the ideas of *dharmā*, *karma* and *moksha* provide the ideological justification for caste system. Ideas regarding **purity** and **pollution** are also cardinal in Hinduism.

Box 11.0: Concepts of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha

A life of righteousness for a Hindu is possible through the fourfold scheme of practical endeavour. It comprises the concepts of *dharmā*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*.

- i) Dharma is honest and upright conduct of righteous action.
- ii) Artha means a righteous and honest pursuit of economic activities.

- iii) Kama is the fulfilment of one's normal desires.
- iv) Moksha is liberation that is absorption of the self into eternal bliss. Related to these four concepts are the concepts of *karma* and *samsara*. Depending upon one's deeds (*karma*) one is able to reach the stage of *moksha* or liberation. The stage of *moksha* or liberation is a term for describing the end of the cycle of birth and rebirth. The cycle of birth and rebirth is known as *samsara*. The Hindus believe that each human being has a soul and that this soul is immortal. It does not perish at the time of death. The process of birth and rebirth goes on until *moksha* is attained. This cycle of transmigration is also known as *samsara*, which is the arena where the cycle of birth and rebirth operates. One's birth and rebirth in a particular state of existence is believed by the Hindus to be dependent on the quality of one's deeds (*karma*). For a Hindu, the issue of liberation is of paramount significance (Prabhu 1979: 43-48).

11.4.2 Islam

Islam emerged in Arabia in sixth century. It is a monotheistic religion, Quran being the only Holy book. Quran's major teaching is summarised in 'five pillars' namely – having faith in the creed, offering *namaz* five times a day, paying legal alms i.e. *zakat*, fasting during Ramzan, and pilgrimage to Mecca.

These beliefs and practices, according to Islamic theology, make a Muslim win over his passions and desires and attain a place in Heaven.

In fact the word 'Islam' means an absolute submission to God.

With regard to the founder of religion, there are two major sects which have emerged claiming one founder – Sunni and Shia. Sunnis believe in the authority of Prophet Mohammad, whereas Shias claim that succession belongs to Imams.

If we go by Srinivas's distinction between 'book view' and 'field view', then you will find that Islam in India has a different character. The caste system emerged in ancient India and central to Hinduism has its impact on Islam, thereby giving birth to a system of stratification different from the place of Islam's origin. Although "the acceptance of the caste principle among the Muslims is considerably weak and does not enjoy any sanction or justification in their great traditional religious ideology", Ahmad 1978: xxiii) Imtiaz Ahmad, renowned Indian scholar, in his book *Caste and Social Stratification among the Muslims* (1973) argues that caste exists among Muslims. Although, caste type categories based on purity and pollution do not exist among them.

The plurality of culture in India is incomplete without Islam. It has contributed to a greater extent in shaping the composite cultural heritage of India.

11.4.3 Sikhism

"Of the great religious traditions of humanity, Sikhism is one of the youngest, being barely 500 years old. (Madan 2011:76)" Sikhism emerged as a challenge to the feudal social norms in Indian society. It is essentially a religious philosophy that stands in opposition to the Vedantic philosophy. It was founded by Guru Nanak in the fifteenth century whose teachings formed the foundation of Sikhism.

It draws elements from the nirguna saints for its theological opposition to the caste system, hence Sikhism reflects a syncretic tradition. Guru Nanak carried forward the legacy of Kabir's thought that rejected caste and religious differences espousing opposition to scriptural knowledge and rituals. Both Kabir and Nanak were bhakti saints in medieval period of Indian history. Kabir, Nanak and other bhakti saints questioned and rejected the caste differences. They laid emphasis on *ikk* (one) God who could be apprehended within the hearts rather than by adherence to empty rituals. Along with monotheism, Sikhism has elements of materiality for the reason that it did not preach the denouncing of the world for spiritual elevation. Three principles of Nanak's teaching are expressed in three punjabi words – *Naam Japna*, *Kirti Karni* and *Wand Chakna* which means 'always remembering god', 'earning one's livelihood through honest means' and 'sharing the fruits of one's labour with others' respectively. It clearly signifies the aspects of material philosophy. To implement the idea of equality, Nanak started the institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* which imply that all humans, irrespective of their caste and religion, sit in a congregation and practice commensality i.e. eat together from the community kitchen. Guru Nank was accompanied by Mardana, a Muslim musician, in his journeys to spread his gospel of love and truth. Given this syncretic nature of Sikhism, the *Adi Granth*, the holy book of Sikhs, contains the poems of bhakti and sufi saints such as Kabir, Namdev and Ravidas, who come from the lower strata of Hindu and Muslim communities.

There is an emphasis on the institution of Guruship in Sikhism. Nanak was followed by nine successive Gurus. The successive Gurus made significant contributions besides continuing with Nanak's precepts and ideals. For instance, the second Guru, Guru Angad Dev evolved Gurmukhi, a distinctive script. The *Adi Granth*, was written in Gurmukhi language.

11.4.4 Christianity

Christian Community: The Spatial and Demographic Dimensions

In India there is no one homogeneous Christian community, but there are many different ones, organised around regional, language and sectarian bases. There are Kerala, Goan Tamil, Anglo-Indians in North India, Naga and North East Indian Christians, who are different in their language, socio-cultural practices and economic status. It is difficult to speak about a general Christian way of life in India for these very reasons. There are many churches, many denominations or groups, many sects or brotherhoods among them.

According to the 1981 Census there were 18 million Christians in India and the percentage of Christians in India's population accounted to 2.43 per cent. The total Christian population had almost kept up with the national increase of 24.69 per cent over 1971-81. In 1991 their population was 2.32 percent of the total population. However, the distribution of Christian population has been very uneven in India. There are dense settlements of Christians in some parts of the country while in other regions there are small and scattered Christian communities. In Andhra Pradesh, in the year 1981, the Christians represented 2.68 per cent of the total population. In Kerala the percentage of Christians was 20.6. So also Manipur had a 29.7 per cent Christian population.

In fact, Meghalaya with 52.6 per cent and Nagaland with 80.2 per cent registered the highest concentration of Christian populations. Tamil Nadu had 5.78 per cent Christian which was over twice the national average. Very low percentages of the Christian population had been recorded in some central and northern states of the country. For example, Jammu and Kashmir 0.14 per cent, Madhya Pradesh 0.7 per cent, Rajasthan 0.12 per cent and Uttar Pradesh 0.15 per cent. In 1991, the highest concentration of Christians was found in Nagaland (87.46 per cent) and Meghalaya (85.73 per cent). In some States such as Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana etc. the Christian population was very low.

However, in spite of regional variations as described above there are certain tenets, which unite Christian life and experience all over the country. The first of these is that all Christians believe that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is their saviour. They believe that Jesus was born to Mary, a virgin, and that God, the Father, sent him to redeem people of their sins. The concept of virgin birth is accepted alike by Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christians in India. Christianity asserts that Jesus was the Son of God. However, Jesus' father on earth was Joseph. He was a carpenter who protected Mary and took her away to Bethlehem where the baby Jesus was born in a stable. The story of the poverty surrounding Jesus' birth is a very important one for Christians. It establishes the background of much of what Jesus taught, and the manner in which his teachings celebrated poverty, meekness and humility.

Box 11.1

Here is an example where religion involves itself with politics to bring about social justice. Christianity has long addressed the suffering of the oppressed people of the world. Through a belief in a better life to come for the faithful. However a number of religious leaders in Latin America, in a radical move, are emphasising on social justice. This movement in Christianity is called liberation theology. Liberation theology developed in the late 1960s within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. In simple terms, liberation theology believes that the church has responsibility to help people liberate themselves from poverty.

11.4.5 Buddhism

Buddhism emerged in India during sixth century BC. It is known by the name of its founder Gautama Buddha. By the time Buddhism emerged in ancient India, a highly complex structure of stratification on the lines of caste had taken its roots in society. It was a period of rapid transformation and reformulation of political structures. There were two kinds of political structures of governance existing at the time of Buddha – monarchical kingdoms and *gana-sanghas*, the republican territories. The *gana-sanghas* were ruled by clans. Buddha himself was a prince, being the son of the chief of Sakya clan. Both monarchical kingdoms and republican territories were in constant conflict due to the political motives of expansion and consolidation of kingdoms. Rice cultivation and rich iron ores were its primary source of wealth and expansion. It was the phase of arrival of urbanisation in ancient India.

The philosophical ideas of Buddhism were innovative and remarkably different from the existing philosophy of Brahmanism of sixth century BC. Buddhism

is essentially a rejection of the basic beliefs of Brahmanism thereby challenging the authority of *Vedas*. “Within India Buddhism has appeared as an alternative to the hierarchical and inegalitarian ideology and practice of Hinduism. In contrast Buddhism is viewed as a system which was more sympathetic to oppressed groups and it has been considered an economic, political, and social solution to the problem of caste oppression.” (Chakravarti, 1996:1) Unlike the abstract spirituality of Brahmanism, Buddhism emphasised on the materiality of this world. It did not emphasise on the creation and preservation of universe by God. It believed in the natural cosmic rise and decline. It did not talk much about gods. It dealt with everything in a dialectical manner and never sought answers in metaphysical domain. Buddha developed a theory of cause and effect which is different from the *Vedic* theory of *Karma*. “Independence from deities was also evident in Buddhist ideas about the origin of government and the state. Whereas Vedic Brahmanism invoked the gods in association with the origin of government, Buddhism described it as a process of gradual social change in which the institution of the family and the ownership of fields led to civil strife. Such strife could only be controlled by people electing a person to govern them and to establish laws for their protection: an eminently logical way of explaining the origins of civil strife and the need for law.” (Thapar, 2002: 168). There are other major religious, like Jainism, Zoroastrian and several tribal religions followed by a substantial number of people in India. These religions also play an important role in understanding society in India.

Check Your Progress III

- i) Tick the correct answer
- A) a) Hinduism is a belief system
 b) Hinduism believe in several Gods
 c) It is a way of life
 d) All of the above.
- B) Tick the incorrect answer
- a) Islam believes in one God
 b) It is divided into two main sects of Shias and Sunnis
 c) Its followed by people only in India
 d) A Muslim offers prayers five times a day.
- ii) Who founded Buddhism and what were the conditions in which it originated?

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11.5 LET US SUM UP

You have read that religion is a social phenomenon. The classical sociological theories of classical thinkers like Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber have drawn a relationship between religion and society. They have differences in terms of how the relationship between society and religion can be looked at, but the common aspect of these theories is that religion is the creation of humans unlike the theological perspectives that emphasise on the divine origin of religion and society. The nature of the relationship between society and religion in India is outlined through the Oriental and Indological perspectives. Towards the end we have discussed the diversity of religious beliefs in India. We have explained briefly the emergence and arrival of various religions in India and their core values.

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11.7 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- i) Emile Durkheim, a French Sociologist, believes that nature of religion is shaped by the social conditions in which it exists. It is, therefore, socially constructed. He studied the elementary forms of religion, since he believed that the primitive religions i.e. totemism explains the religious focus of the more complex societies.
- ii) Karl Marx, a German philosopher, developed a critical theory of religion, unlike Durkheim and Max Weber. He says that religion is a ‘false consciousness’ developed by people to disguise the inherent social inequalities and disparities of poverty etc. that exists in society. It is, for this reason he believes that religion is the ‘opium of the masses’ which enables them to accept their social existence.
- iii) Max Weber, a German Sociologist in his celebrated book, ‘The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism’ developed the thesis that the Protestant ethics (a sects of Christianity) in the West, played an important role in the development of modern capitalism in America. This ethic was different from the Oriental religions and even the Catholic beliefs and emphasized upon a distinct economic behaviour.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) A) (d)
B) (c)
- 2) Buddhism was founded by Gautam Buddha during the 6th Century BC in a princely family of Saka clan. This was a period of rapid urbanisation and presence of an extreme orthodox Hinduism. Buddhism came as a protest against caste, as well as, orthodox Hindu rituals.

UNIT 12 RACE AND ETHNICITY*

Structure

12.0 Objectives

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Defining Race

12.2.1 Race as a Social Construction

12.2.2 Racism

12.3 Ethnic Group and Ethnicity

12.3.1 Ethnic Group: Definition and Characteristics

12.3.2 Ethnicity

12.4 Theories of Ethnicity

12.4.1 Primordialist School of Thought

12.4.2 Instrumentalist School of Thought

12.4.3 Situative-Primordial Approach

12.5 Difference between Race and Ethnicity

12.6 Let Us Sum Up

12.7 References

12.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

12.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define the idea of race, racism;
- provide definition and characteristics of ethnic group;
- discuss the concept of ethnicity;
- present the theories of ethnicity; and finally;
- describe the differences between race and ethnicity.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

You learnt about the basic ideas of religion and its linkage to society. How Indian society is a pluralistic society where differences between people are cross-cutting on the basis of language, culture, religion etc. Here in this unit on 'Race and Ethnicity' another distinction is being explained to you which reflects the diversity of India. This Unit will discuss the idea of race and ethnicity. These concepts are frequently used to describe some of the social phenomena of present times. Here, we will initially try to understand the classical definitions of race and ethnicity, ethnic group, its characteristics, etc. We will also elaborate various theories of ethnicity to understand race and ethnicity and how it works in today's world. Race and ethnicity are used in sociological discourse to understand various social structures of power, inequality, stratification, etc. Though, the concepts like race and ethnicity are considered as biological but such concepts have deeper meanings and social constructions. Moreover, they are not just social

* Contributed by Prafulla Kumar Nath, Assam University

constructions, rather they lead to creation of various identities and marginalization of different social groups. Let us elaborate these concepts and ideas associated with them to understand them in a more lucid manner.

12.2 DEFINING RACE

In a common parlance race is understood as the external physical features of various human beings whose categorization depends upon such features like the skin colour, facial features, height, etc. Race is thus a category of human beings due to some of the physical features including skin colour and other facial features. If we see people from various continents and countries, we will see that most of the people of Europe are largely having fair skin where as people of Africa are often having black skin. Apart from the skin colour, some people have curly hair, some have straight hair, some people are short and some are relatively taller. Similarly, we can see differences in shape and size of nose, lips, etc. Depending upon these differences people are clubbed in various groups popularly known as race, such as, Caucasian, Mongoloid, Negroid, etc. These categories are considered as biological i.e. they are inherited, hence widely race is regarded as a biological category. Thus, a racial group is described as a group having similar physical traits. It is a condition where a group sees similar characteristics between themselves and sees others as different. Such kinds of divisions were made basically by the physical anthropologists during 18th century and considered as scientific classifications of human beings.

The idea of race emerged during 18th and 19th century when European countries started colonising the rest of the world. Such categorization helped to establish the whites Men supremacy over other populations, as well as, domination and conquest. The ethnocentrism of the whites prevented them to look humans as species rather than categorizing them in terms of physical appearances. Along with the physical features most of the times behavioral characteristics were also added to various races. Frederick Farrar in 1866 lectured on the “Aptitude of Races” where he divided people into 3 groups based on civilization:

Savage: All Africans, indigenous people, people of color (with the exception of the Chinese).

Semi savage: Chinese who were once savage type but now well civilized.

Civilized: European, Aryan and Semitic peoples.

Carolus Linnaeus, a German Taxonomist, classified human beings into four categories depending upon the skin colour:

- 1) American (Red)
- 2) European (White)
- 3) Asian (Yellow)
- 4) African (Black)

He also said that Americans are ill-tempered, subduable, Europeans are serious and strong, Asians are melancholy and greedy, and the African are listless and lazy.

Though, race is considered to be biological but in sociological understanding, race is considered as a social construction rather than biological. Many authors

consider race as a category of social stratification. Smedley (1998) argues that till 17th century there was no historical record that the idea of race existed. He further argues that race is “premier source of human identity” (Smedley, 1998, p. 690). He says that:

“The term race had been used to refer to humans occasionally since the sixteenth century in the English language but was rarely used to refer to populations in the slave trade. It was a mere classificatory term like kind, type, or even breed, or stock, and it had no clear meaning until the eighteenth century. During this time, the English began to have wider experiences with varied populations and gradually developed attitudes and beliefs that had not appeared before in Western history. This reflected a new kind of understanding and interpretation of human difference.”

The Europeans colonized parts of Africa, Asia and other countries and justified their claim of superiority over others. They took help of religion, beliefs and even science. They legitimized the slavery of the blacks, supremacy and various other rights of the whites. Such beliefs of racial superiority of the whites they believed gave them the rights to colonise other populations. The racial distinctions and the physical features normalized the idea that whites are superior and others are lesser form of human beings.

12.2.1 Race as a Social Construction

Though it is widely believed by many that race is a biological category but, sociologists, social scientists and even biologists argue that race is not a biological or inherited category rather it is a social construct. As we have mentioned above initially, it was presumed that race is biological, historical and scientific but nowadays it is considered as a myth. The biological studies over race and its genetics indicate that within a so called given race much more variations are found than between the races. It implies that there are no special genetic markers to differentiate people in the name of race. Two people from the same race have even sometime more differences in comparison to the people of different races. The diversity of people many a times are influenced by the geographical locations. So, there is no biological base of classifying people. There is a social basis of their classification. It has its own history and politics of classifying people. The creation of racial identities is a process of creation of hierarchies between people, thereby, some groups enjoy power and privileges. The idea of race hence has no scientific basis. The skin colour of people varies due to the presence of pigment and melanin in the skin.

12.2.2 Racism

As historians and other scholars admit the fact that humans originated in Africa and migrated to different geographical locations in various phases of history. People adopted the geographical differences and adopted the favorable traits suitable in these particular environments. Moreover, there is so much of intermixing between people that biological category has already been lost.

During the 18th and 19th century the colonial powers in different places of the world used racism to establish their supremacy. They even took the help of religion and science to establish their racial supremacy and differences. Darwin’s

theory of “survival of the fittest” was used by the colonial powers to justify their genocide and racism. This theory means that the strong would survive and the weak would die. They considered themselves stronger than others and hence, they legitimized their supremacy of power and race. The colonized also legitimized slavery as well as lots of other myths to create subordination of the Blacks and other colonized people. Race is a process of creation of ‘othering’, i.e. the process by which you separate yourself from other people in terms of superiority and inferiority. This is also a process through which some people are marginalized, dominated and controlled. It also creates various kinds of stereotypes in our society. The racial categorization was made to accept the fact that whites are superior to the others and also gave the legitimacy to it. Thus, the idea of race was not scientific rather a process of racialization of groups. We can sum up that race was a social construction where cultural meaning is attached or imposed on it. Even the very idea of race has changed over time. For example, in Brazil and other countries, the class position is more important than the colour. Even the inter-racial marriages are taking place within the white dominated countries. However, the point being framed is that race is a social construct.

Activity 1

From the internet, download the film by Spielberg, “Schindler’s List” or read Anne-Franks diary written as a victim of the Holocaust during II Word War, when Jews were killed enmass. Write an essay on ‘Racism’ in at least two pages and discuss with other students at your Study Center.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Define and discuss the concept of race in about 10 lines.

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- 2) What do you understand by racism?

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12.3 ETHNIC GROUP AND ETHNICITY

Ethnicity in simple language is the sense of belongingness of an individual or group to an ethnic group. An individual or group, how they relate himself/herself/ themselves to a particular ethnic group due to various cultural traits is said to be ethnicity. Hence, ethnicity is more a cultural than biological. However, there are

debates on the idea of ethnic group and ethnicity as some scholars believe that ethnicity is natural and some scholars believe that it is a social construction. Hence let us elaborate the idea of ethnicity and ethnic group.

12.3.1 Ethnic Group: Definition and Characteristics

An ethnic group is best understood in terms of its ancestry; i.e. how the members of the group relate themselves to a particular mythical character or a myth about how it originated. It is thus a common belief among the members that they are descendents of a particular mythical character or of similar origin. As such, ethnic group is best understood in terms of a collectivity – being a member of the group. The collectivity may be through blood relation, language, culture, kinship ties, religion etc.

Hutchinson and Smith consider six characteristic features of an ethnic group:

- i) a common *proper name*, to identify and express the “essence” of the community;
- ii) a myth of *common ancestry* that includes the idea of common origin in time and place and that gives an ethnic a sense of fictive kinship;
- iii) Shared a *historical memories*, or better, shared memories of a common past or pasts, including heroes, events, and their commemoration;
- iv) one or more *elements of common culture*, which need not be specified but normally includes religion, customs, and language;
- v) a *link with a homeland*, not necessarily its physical occupation and ancestral land, as with diaspora peoples; and
- vi) a *sense of solidarity* on the part of at least some sections of the ethnic’s population (Hutchinson and Smith 1996, 6-7).

Box 12.0

The origin and resurgence of ethnicity lie in intergroup contact, that is, when different groups come into contact with one another’s sphere of influence. Of course, the shape it takes depends on the conditions in that society. The second point is that ethnicity is used to meet the present demands of survival for the oppressed groups. When subjugated groups find it difficult to tolerate the dominance of others and make efforts to improve their position, ethnicity is generated. (Ref. IGNOU, 2010, ESO-14 Block 3, pg. 9)

Schermerhorn on the other hand describes ‘ethnic community’ or ‘*ethnie*’ to understand the content of an ethnic group. He holds, “An ethnic group is defined here as a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as a localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features, or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some kind of consciousness among members of the group” (Schermerhorn 1978, 17).

Thus, Schermerhorn looks into various elements which form an ethnic group. Such elements are kinship ties, language, religion, etc.

Anthony D Smith defines *ethnie* (ethnic communities) as “a named human population with shared ancestry, myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity” (Smith 1986: 32). Here, Smith refers to the ethno-symbolic importance of a group, where shared past and the history binds the members of the group.

The classical anthropologists have given some characteristics of an ethnic group; as given below:

- It is largely biologically self-perpetuating.
- Shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms.
- It makes up a field of communication and interaction.
- It has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as a continuing category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. (Narroll 1964, quoted in Barth 1969, 12-13)

Fredrik Barth however, in his analysis of ethnic group added the idea of boundary to understand the ethnic group. He holds that it is not the cultural markers that makes a group distinct rather the boundary makes it distinct. He holds that “the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” (Barth 1969, 15). He further says that the social interactions make a group distinct. The common belief or the subjective understanding that cultural markers make a group distinct replaced by Barth saying that the processing of boundaries differentiate a group from other groups. As such, ethnicity is largely based on social interactions with other groups. Ethnic boundaries hence are the products of social action. The social contacts create the distinction of a group in relation to other groups. Eriksen holds that “group identities must always be defined in relation to that which they are not. In other words, the identity is defined in relation to non-members of the group” (Eriksen, 1993: 10). The ethnic groups are understood with the cultural differences with other groups. The ethnic groups are not found in isolation but found in relation to other groups only.

Box 12.1

Those aspiring for higher positions in administration equipped themselves with Persian and its later version Urdu, nationalist in conformance with their nationalistic and patriotic needs produced rich literature in regional dialects and languages. Oral tradition became the most significant tool for protecting rich cultural and linguistic heritage of each ethnic group. Orientalist admit that the literature available in native Indian languages is far richer than the produce of English Language, which rules the roost in the world today. English made in roads into Indian cultural fabric as a vector for modernization and political empowerment. In the post independence period, it came to be projected as the language for the powerful and rich, it also acquired natural acceptance in the early period of language riots.

(Ref: IGNOU, 2010, ESO-14, Block 3, pg. 42)

12.3.2 Ethnicity

As we have mentioned above, ethnicity is the sense of belongingness of individual or group to a particular ethnic group. As an individual of this group you share cultural markers which make your group distinct from others. Hence, his/her

sense of group identity is said to be ethnicity. Eriksen defines ethnicity as an aspect of “social relationship between agents who *consider themselves* as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. The first fact of ethnicity is the application of systematic distinctions between insiders and outsiders or between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. If no such principle exists, there can be no ethnicity” (Eriksen 2002, 12-19).

12.4 THEORIES OF ETHNICITY

There are three schools of thought to analyse ethnicity in the social science discourse. These are :

- 1) Primordialist school of thought
- 2) Instrumental school of thought, and
- 3) Situative primordialist school of thought.

The first two schools of thought i.e. primordialist and instrumentalist hold polar opposite views on formation of ethnicity. The situative primordialist approach has taken the elements from both these two thoughts. The primordialists believe that ethnicity is a given category and one’s ethnicity cannot be changed. The instrumentalists argue that ethnicity is a construction constructed by the elites of a community, and it is a social, political and a cultural construction. Let us discuss these three kinds of thoughts on ethnicity separately.

12.4.1 Primordialist School of Thought

The primordial school believes that ethnicity is innate; i.e. ethnicity is the fixed or given characteristic of individuals and community. It believes that ethnicity is ascriptive. It is achieved through birth. It is permanent and can not be changed. The ethnicity or the ethnic identity goes with her primordial attachment to a group. Shils, Glazer, Moynihan, Rex, are some of the scholars associated with this school of thought who believe that ethnicity is a primordial phenomenon. For them, ethnicity is “subjectively held sense of shared identity based on objective cultural and regional criteria” (Phadnis & Ganguly 2003, 23).

American sociologist Edward Shils in 1957 in his essay on “Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties: Some Particular Observations on the Relationship of Sociological Research Theory”, developed the idea of the *primordial*. He looked into different kinds of social bonds between members in modern society. Shils examined the public civil ties in modern societies as well as primordial ties existing in family, religion and ethnic groups. In such kinds of ties the manifestation of such ties occurs in the symbols and ceremonies or occasions. (Shils 1957, 130-145). For Shils, various primordial ties may be real or imaginary, but what is important, is that it relates the community to its historical origin. Similarly, the kinship ties bind the members to a common ancestor. In modern societies also such kinds of primordial ties exist. Moreover, Shills also says that the culture that is shared by the members can be considered as naturally given. Thus, ethnic bonds are *natural* and *given*. They can not be acquired. As a result, primordialism gives the scope to identify a community in terms of kinship relations, and ancestry.

The idea of primordialism was further developed by the American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz. He holds that :

“The primordial attachment means something ‘given’ – In such attachments culture is inevitably involved. The social existence is given with contiguity and kin connection of the idea of ‘givenness’ stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to be inevitable. The social existence is, born and given with certain degree of coerciveness. The primordial attachment shapes the identify (Geertz, 1964, 259-60)

The Primordial school of thought thus, looks ethnic bonds as primordial, ancient, natural, emotional and given. Thus, ethnicity is considered as static and naturalistic. But the major problem with the primordialists is that they have failed to explain about different kinds of identities that emerged at different points of time. Similarly many kinds of identities also get decayed or changed. They do not take into account the dynamic character of identity and the foundation of now identity.

12.4.2 Instrumentalist School of Thought

The instrumentalists look at ethnicity not in terms of the primordial qualities but they consider ethnicity to be socially and politically constructed over time. Ethnicity is a necessary instrument in achieving certain goals. The instrumentalists treat ethnicity as the social, political and cultural resource for different interest groups. Paul Brass, Ted Gurr and Abner Cohen are some scholars who belong to this school of thought.

As mentioned, for the instrumentalists, ethnicity is a construction, constructed by the elites of a particular group for certain interest of the group. Since, ethnicity is a construction, the ethnic boundaries become flexible and changing over time.

Paul Brass argues that the “cultural forms, values and the practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantages. They become symbols and referents for the identification of members of the group, which are called up in order to create a political identity more easily. The symbols used to create a political identity also can be shifted to adjust to political circumstances and the limitations imposed by the state authorities” (Brass 1991,15).

Brass thus argues that ethnicity is constructed by the elites of a group. The major motive behind such construction is to share or occupy the state resources both political and economic. He explains that elites select the cultural tools and define the ethnicity of the groups. He says, “elites and counter-elites within ethnic groups select aspects of the group’s culture, attach new value and meaning to them, and use them as symbols to mobilize the group, to defend its interests, and to compete with other groups (1979: 40-41). In support of his claim that ethnicity is a construction, Brass explains that “ it is quite obvious that there are very few groups in the world today whose members can lay any serious claim to a known common origin, it is not actual descent that is considered essential to the definition of an ethnic group but a belief in a common descent” (*ibid*,70).

12.4.3 Situative-Primordial Approach

The situative-primordialist approach examines both the schools of thought of ethnicity. This approach claims that primordialist and instrumentalist approaches raise many questions but do not answer them in the present global scenario. Carsten Wieland in his situative-primordialist approach criticizes the other two approaches which agree that. It is to be mentioned that the above two approaches agreeing in some points that ethnicity is a process of group formation. The primordialists consider ethnicity as given, natural and objective and hence ethnic group is a solid unit but Wieland in his approach takes ethnicity as an independent variable in comparative politics. According to him, ethnic factors independently influences the political outcomes (*ibid*,18).

The instrumentalist approach on the other hand considers ethnicity as construction. It is subjective and flexible and constructed by the elites of a community. The, ethnic group is also an interest group but Wieland holds the view that an ethnic group and the ethnicity are the products of exterior influences, and hence, they are dependent variables but, as soon, as they one formed, they independently influence the decision-making processes.

Criticizing these two approaches, Wieland argues that as primordialists consider ethnic groups as natural and ethnic identity as fixed, they do not prove their assumptions. They are unable to explain why some ethnic groups decay, some reappear, some merge and how now identity is formed. They are also unable to explain why some ethnic characteristics are more important than others and why some ethnic groups fight each other and others co-operate. Wieland has also criticized the instrumentalists because they do not explain how the ethnicity is socio-politically constructed and what is the force operating within ethnicity that the people can be mobilized based on ethnic factor and they may be ready to die for their culture ad ethnic origin (*ibid*, 20) Wieland has critically responded to the primordial and instrumental approaches to ethnicity. He has developed his own situative-primordial approach. Wieland argues that ethnicity is both a dependent and independent variable as explained above. He argues that the ethnicity is a modern invention. In the formation of ethnic groups selective cultural materials are used to generate force into it. He argues that some primordial traits are used to form the ethnicity. Thus, it becomes dependent on primordialism but it influences the society independent of its primordial origin.

Activity 2

Discuss with your family members; neighbours or friends to which part of India they came from; in the sense of their ancestry and how they interact as a social group. Write a page on “Identity and Belonging” and share with your friends your ideas on the topic.

12.5 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RACE AND ETHNICITY

We have seen that race and ethnicity are two different concepts used in social science discourse. Many a times both the terms are used interchangeably but there are some clear distinctions found between them. Although, both are considered as a social construction in understanding of race the biological or

the physical features are important, in understanding ethnicity the cultural markers are important. Race is based on physical features where as ethnicity is based on cultural traits. Ethnicity is defined by the shared culture, history, ancestry, etc. of the members of a group. Race on the other hand can be defined as the shared physical traits.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What is ethnicity and what are its major characteristics?

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2) Discuss one of the major theories of ethnicity in your own words.

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12.6 LET US SUM UP

From the above discussion we have learnt that race and ethnicity are two distinct social constructions. The 18th and the 19th century colonial anthropology and science created the idea of race to create physical differentiation like skin colour, facial or physical differences amongst people different from themselves. The racial classification was used to create hierarchies among the races because it served the interest of the colonial powers. They legitimized their rule on the bases of races. The idea of ethnicity is the idea of group of people who believe to have the same cultural origin, cultural similarities, same language, and religion, etc. Though, race and ethnicity look to be natural, but we have learnt from our discussion that they are two different social constructs.

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12.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Race is commonly understood as the external physical features of different people from different parts of the world; such as, the white complexioned Europeans, Blacks of Africa, mongoloids, people of Asia, and so on. It was defined by the physical anthropologists during 18th century based on physical features it was also to associate certain mental characteristics with them. Thus Farrar in 1866 divided human races into three groups –Savage, Semi-Savage and civilized races.
- 2) Racism is the historical process by which we find during 18th and 19th centuries the colonial powers used it to establish their supremacy. They also used religion and science, sometimes to legitimize their supremacy; such as Darwin's theory of 'natural selection' and 'survival of the fittest' were some explanations used by the colonial rulers. Thus, racism is part of social stratification in societies.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Ethnicity is simply the sense of belonging or belongingness to a certain group on the basis of certain cultural traits. It is a cultural rather than a biological trait. Its major characteristics are based on certain historical memory of belonging to a place or tracing a common ancestry from a mythical ancestor. The ethnic belongingness is how people relate to this group on the basis of blood i.e. ancestry, shared religion, language, culture, kinship ties, etc.
- 2) One of the three theories of ethnicity is the primordial school of thought. It's proponents believe that ethnicity is innate, it is a given characteristic of individuals and community. This school of thought believes that ethnicity is ascriptive i.e. you are born in a social group which you can not change. Its main proponents are Edward Shills (1957); Glazer, Moynihau, etc.

UNIT 13 POLITY AND SOCIETY*

Structure

13.0 Objectives

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Defining Polity

13.2.1 Political System and its Components

13.2.2 The Notion of Power

13.3 State Nation and Society

13.4 Emergence of Indian Nation State

13.4.1 Absence of the Idea of a Nation before 1858

13.4.2 Growth of Nationalism in India

13.5 Nature of Politics in Independent India

13.5.1 Strategy at the Political Level

13.5.2 Strategy at the Economic Level

13.5.3 Forces which challenge Nation-building Efforts

13.6 National Integration

13.7 Let Us Sum Up

13.8 References

13.9 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

13.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define the concept of polity and the political system in society;
- define and distinguish between state nation and society;
- trace the emergence of the Indian nation state;
- describe the strategy and challenges involved in the task of nation building; and
- define national integration and discuss the forces threatening national integration.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit on Race and Ethnicity you learnt about what constitutes the concept of race and ethnicity and its different social and political connotations. Here in this unit on, **Polity and Society** we will attempt to explain to you the meaning of polity and its relationship with society. How the political system exists and distinguish between the concepts of nation, state and society. We have explained the emergence of India as a nation and the challenges that it faces in terms of national integration.

13.2 DEFINING POLITY

Polity and Society are interlinked with each other. All societies have some ways and means to organize its members on the basis of certain social, political, economic criteria. These could be based on age, or sex categories, on criteria of birth in a social group i.e. based on ascription, as in simple tribal societies or caste societies. Power and authority are two dimensions based on which polity or political relations of a certain kind are established. The political institution that exists in all societies is based on certain set of relationships which are formally established and which constitutes the political system.

13.2.1 Political System and its Components

We find that for establishing social relationships people interact with one another. In doing so, they very often pursue their self-interests. These self-interests sometimes run contrary to the interests of others as also to the interests of the society. To serve their own interests people use the means of power and they control the interests of others. This situation invariably leads to conflict. For maintaining an orderly arrangement of social relationships, we need to both resolve the conflict and coordinate diverse activities of people. This is generally done by exercising power and imposing some kinds of constraint on people's behaviour. When social relationships are organised around the dimension of power, we say that we now move from the general area of social interaction to a more specialised area of power relationships. When the power relationships are systematised and ascribed specific functions, we speak of them as a political system. Thus, political systems develop whenever the relationships among individual and groups are organised according to the exercise of power and its various manifestations. These might range from sporadic meetings of village elders in simple societies to highly organised states. In order to understand the specific manner in which power operates at the national level, it is appropriate for us to first understand the notion of power and its relation to the definition of political system in general. Then we can also look at its link with the specific case of nation-states.

13.2.2 The Notion of Power

The ability to do something or anything, or to act upon a person or things, is the definition of power as given in the dictionary. Viewed in this way, power is a basic concept in social sciences. It implies the influence that any person, group or organisation brings to bear on the actions of others. In this sense, anyone seeking to serve an interest by eliciting a response from others is described as exercising one's power. This means that one has social power, which can be used to make another person do what is wanted. This social power is essentially an aspect of inter-personal relationships.

Let us see what happens if we were to take the use of social power as a criterion to define the political system. This would imply that almost all human actions and interactions would fall in the domain of politics. This would be the widest possible definition of politics. The political scientists do not accept it. Let us see what they have to say.

Delimiting the Domain of Politics: The political scientists argue that this view of politics reduces it to the level of a very commonplace and broad subject. They therefore delimit the domain of politics and reserve the term politics' to designate the domain where social power is used in public sphere rather than in private sphere. Thus, for example, what happens within the family, in terms of power relations, is not included in the category of politics. When the family or its representative participates in the affairs of the neighbourhood or the village by influencing others' opinions and actions, it is described as politics. Viewed in this way, power and its various manifestations, such as, authority, coercion, force etc. are the recognised terms for discussing politics. **Concept of Authority:** For further delimiting the special field of political relations, it is useful to apply the concept of authority. It refers to the legitimacy of the use of power. When power relationships in the public domain become regularised, and therefore to some extent predictable, they are also closely guided by the appropriate norms. People acknowledge the right of the political authority to exercise power. This implies the existence of a clear system of acceptance of the political institutions through which the authority or the legitimate use of power is exercised. In other words, power becomes authority because the actors involved in this relationship accept (to a greater or lesser degree) the legitimacy of those issuing commands. They are not physically compelled to comply, they do so willingly. Such systematised political relations are generally referred to as political systems.

More Restricted View of Politics: Taking an even more restricted view of politics, sociologists, like Max Weber, confine the political relations to an organisation of individuals. For them, this organisation is to be territorially defined. Secondly it has to be based on the ultimate sanction of physical force. In other words, Max Weber is referring to the notion of state as it has emerged in the modern sense. For the purpose of describing political relations at the national level, we need to focus on this restricted meaning of politics.

But as sociologists, we should not forget that political relationships are also present in those societies, which do not have a specialised political institution like the state. In a large number of tribal societies, political authority is not based on territory. For example, the nomadic tribals like the Gujjar in India and the Roma or Gypsies in Europe have councils to regulate the behaviour of deviant members, to settle disputes, to provide social security to their members. Yet, they do not have a state.

Here, as we are dealing with political relations, at the national level, in a society which has a fully developed state, we need to discuss the concepts of state and nation. Only then we can proceed to follow the story of the emergence of nation-state in India.

Check Your Progress I

- i) What are the two essential requirements for an orderly arrangement of social relationships? Use four lines for your answer.

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ii) What is a political system? Answer in five lines.

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iii) Define power and authority in the context of politics. Use five lines for your answer.

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iv) What do we mean when we say there is restricted view of politics? Use seven lines for your answer.

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13.3 STATE, NATION AND SOCIETY

While discussing politics in modern times, we generally talk of the state, the nation and the society. In the context of Western European experience, the three terms are somewhat coterminous. This is not so in the case of many other places. It is, therefore, essential that we first define these terms.

- i) **State:** The state is a political association, which is characterised by
- a) territorial jurisdiction,
 - b) more or less non-voluntary membership
 - c) a set of rules which define the rights of its members by way of a constitution and
 - d) claims to legitimacy of power over its members.

The member of a state is usually referred to as a citizen. More often than not, the state is coterminous with nationality.

- ii) **Nation:** The term refers to group of people who have developed solidarity on the basis of common identity of culture, religion, language and state etc.

The national identity of any group, which defines itself as such, may be based on any number of criteria, such as the place of residence, ethnic origin, culture, religion, language.

- iii) **Society:** It is the broadest category of social organisation which includes a large number of social institutions, like kinship, family, economy and polity. In this sense, the term society refers to social relationships which are interlinked. In interacting with each other people form social relationships. Repeated and regularised patterns of social relationships become institutionalised and hence as a relational concept society includes the study of social institutions.

On the other hand, as a substantial concept the term society is a general term which may encompass the state or the nation. It can also be coterminous with either or both of them. For example, the Germanic Society may include the German speaking people of East Germany, West Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland etc. Take another example, Hindu society may include the citizens of Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The state may similarly include a number of societies. For example, the Indian State includes diverse societies based on region, religion or language. The tribal societies, such as the Bhil, the Gond or the Naga, form an integral part of the Indian State.

Having discussed the concepts of state, nation and society, we now turn to the nature of politics in Indian society. For this purpose, in the next section, we will discuss the emergence of Indian nation state. You may ask what is a nation state. A nation state refers to a state organised for governing a nation, or perhaps two or more closely related nations. The territory of such a nation is determined by national boundaries and its law is determined, at least in part, by national customs and expectations. In this sense, India can also be discussed as a nation state and to discuss the nature of its national politics, we must first look at the way in which the Indian nation state emerged.

Check Your Progress II

- i) What is a society? Use about five lines for your answer.

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- ii) What is a nation? Use about three lines for your answer.

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iii) What is a state? Use about three lines for your answer.

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13.4 EMERGENCE OF INDIAN NATION STATE

Indian national politics is influenced by the historical experience of nation-building. This experience is marked by efforts to bring together a large number of social groups in a common national identity. The nature of national politics in the post-independence period can be easily grasped if we outline a brief sketch of the historical experience. Here, we first describe the situation in India before 1858, when there was a relative absence of the idea of nation. Then we look at the period of British rule when growth of nationalism took place in India.

13.4.1 Absence of the Idea of a Nation before 1858

Before the advent of the British rule in India and establishment of sovereign rule of the British crown in 1858, India was characterised by a large number of small and large political units. These units waged a constant struggle to maintain their authority over the dominions and protected themselves from the attacks by other political units. Although there were some large scale empires such as the Maurya, the Gupta, the Chola and the Pandya, the entire country that we know of as India was never united politically under any rule. As such, we had no 'Indian State' to speak of until the British imposed their **hegemony** on India.

This does not, however, mean that we had no Indian national identity. Even without a politically unified territory, many factors combined and gave the country an identity of oneness. Although people lived all their lives in villages, these villages were not as self-contained isolated islands as was made by some Western scholars. People moved for marriage, for pilgrimage and for trade. The religious beliefs, practices and institutions provided the people a unifying force (Kothari 1986). One example of the unity can be seen in the setting of four seats of religious authority in four corners of India by Adi Sankaracharya. We may thus see the awareness of commonality, however nebulous it may be. This awareness grew out of one's participation in the world which existed beyond one's immediate geographical area. This consciousness did not, however, get translated into the political domain and we had therefore no national identity in the sense in which we talk of it today. The identity of the commonality that we had before the British can perhaps be best expressed as a cultural identity as a nation and not as a political identity as a nation.

13.4.2 Growth of Nationalism in India

The establishment of the British rule, although it enslaved us, paradoxically also started a process of our liberation. It made us think of ourselves as not only a cultural unity but also as a political unity. The growth of nationalism can

be seen in the efforts made by Indians for removing the British rule from this country. Although we were always divided in numerous ways in terms of language, religion, ethnic composition, two factors facilitated the emergence of Indian nationalism.

- i) One was the presence of a common enemy, i.e., the British rule, and
- ii) the other was the existence of a common cultural identity that preceded the unification of India as one state.

The various struggles, violent, non-violent, constitutional, extra-constitutional against the British further unified the diverse groups in India. Thus, Nehru's well-known phrase 'unity in diversity' was not merely a cliché (cliché is a phrase made common by repetition), but a factual description of the Indian experience. Our purpose is, here, not to go into the details of the Indian national movement. Rather we need to discuss how our nation state came into being. For this purpose we shall in the next section describe how during the post-Independence period a modern nation state developed in India. We should also remember that the process of nation-building was not complete on attaining independence. It is, in fact, a continuing process and is reflected in the nature of politics. We can also say that it is a process of translating cultural identity into a political national identity. Let us now look at the nature of politics in independent India so that we can make out how this translation takes place.

Activity 1

Read a book written by Mahatma Gandhi like *My Experiments with Truth* or by Jawaharlal Nehru like *The Discovery of India* or by any other leader of the national movement for independence. Look at what the author has to say about

- a) the attitude of the British towards the Indian leader's cause for freedom.
- b) the people who joined hands in freedom struggle (men/women from different regions, castes, classes and religions).
- c) the important events which marked the struggles for independence.

Make a two-page note on the above points and discuss, if possible, your note with the notes of other students in the study centre.

13.5 NATURE OF POLITICS IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

The major task for the independence movement was not merely to attain political independence from the British rule but also to develop a modern nation state. We can say that some definite steps in this direction were taken at the political level while others were at the economic level. We can discuss both types of strategies followed in India for nation-building.

13.5.1 Strategy at the Political Level

The political organisation, which was carrying out the activity of nation-building in India, was mainly the Indian National Congress Party. This political party consisted of diverse sections of population and activists, in some cases, with

diametrically opposite political ideology. The members of the Congress Party belonged to different strata of society from the so-called untouchables on the one hand and to the Brahmin and Thakur on the other. There were those who swore by Marxism and some others who wanted '*Hindu Rashtra*' and yet others who wanted to promote Islamic nationalism. Such diversity was not accidental. The leaders of the party were drawn from the urban professional classes. They were convinced that nation-building was as important as political independence. Hence the major thrust of their political activity was to bring together as many diverse groups as possible. The same theme is also visible in the politics after the independence of India.

The Constitution: The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, was the first attempt at nation-building. We have a written constitution, which is a comprehensive document. It provides the foundation or the design of the government. Let us see what this design is.

India has a federal government. A federal government in India implies that authority is divided between the centre and the states. The Constitution has established a parliamentary system of government at both the centre and the states. The word 'parliament' has different connotations, the important ones being that it is an assembly of representatives of the people and it is a body of persons gathered for discussion. In our context, parliament refers to the legislative organ of the government. The President is the constitutional head of the country and the council of ministers headed by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the head of the executive which is responsible to the Lok Sabha. The parliament consists of the President and the two Houses, namely the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and the House of the People (Lok Sabha).

In the states, the council of ministers is headed by the 'Chief Minister' who is responsible to the Legislative Assembly. Every state has a legislature. Some states have one House while others have two. Where there is one House it is known as the Legislative Assembly or *Vidhan Sabha* and where there are two Houses, one is called the legislative Council (*Vidhan Parishad*) and the other is known as Legislative Assembly (*Vidhan Sabha*). India is a parliamentary democracy and this means that the government is derived from public opinion. It requires political parties, rule by the majority and a responsible government through discussion. Figure 13.1 shows the different constituents of Indian national politics.

By way of building up a united nation state the Constitution of India also lays down, among other things, some "Fundamental Duties" of Indian citizens. Some of them are (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem, (b) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all people of India, (c) to protect natural environment, (d) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform, (e) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture and so on. Our Constitution not only provides fundamental rights to citizens but also gives directives to the state to provide the necessary economic, social and political benefits to the citizens. It goes to the credit of the leaders of the early phase of independent India, who were sensitive to the potential disruption of the Indian polity. Our national leaders believed that the Constitution of India would help to integrate the people into a united nation.

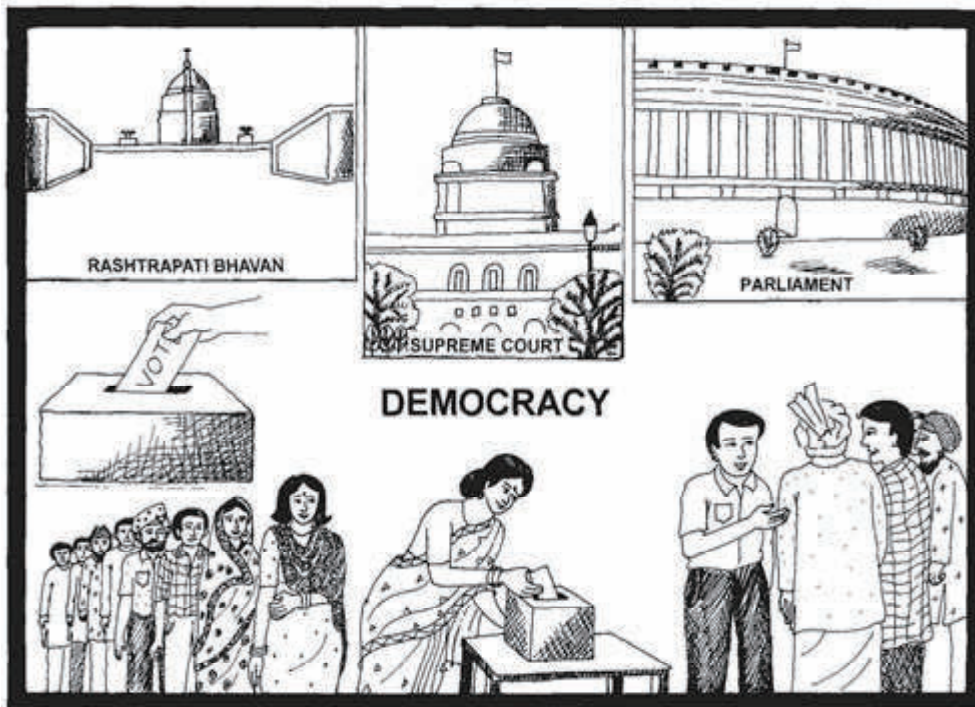


Fig. 13.1: National politics

Socialist Pattern: The adoption of socialist pattern of society in order to curb or reduce inequalities in society constituted another attempt of the Indian polity toward nation-building. This too helped to contain divisive tendencies. The inclusion of as many segments of the population as possible was achieved by granting special privileges to the scheduled castes, the tribals, the backward classes, the other backward castes and the religious minorities.

One of the remarkable features of the early phase was that despite the struggle for political power, political parties had no major dissension regarding the thrust of politics. The thrust was to keep together diverse elements of the population and to include the hitherto excluded categories into the mainstream of national politics.

You should keep in mind that the process of nation-building is not yet complete. This is one reason why we cannot and should not say anything much with finality about this process. Instead, we should now turn to the process of nation-building at the economic level.

Check Your Progress III

i) What are the two factors, which have helped the emergence of Indian nationalism? Answer in four lines.

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ii) Outline the attempts at nation-building at the political level? Use four lines for your answer.

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iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true or F for false against each statement.

- a) The Members of the Indian National Congress Party at the time of attainment of independence were drawn from one caste mainly.
- b) A federal government denotes that authority is divided between the centre and the states.
- c) India is a parliamentary democracy.
- d) The parliament consists of the President and the two houses namely the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha.

13.5.2 Strategy at the Economic Level

The second major step taken by the political leadership was the economic resurgence of the country. Any political regime gains legitimacy when it can satisfy the needs of the people. The satisfaction of the people in turn depends upon the availability of goods to be distributed. Hence the first task for the Indian state was to build the economy. This was more so in the light of the bad shape of Indian economy at that time. The colonial policies of the British were largely based on exploitation of the raw materials available in India at cheapest possible rates, to be used by industry in Britain. India was used as market place for their finished goods. The result of the policy was that industry did not develop in the country. The little industrialisation that took place during the British rule was due to its importance in international politics. This did not at all help the economic development of the country. Thus, it was inevitable that after the independence, definite steps were taken to revise the economy. Formulation of Five-Year Plans for regulating the economic activity was one such step. For this purpose the Government of India established the Planning Commission.

The planning process is not merely an economic activity. It is also a political activity. The Planning Commission not only decides about which sector has to produce how much, it also allocates projects to various states. This is where political decisions have to be made. Let us take a concrete example. Suppose the government decides to establish a steel plant. It is not only in terms of the economic viability of location of a steel plant that a decision is made. The Commission takes into account the costs and benefits in economic terms and it also considers the decision in terms of possible offsetting regional imbalance in location of industries. Similarly, the balance has to be maintained between the various interest groups, which have emerged around different sectors of the economy. For this purpose, take the simple example of the use of electric power.

How much electricity should be made available to industry as against agriculture is a political decision. In the economic sphere, as in the social and political spheres, national politics has followed the policy of reconciling different interests and thereby avoiding conflicts to surface.

The Indian nation state not only concentrated on making available goods for distribution, but it also decided to follow the path of distributive justice. Distributive justice refers to achieving a fair and equal distribution of goods and services among all people. The intentions for distributive justice are clear in India's adoption of a socialist pattern of society. A socialist pattern of society denotes that people have equal opportunities and equal rights. The state as an administrative device guarantees individuals their rights. It distributes goods and services equally and fairly for the welfare of the people. It also strives for elimination of rigid systems of control. For example, private property is permissible in India, but only in so far as it does not amount to a system of control of the owner over another who does not own it. We can also find instances of distributive justice in many social legislations, such as the Industrial Disputes Act, which protects the rights of the industrial workers, or, the Untouchability Offences Act, which protects the untouchable castes from discrimination or the Hindu Marriage Act, which grants rights to Hindu women. Thus our nation-building efforts involve not only goals of development but also equality and social justice. The latest in terms of strategy at the economic level is adoption of the New Economic Policy of liberalisation of economy. About this step you have already read in Unit 12 and therefore we would now proceed to look at the factors, which have challenged our efforts for nation-building.

13.5.3 Forces which Challenge Nation-building Efforts

A host of interrelated factors have disrupted efforts to achieve goals of equality and social justice as well as building a nation state. We can see at least three main forces.

- i) The diversity of groups which constitute Indian society.
- ii) Regional and cultural identities.
- iii) Casteism.

Let us take a brief look at each of these forces.

- i) **Diversity of Constituents:** India is a heterogeneous society. It is made of a number of diverse groups. The first potential threat to the Indian nation state lies in this plurality. The Indian society was and is divided in terms of religion, caste, language and ethnic origin. The British were able to somewhat control the diverse groups by following the policy of pitting one group against the other. But the divisive tendencies were sharply manifested even during the nationalist movement when different groups apparently united to remove the British rule from India. One of the more serious challenges that Indian national leaders in India face even now is how to integrate the interests of the divergent groups. Each of them has its own distinctive aspirations, history, and way of life. Attempts to minimise confrontation between conflicting groups do not always succeed. As we have already seen, the adoption of an egalitarian model of society is one

important strategy to contain the divisive tendencies. It is, of course, necessary that these divisions are not allowed to threaten the nation state.

- ii) **Regional and Cultural Identities:** The task of nation-building has also faced a threat from regionalism. We find that national politics in our country is still marked by emergence of regional nationalities. This is quite evident in the formation of states on linguistic basis. It is also evident in demands by some regional identities such as the Gorkha for Gorkhaland and by some tribals for a separate Jharkhand state before November 2000. But there have been instances that the government of India conceded to such demands for a separate state. The agitation started by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha for a separate state impelled to establish the Jharkhand Area Autonomous council in 1995 and finally a full-fledged state in November 2000 (India 2003).

You should not take this to mean that the regional identities should not be emphasised. Some may like to argue that regionalism does not augur (foretell) well, it harbinger political disintegration of the country. But as the nation has faced such problems earlier, the process of reconciliation has given its polity the ability to accommodate regionalism within its orbit. The **politics of reconciliation** harmonises the diverse interests of various groups in a national framework.

Despite the early gains of consolidation of the nation state, diverse cultural identities asserted themselves. One example of this is the opposition in the southern states to Hindi as the national language. Another example is the demand for reorganisation of states. Yet another example is the assertion by religious minorities of their right to regulate the lives of their members.

As a matter of fact, the national level politics has recognised the existence of regional and cultural identities and the central government has even provided legal sanctions. The Constitution of India recognised fifteen national languages till 1992. In 1992 through a Constitutional Amendment (71st Amendment) three more languages were added to the Eighth Schedule and making the list of national languages to 18. As on 2003 there are 18 national languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution (India 2003). It allows each state to carry out its administration in the regional language. It does not interfere in the religious, social and political activities of the minorities. To some people this may appear to provide special protection to the minorities. The number of people holding this view is not very small. But then there are others who consider protection of the rights of minorities as a major gain for the nation. This keeps the nation state together and forges a political unity.

- iii) **Casteism:** The issue of casteism in national politics has been discussed again and again by a number of people, public men, scholars and laymen alike. Caste is one of the more distinguishing institutions of Indian society. Its role in the political sphere is of recent origin. It is widely observed that caste has become the major basis for political articulation. This is so mainly because caste provides the mechanisms for bringing people together. This is also the requirement for a successful democratic state. By politicizing the institution of caste, political process in India has assumed a unique

character. Political parties in India are formed on the basis of caste alliances and voting behaviour of the Indian electorate can be described in terms of caste identity.

As casteism is considered a social evil and caste ideology does not go well with the egalitarian model of a socialist society, role of caste in national politics is viewed as a necessary evil. It is seen a factor which poses a challenge to the task of nation-building. All the same in the absence of an alternative basis for people to come together, caste continues to play a decisive role in Indian national politics.

From what we have discussed so far, it is obvious that the task of building a nation state is not an easy exercise. A growing realisation is that national integration is the key to achieving a political identity. We shall in the next section discuss the concept of national integration.

Check Your Progress IV

i) What was the strategy at the economic level to build up a nation state? Use five lines for your answer.

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ii) What are the three main forces, which pose a challenge to nation building efforts? Use two lines for your answer.

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iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true or F for false against each statement.

- a) The politics of reconciliation involves efforts to harmonise the diverse interests of various groups in a national framework.
- b) In India each state does not have the right to carry out its administration in its own regional language.
- c) Caste is one of the important basis for political articulation.

13.6 NATIONAL INTEGRATION

National integration is a process of developing the different parts of the national social system into an integrated whole. In an integrated society, social institutions and values associated with them have a high degree of social acceptance.

However, linguism, communalism, social inequalities and regional disparities are some of the factors, which threaten the ideal of national integration in India, Let us look at each of them one by one.

- i) **Linguism:** India is a multi-linguistic nation. Language has become, specially since Independence, a powerful source of political articulation. For instance, in the South, particularly in Tamil Nadu, language sentiments have been propagated among the people for getting power within state politics.

The language problem has two aspects, namely (i) medium of instruction at the level of school, college and public service examinations, and (ii) meeting the demands of non-Hindi and Hindi-speaking radicals.

Responding to the first aspect, the Government of India decided to implement a three-language formula. This consists of (a) teaching the regional language, or mother-tongue when the latter is different from the regional language, (b) Hindi or another Indian language in the Hindi speaking area and (c) English or another modern European language. Today for the Union Public Service Commission in India examinations can be written in Hindi or English or in any regional language of the country.

Regarding the second aspect of the language problem, namely, demands of Hindi and non-Hindi speaking radicals, the Government of India passed the Official Language (Amendment) Act, 1967. This Act decided that English will continue to be the official language of the Indian union for all the non-Hindi speaking states until these states themselves would opt for Hindi (Kishore 1987: 41). Thus, Hindi is today only one of the official languages of the Indian Union. The provision made under the above mentioned Act and the three-language formula have helped to reduce the possibility of conflict on the basis of language.

- ii) **Communalism:** Broadly defined, communalism refers to the tendency of any socio-religious group to maximise its economic, political and social strength at the cost of other groups. This tendency runs counter to the notion of the secular nation state that India purports to be. Secularism in the Indian context is defined as the peaceful coexistence of all religions without state patronage to any of them. The state is to treat all of them equally. Yet, in a secular state like India, we very often hear, see and read about communal conflicts. While making conscious efforts towards the goals of democracy and socialism, the Indian nation state has not been free of communal clashes (Kishore 1987: 69).

Activity 2

On the basis of the information you have gathered from newspapers, magazines, radio and TV about caste and politics note down the following facts.

- i) Caste composition of major political parties in your state
ii) What role did the caste factor play in your state in the last Lok Sabha elections?

Describe the role of caste in terms of the issues raised in the election campaign.

iii) **Social Inequalities:** In every society, there is a system of social stratification. Social stratification refers to inequality in society based on unequal distribution of goods, services, wealth, power, prestige, duties, rights, obligations and privileges. Take for example, the social inequalities, created by the caste system. Being a hereditary and endogamous system, the scope for social mobility is very little. Social privileges and financial and educational benefits are by and large accessible to only upper caste groups.

Processes of change, such as democratisation, westernisation and modernisation, have helped to broaden the accessibility to privileges to a wide range of people. Today caste and politics are also very closely associated. Various commissions for backward castes have been formed for reserving seats for their members in educational and occupational spheres. This is a reflection of the politicisation of caste affiliations. While measures to uplift the hitherto exploited and suppressed section of the population are necessary, overemphasis on caste identities has a disintegrative effect on the process of nation-building.

iv) **Regional Disparities:** The unequal development of different regions of India has negatively affected the character of national integration. The unequal development has become the major cause of many social movements after the independence. For instance, the erstwhile Jharkhand movement, which involved tribal groups from Bihar, M.P, Bengal and Orissa, stressed the backwardness of the region among other issues. While demanding a separate state, people involved in this movement argued that the rich natural resources of the area have been drained out to benefit others. The dissatisfaction caused by the perceived and/or actual threat of material deprivation has led people to think that the socio-economic development of their region is not possible if they continue to be a part of the Indian Union. Finally the National Government conceded their demand for a separate state and the three new States of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh were formed in November 2000. The demand in the case of Jharkhand was for a State comprising of tribal areas of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. The new State was created encompassing only parts of Bihar State. The regional disparities in terms of socio-economic development have at times proved to be a threat to the concept of united nation state.

In brief, we can summarise this section by saying that various forces pose a challenge to national integration in India. The government and those concerned with the task of nation-building have utilised many strategies, like planned socio-economic development and expansion of education and mass communication and at times even reorganising the existing states to strengthen and promote the concept of national integration.

Check Your Progress V

i) What is national integration? Use four lines for your answer.

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ii) What are the factors which threaten the ideal of national integration in India? Use four lines for your answer.

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iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true or F for false against each statement.

- a) The three language formula was adopted by way of responding to the problem of medium of instruction at school, college and public service examinations.
- b) Hindi is the only official language of the Indian Union today.
- c) India is a secular state.

13.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed the various aspects of national politics. First we identified the political system and its concept in which we discussed the notion of power and its dimensions in society. We then moved on to define concepts like state, nation and society. In the context of Indian national politics we briefly traced the emergence of Indian nation state and the strategies adopted at the national level to build up a nation state. We also looked at the forces, which have challenged the task of nation-building. In our last section we outlined the issues related to the task of national integration, which we said, is essentially a process of building up a nation state.

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13.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- i) Co-ordination of people's different activities and resolution of conflict emanating from clash of interests are the two requirements for an orderly arrangement of social relationships.

- ii) A political system refers to a system of social relationships among individuals or groups organised around the exercise of power and its various manifestations. The manifestations refer to authority, coercion and force.
- iii) Power is the ability to achieve whatever effect is desired. It implies the influence any person or group or organisation has on the action of others. Authority is the legitimisation of power. Both the concepts are used in the context of politics.
- iv) A restricted view of politics confines the definition of political relations to an organisation of individuals who live in a particular territory. This organisation is also based on the sanction of physical force. This restricted view fails to take note of such political relations, which are not territorially defined.

Check Your Progress II

- i) Society refers to social relationships that are inter-linked. It is also a category of social organisation, which includes a large number of social institutions like kinship, family, economy, polity and communities and association.
- ii) A nation refers to groups of people who have developed solidarity based on common identity of culture, religion, language and state.
- iii) A state refers to a political association, which is characterised by territorial jurisdiction, non-voluntary membership, and a constitution. It also claims to have legitimacy of power over its members.

Check Your Progress III

- i) The two factors which facilitated the emergence of Indian nationalism are (a) the presence of a common enemy (b) the existence of the cultural identity of oneness that preceded the unification of India as one state.
- ii) The adoption of a constitution and a socialist pattern of society constituted the major attempts at nation-building at the political level.
- iii) a) F
b) T
c) T
d) F

Check Your Progress IV

- i) The five-year plans constitute an important strategy at the economic level for nation-building. The Planning Commission is given the responsibility of deciding which sectors has to produce how much and what projects have to be allocated to each state. The principle of distributive justice guides the distribution of goods and services.
- ii) The three main forces are diversity of constituents, regional and cultural identities and casteism.
- iii) a) T

b) F

c) T

Check Your Progress V

- i) National integration is a process of integrating the various and diverse elements of a national social system into a unified whole.
- ii) The factors, which threaten the ideal of national integration in India, are linguism, communalism, social inequalities and regional disparities.
- iii) a) T
b) F
c) T



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UNIT 14 ECONOMY AND SOCIETY*

Structure

14.0 Objectives

14.1 Introduction

14.2 Concept of Economy

14.2.1 Relationship Between Economy and Society

14.3 Types of Economy

14.3.1 Economy Based on Distinction of Scarce Resources

14.3.2 Economy Based on Modes of Production

14.3.3 Economy Based on Accessibility to Employment Security, Work Security and Social Security

14.4 Informal Economy: An overview

14.4.1 Four Dominant Schools of Thought on the Informal Economy

14.4.2 Informal Economy in India

14.4.3 Women and Informal Economy in India

14.5 Strategies for Transition towards Formal Economy

14.6 Let Us Sum Up

14.7 References

14.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

14.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you shall be able to:

- define the concept of economy;
- discuss the relationship between economy and society;
- describe the types of economy;
- provide an overview of informal economy; and
- identify the strategies for transition towards formal economy.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

As you had learnt about the relation between polity and society in the previous unit, in this last unit of this course; Economy and Society, we have described and discussed the relationship between economy and society. Like all basic institutions of society, economy forms the core of human interaction with each other. Thus, we explain to you the different aspects of economy and its types, along with its major features.

14.2 CONCEPT OF ECONOMY

The word economy is a Greek word which means the “household management.” The economics as an area of study attracted the attention of philosophers, notably Aristotle but the modern study of economics began in the 18th century Europe, particularly in Scotland and France.

*Contributed by Otojit Kshetrimayum, NLI, NOIDA

The economy is a system of organizations of production and distribution of goods and services in society. It determines the resource distribution, production of goods and services and their values, also determines what goods and services can be traded and bartered.

14.2.1 Relationship between Economy and Society

The relationship between economy and society is very close. The society influences the economic structure, and economic processes which in turn affect the environment of the society. The economy applies goods and services to everyone, whether it is individual, institution, corporation or the government and its agencies. It supplies them goods and services in the form of commodities to fulfill basic needs of services in the form of work opportunities. The necessities of mankind are the sources of the evolution of economy. Therefore, the forms of the types of economy and the goods and services provided by it to the society vary by time and necessities of mankind. Those human necessities are governed by culture, laws, environment conditions and the structure of the society. Being governed by these factors, those necessities define the nature and the type of production of the economy. The goods domestic productions is an index of productive capacity of economy. The GDP in turn affects the overall development of the society.

14.3 TYPES OF ECONOMY

Economy of a society can be understood from three perspectives:

- i) There are economies which are based on the way scarce resources get distributed within an economy. There are four primary types of economies based on the distribution of scarce resources. They are traditional, centralised, market and mixed.
- ii) These four types of economies based on the modes of production. They are the asiatic, ancient, feudal, and capitalist.
- iii) These economies are based on the accessibility to employment security and social security, work security. They are the formal and the informal sectors of economy.

14.3.1 Economy Based on Distribution of Scarce Resources

i) **Traditional economy**

The traditional economy consists of small units of production, catering largely to the needs of family, tribal group and communities. Which support the small units of production of goods and services. Such economic units are closely linked with local customs, traditions and beliefs. They are not profit oriented and their reliance is more on trading and bartering of goods and services among the social communities. They are engaged in economic activities like agriculture, harvesting, animal husbandry, fishing, food gathering, hunting, herbal production.

ii) **Centralised economy**

This is system of economy is whiter centralized decision-making on a central economic matters takes place. There is a centralized or the government or a

collective control over the means of production, particularly the land. Such a system of production of goods and services does not rely more on the laws of demand and supply which operate in a market economy. It is not like the traditional system of economy but similar to the public economy or collectivized economy or the government run public sector economy.

iii) **Market economy**

The market economy is a capitalist form of economy where the production of goods and services is guided by the market forces where the government intervention is minimum. In this system the laws of demand and supply govern the production of goods and services. Here, capital (both material and non-material) plays an important role in managing resources, labour, market forces, profit, capital assets, and even in managing decision-making, political forces, consumers, accumulation of wealth and in managing the social structure of the society to cope with the business interest and the interest of the market forces. It has much stronger profit motive as compared to the centralized public sector economy.

iv) **Mixed economy**

The mixed economy is a system that combines the business characteristics of both the centralized public sector economy and the open market or private sector economy. It protects public interest and allows open market forces and the use of capital. It also allows interference from the centralized government bodies in strategic areas of economic activities in order to protect public interests.

Activity 1

Discuss with your friends and family members about what they think about the “Economic Growth in India – Its strengths and its Weaknesses”. Write an essay of about five pages on this topic and discuss it with other students and Academic Counsellor of your study center.

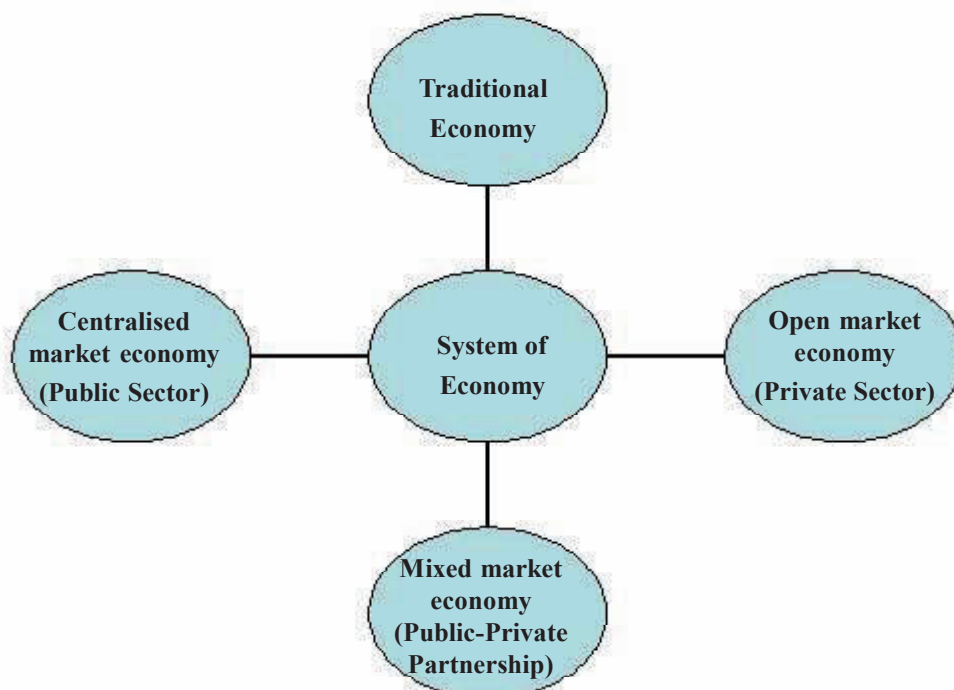


Fig. 14.0: Types of Economy

14.3.2 Economy Based on Mode of Production

The mode of production is defined as the way a society is organized to produce goods and services. It consists of two major aspects: the forces of production and the relations of production. The forces of production include all of the elements that are brought together in production – from land, raw material, and fuel to human skill and labor to machinery, tools, and factories. The relations of production include relationships among people and people's relationships to the forces of production through which decisions are made about the production of goods services. The forces of production and the relations of production together constitute the economic base structure of a particular mode of production, the political super structure (ideological, political, institutional, belief system, etc.). There are four different modes of production, namely; Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and capitalist.

- i) Asiatic mode of production has the following characteristic features:
 - a) It exists in the primitive society.
 - b) It has no classes.
 - c) It is structured around the kinship.
 - d) It has very low division of labour.
 - e) It has no private property.
 - f) Every one works together for common good.
- ii) Ancient mode of production has the following characteristic features:
 - a) It is aristocracy and has the system of slavery.
 - b) The slaves did most of the work.
 - c) The concept of private property started to develop.
- iii) Feudal mode of production has the following characteristic features:
 - a) It consists of feudal lords. Vassals or Serfs came to forefront at this time.
 - b) The exploitation of peasant class by the landlords.
 - c) It is characterised by changes in technology.
 - d) The renaissance appears during this mode of production.
- iv) Capitalist mode of production has the following characteristic features:
 - a) It is characterised by the private ownership of the means of production.
 - b) The class system constitutes of two classes: capitalists and workers.
 - c) There is exploitation of labour.
 - d) There is maximum profit motive.
 - e) There is Domination of capitalist class.
 - f) There is perpetual accumulation of wealth by the capitalist class. The capitalist becomes richer and the working class becomes poorer.
 - g) The mental and manual labour are separated.
 - h) The economy has elaborate division of labour based on specialization of work.

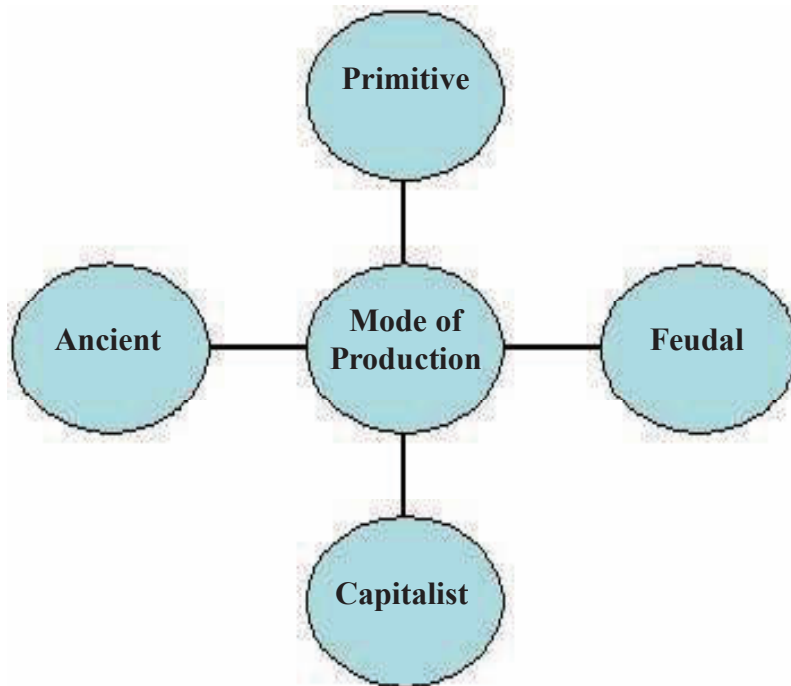


Fig. 14.1: Types of Mode of Production

14.3.3 Economy Based on Accessibility to Employment Security, Work Security and Social Security

i) Formal economy

- a) It has an organised system of employment with clearly written rules of recruitment, agreement and job responsibilities.
- b) It has a standardised relationship between the employer and the employee maintained through a formal contract.
- c) The employee is expected to work for fixed hours and receives fixed salaries in addition to incentives and perks.
- d) The employee works under a decent work environment and is entitled to benefits such as leave, savings, loans etc.
- e) The employee is covered under social protection benefits such as life insurance, health insurance, pension, gratuity etc.

ii) Informal economy

- a) It does not have any written rules or agreements.
- b) It exists merely on verbal understanding.
- c) It does not have fixed wages or fixed hours of work and mostly relies on daily earnings.
- d) The work atmosphere is unorganised, congested and unhygienic.
- e) The workers in this type of economy usually lack collective bargaining. They have poor awareness levels regarding social protection schemes. They are unable to have savings and do not see the necessity of insuring themselves.

Check Your Progress I

i) Define the concept of economy. Use five lines

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ii) Discuss the interlinkage between economy and society in about 10 lines.

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iii) Distinguish between formal and informal economy in India. Use about 10 lines .

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14.4 INFORMAL ECONOMY: AN OVERVIEW

The informal economy as compared to the formal economy is more concerned with the quality of work and adequate functioning of the market forces. It is also concerned with issues of poverty, inequality and vulnerability. This economy is marginalised and it is not the mainstream processes of production of goods and services. In informal economy relatively a greater proportion of the workforce are engaged in the informal sector of economy. Its informal character affects the labour income structure, social security and vulnerability of the workforce. The informality in this sector of economy faces tough competition with the formal sector. The workforce in the informal economy is excluded from transaction that takes place in formal and recognized sector. The workers of the informal economy are not counted officially by the national accounts and official statistics.

They often remain invisible in the policy formulation. They lack social protection, rights and representation of their voice. They are engaged in low productive work. They work in poor working conditions. They are excluded from the benefits provided by the states. They are, therefore, unprotected, vulnerable and insecure. The weak governance and structural factor are the key issues underlying

informality. The 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS (2003) has spelled out specific categories of the informal economy; They are the following: Own-account workers (self-employed with no employees) in their own informal sector enterprises and (2), Employers (self-employed with employees) in their own informal sector enterprises, the employees are mostly family workers who work, irrespective of type of enterprise. The employees holding informal jobs are subjected to national labour legislation and income taxation. They suffer from social protection and entitlement to certain employment benefits. The own-account workers engaged in production of goods, exclusively use their products in their own household. Thus, the employment in the informal economy is the sum total of employment in informal sector and the household sector.

Some important factors that drive informality are poverty and social exclusion, poor labour market absorption in the industrial sector, global competitive pressures, changing production structures and economic restructuring, economic crises including the recent global financial crisis, and lack of regulation, skills, finance and technology and social protection. The key determinants for participating in the informal economy are:

For workers:

- Lack of alternative employment opportunities.
- Need to supplement low income derived from employment in the formal sector.
- A wish to supplement social security benefits with an undeclared income.

For businesses:

- Perceived or actual bureaucracy associated with formalization.
- Wish to avoid or reduce costs associated with taxes and social security contributions.
- Inadequate inspection services.

14.4.1 Four Dominant Schools of Thought on the Informal Economy

The dualist school, popularised by the ILO in the 1970s, subscribes to the notion that the informal sector is comprised of marginal activities. They are distinct from and not related to the formal sector – that provide income for the poor and a safety net in times of crisis (Hart 1973; ILO 1972; Sethuraman 1976; Tokman 1978). According to this school, the persistence of informal activities is due largely to the fact that not enough modern job opportunities have been created to absorb surplus labour, due to a slow rate of economic growth and/or to a faster rate of population growth.

The structuralist school, popularised by Caroline Moser, Alejandro Portes and others in the late 1970s and 1980s, subscribes to the notion that the informal sector should be seen as subordinate economic units (micro firms) and workers that serve to reduce input and labour costs and, thereby, increase the competitiveness of large capitalist firms. In the structuralist model, in marked contrast to the dualist model, different modes and forms of production are seen not only to co-exist but also to be inextricably connected and interdependent

(Moser 1978; Castells and Portes 1989). According to this school, the nature of capitalist development accounts for the persistence and growth of informal production relationships.

The legalist school, popularised by Hernando de Soto in the 1980s and 1990s, subscribes to the notion that the informal sector is comprised of micro-entrepreneurs who choose to operate informally in order to avoid the costs, time and effort of formal registration (de Soto 1989). According to Hernando de Soto, micro-entrepreneurs will continue to produce informally, so long as, the government procedures are cumbersome and costly. In this view, unreasonable government rules and regulations are stifling private enterprise.

The Voluntarist School, popularized by William Maloney in the early 2000s focused on self-employed, notably micro-entrepreneurs and especially male micro-entrepreneurs. It subscribes to the notion that micro-entrepreneurs choose to operate informally after weighing the costs benefits of formal and informal economies. (Maloney 2004). The cost of the formal economy includes payroll taxes and social protection contributions while the benefit of the informality is the way to earn income while avoiding costs of formal economy.

14.4.2 Informal Economy in India

The informal economy, in general, constitutes all forms of ‘informal employment’. The employees work without a secure contract. It also includes self employment in informal enterprises (small unregistered or unincorporated enterprises) and comprises of employers’ own account operators and unpaid family workers in informal enterprises or part time workers (Chen, 2002). In India, workers working in the informal economy are classified as follows (Economic Review 2010, Government of Kerala):

- **Classified in terms of *Occupation*:**

Small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, share croppers, fishermen, those engaged in animal husbandry, beedi rolling, labeling and packing, building and construction workers, leather workers, weavers, artisans, salt workers, workers in brick kilns and stone quarries, workers in saw mills, oil mills etc. They come under this category.

- **Classified in terms of *Nature of Employment*:**

Attached agricultural labourers, bonded labourers, migrant workers, contract and casual labourers come under this category.

- **Classified in terms of *Specially Distressed Categories*:**

Toddy tappers, scavengers, Carriers of head loads, drivers of animal driven vehicles, loaders and unloaders come under this category.

- **Classified in terms of *Service Categories*:**

Midwives, domestic workers, fishermen and women, barbers, vegetable and fruit vendors, newspaper vendors, etc. belong to this category.

The majority of workers in India are in informal employment, though there are two diverging underlying trends behind this phenomenon. Firstly, the share of

workers in the unorganized sector fell from 86.3 per cent in 2004-05 to 84.3 per cent in 2009-10, and further to 82.2 per cent in 2011-12. At the same time, the new jobs created in the organised sector were mostly informal in the sense that workers do not have access to employment benefits and social security. From 2009-10 to 2011-12, employment in the organized sector increased by 17.2 million. However, 84.9 per cent of this increase (or 14.6 million) was due to a rise in informal work in the organized sector (ILO 2013).

14.4.3 Women and Informal Economy in India

The labour market discrimination pushes many groups into the informal economy. Women are often clustered in the most marginalised segments of the informal economy. They gender wage gaps, occupational segregation, lack of access to resources and the burdens of unpaid work are as problematic in the informal economy as in the formal economy. The policy making requires a gender lens to understand the different needs and constraints of women and men.

The women's access to labour market, resources and health education are largely affected due to their socio-cultural backgrounds. In a country like India, there is a preponderance of the informal sector absorbing a large section of women engaged in casual work, piece rated work and working largely in the confines of the household which remains invisible in the statistical sources. Such constraints deprive women from the social protection and social security provisions of the country. In fact, women are subjected to a life-cycle of risks and vulnerabilities emanating largely from gendered divisions of household tasks, poverty and deprivation in the household, customary laws and social practices restricting women's mobility.

Activity 2

Interview a female domestic worker and a small shopkeeper about the nature of their job. Write about "Work Satisfaction of Women in Informal economy" in one page and discuss with other students at your study center.

Another significant issue is related to the decline of rural women labour force participation rate. There are various explanations for this declining trend like impact of technology, higher skill requirement etc. The women in rural areas are now pursuing higher education. They are not available for labour market participation. Their household incomes could have risen in rural areas due to higher wage levels, which would thus take the pressure off women to seek employment in times of economic hardship. There are also cultural and social constraints in their employment. However, there is an overall decline in short and long term employment opportunities for women in rural areas.

14.5 STRATEGIES FOR TRANSITION TOWARDS FORMAL ECONOMY

The establishment of social protection floor, which did not exist in the informal economy and the extension of social Security coverage are the strategies for transition towards formality. In a persons's life, risks are associated with shocks and stress. They can be external to the household, such as, crop failure or price collapse and also internal, (such as, the loss of labour through sickness, injury

and death). The individuals or the households are likely to be affected adversely by such risk factors. The Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, of ILO, 1952 is the only international instrument based on to cover the risk factors and the basic social security principles. The convention establishes worldwide agreed minimum standards for social securities like medical care, sickness benefit, unemployment benefit, old-age benefit employment injury benefit, family benefit, maternity benefit, invalidity benefit, and survivors benefit.

Social security in India refers to the sum of all government regulations and provisions that aim at enhancing the people's living conditions. Those regulations, provision, legislation, acts, laws, politics and planning cover the problems of old age, wage, unemployment and social exclusion, sickness and health care, and income security, such as, the food security, employment, education and health, housing, social insurance and social assistance. In the Indian context, the state bears the primary responsibility for developing appropriate systems for providing social protection and assistance to its workforce. The matters relating to social security are listed in the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Concurrent List of the Constitution of India.

The social security for the workers of the informal economy, has emerged as one of the core concerns in the central public policy discourse in India. The employment pattern and structure of the Indian labour market is such that about 50 per cent of the workers work as self-employed, 30 per cent as casual workers and only about one-sixth of the total number of workers work as regular workers. Of the 51 per cent who are self-employed, nearly 80-85 per cent are own-account workers, which means they do not hire worker on a fairly regular basis and work on their own. Further, the proportion of poor and vulnerable workers in the labour market is estimated to be as high as 70 per cent. Every worker, at some point of time in his or her life faces risks and contingencies related to sickness, accidents, unemployment, disability, old age and maternity (in case of women workers). The social security aims at mitigating these risks and uncertainties by providing financial and social care to the affected workers and their families. The access to social security coverage for formal sector workers are largely available but this is not the case with large number of informal sector workers who account for 92 percent of the total workforce and contribute 50% to the India's GDP.

On the basis of social security literature, two streams of social security measures can be identified, (a) those concerned with livelihood, especially for the vulnerable population, which often is called as promotional measures and (b) those concerned with the protection of workers and their families against risks and uncertainties. In India, the formal workers receive benefit from a fair minimum standard of social security. The principal social security laws enacted in India for the formal sector workforce are:

- Employees State Insurance Act, 1948,
- Employees Provident Funds & Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952,
- Employees Compensation Act, 1923,
- Maternity Benefits Act, 1961 and
- Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972.

These legislations provide social security benefits like medical facilities, employment injury, maternity benefits, insurance, pension and gratuity etc. to industrial and factory workers. There are other sectoral legislations, such as, Building and Other Construction Workers Act and acts related to Beedi workers, Mine workers, Manganese, Mica and Chrome workers and so on. Furthermore, the salient features of the historic Unorganised Workers’ Social Security Act (2008) which covers both self-employed and wage employed workers and various schemes like pension schemes and insurance schemes have been formulated under it. In addition to the schemes of the central government, various schemes are also administered by the state governments to take security pressures for the workers of the unorganized sector of economy.

Check Your Progress II

i) List the four dominant schools of thought on the informal economy. Use about 15 lines.

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ii) Discuss the condition of women labour in informal economy in India.

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14.6 LET US SUM UP

In the above unit on Economy and Society, you learnt about the concept of economy. We explained to you the meaning of economy as a word, which means in Greek “household management”. It is the study of system of production, distribution and consumption in society. We have described the informal economy and also strategies for its transition towards formal economy.

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14.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- i) The word economy means in Greek language “household management”. It is that system of society which deals with the process of production, distribution and consumption in society.
- ii) Economy and society are deeply interlinked with each other; one affecting the other. The social, political and technological environment influences the economic structure as it affects the individuals, institutions and governments. Human well being is clearly associated with the economy and society.
- iii) Formal economy has an organized system of employment with clearly written rules of recruitment, agreement and job responsibilities where as informal economy has an unorganized structure. It does not have any written

Check Your Progress II

- i) The four dominant Schools of Thought on informal economy are:
 - a) The dualist school: when not enough modern job opportunities exist in the economy to absorb surplus labour due to slow rate of economic growth or/and to a faster growth of population.
 - b) The structuralist school: the nature of capitalist development in this economy accounts for the persistence and growth of informal production relationship
 - c) The legalist school: this school subscribes to the opinion that the informal sector is comprised of micro-entrepreneurs who choose to operate informally in order to avoid the costs, time and effort of formal registration.
 - d) The voluntarist school: It focused on self-employed, notably micro-entrepreneurs especially the male entrepreneurs. The cost of formal economy outweighs the costs of informal one which matters to these entrepreneurs.
- ii) In Indian economy there is a tendency to marginalize women workers. Their access to labour market, resources and health education are largely affected due to their socio-cultural backwardness. They are largely engaged in casual work, piece-rated work and also work confined to households which remains unskilled.

GLOSSARY

Administrative View: The purpose of these studies was to familiarize the government officials and private persons with classified descriptions about castes and tribes in India with a view to ensuring effective colonial administration.

Affinity: The principle of deriving relationship from relative through marriage.

Agrarian Policies: Policies regarding ownership of land in the different states of India which determined who will cultivate or use the land. Here the conversion of land as private property decided by the Government left the non-private forest land areas as the property of the state. This policy adversely affected the tribal people who had traditional rights over the forests where they had lived since ages.

Agrarian: Rural, dependent on agriculture.

Bilateral or Cognatic: The system of descent in which a child is recognized as a descendant equally of both the father and the mother.

Bourgeois: The capitalist class is known as the bourgeoisie. This consists of industrial, financial and mercantile capitalists. They own and control industrial, trading and financial enterprises. They exploit the working class for maximisation of their profit and expansion of their enterprises. They constitute the dominant class in the capitalist society.

Capitalism: An economic organization which consists of private ownership of property, control of capital, has market mechanism and provisions of workers and which aims at making maximum profit.

Capitalist: In an industrial system of production, the class of owners of the means of production (such as, the capital i.e. the money, the property, the tools, etc.) is called the capitalist.

Civilization: An advanced stage of social and cultural development.

Class: According to Marx, classes are groups of people who are distinguished from each other due to their ownership or control over the means of production or lack of the same.

Collective Conscience: According to Emile Durkheim, Collective Conscience refers to the totality of belief and sentiments common to average member of society.

Commensality: Relating to those who are traditionally allowed to eat together

Consanguinity: The principle of recognising kinship by virtue of blood relationships, such as, relation between parents and children.

Coparcenary: Joint ownership of property amongst the male members of the family, in a patrilineal society.

Cosmology: is the science of universe.

Cultural relativism: Cultural relativists believe that all cultures are equal and have equal value.

Demographic: Related to age, sex, density and overall structure of population.

Double Unilineal: The system of descent in which the child is affiliated to the group of either parent.

Endogamy: Marriage within one's own community/ group/caste/tribe.

Epistemology: Theory of knowledge which studies the source of knowledge its nature, scope and limit.

Ethnic Group: Ethnic group is a group of individuals who share a common belief of their ancestry. A kind of collectivity which comes through blood relations, kinship ties, religion, culture, language etc.

Ethnicity: Ethnicity is the sense of belongingness of an individual or group to a particular ethnic group.

Ethno-centric: This is used to describe the attitude that one's group is superior.

Ethnocentrism: It is state where one believes that his/her culture, customs are superior or better than other cultures.

Exogenous: This adjective is used to describe that which originates from external causes.

Exploitation: When the poor and marginalized people have no source of livelihood to survive they are forced to work as landless labour for the mines or development projects, fields, etc. where they get minimum salaries or wages.

Feudalism: The legal and social system that evolved in Western Europe in the 8th and 9th centuries in which vassals were protected and maintained by their lords, usually through granting of property, and were required to serve under them in war.

Graded inequality: Inequality is when people are stratified into different castes as classes on the basis of birth in all spheres of life, including social and economic.

Hegemony: Imposition of power by a small group of people over a large number of people

Heterogeneous: Opposite of 'homogeneous': This means variety, different types, e.g. India has a heterogeneous population, i.e. a variety of races, languages, religions, customs, etc.

Historiography: Historiography is the scientific approach of writing history. It is comprised of theory, principles, critical examinations of the historical facts to write objective history.

Ideological: Science of ideas or ideas that are the basis of some economic or political theory or system.

Indological: refers to the study of Indian (South Asian) society, its culture, languages, literature, history and politics.

Internalization: Internalization or internalize is a process where an individual or group absorb some ideas or belief which are reflected in their day-to-day social and individual life. Such kind of behaviour becomes normalized where it is thought that such behaviour is natural and normal. Caste system is such a

process where one caste is believed to be superior or inferior to the other.

Jajmani System: A traditional system of exchange of goods and services based on caste-wise division of labour.

Kachcha food: It is the food cooked in water.

Land Alienation: When people are banned from using the vast tracts of forest land which their tribe(s) has customarily been using since ages due to the Govt. policies, it is considered to be land alienation. People of the tribes become landless, as well as homeless.

Little republic: A small political entity characterised by popular participation in its political process.

Living Language: A language which is being spoken and used by an existing people in everyday life.

Marginalized: Marginalized means to keep an individual or group to a powerless position where his/her/their voices are not given due importance in the society or in a structure. It is a state of powerlessness on one hand and on the other regarded as unimportant in the process of decision making and other affairs.

Matrilineal: A principle to trace descent though the female line.

Missionary View: This view developed through the writings of early missionaries in India during the 18th century.

Mixed economy: India has adopted the path of 'mixed economy' for economic development of the country after independence. The concept of 'mixed economy' refers to the co-existence of both the public sector and the private sector in the national economy. The public sector is owned and controlled by the government but the private sector is owned and operated by individuals, families or private bodies.

Nation- building: The process of development of national identity.

Nation: Nation is a group of people who shares a common history, language, culture, territory and psychological make-up.

Nationalism: Nationalism is the feeling of individual(s) or groups that he/she belongs to the nation. It is the sense of belongingness to the nation or a sense of loyalty which comes due to his/her birth or as a member of the particular nation.

Organised and Unorganised sector: Indian economy has been viewed as dual in character comprising organised or formal sector and unorganised or informal sector. The organised sector possess the characteristics such as large-scale operation in terms of capital and labour, wage labour, modern technology, public and private ownership, regulated and protected markets for labour and output, skilled labour etc. Small-scale operation, private or family ownership, labour intensive, backward technology, unregulated market and unprotected labour are on the other hand the important features of the unorganised sector enterprises.

Orientalists: refers to scholars who study Asian societies, their culture, languages, history, literature and their politics.

Pakka food: It is the food cooked in oil.

Panchayati Raj: Panchayati Raj is the system of local self-government

Patri- virilocal: The term refers to the residence of a couple after marriage with the husband's father.

Patriarchal: where the father is the main authority in the family.

Patrilineal: A principle to trace descent through the male line.

Pauperization: The process due to which Tribal people loose not only their traditional livelihood but they become poor and marginalized.

Political System: Those arrangements of society, formal or informal, which are based on power and wherein authoritative decisions are made.

Politics of Reconciliation: The political processes that reconcile of divergent political interests.

Post Colonial study: Post colonial study refers to body of theories and analysis from its own perspective especially of those societies which were earlier colonies of the western countries. It also deconstructs the colonial legacies and discourses in terms of knowledge creation which the colonialism created through its various institutions.

Profane: The elements of a social system which are not connected with religion or religious purpose. In other words, they are secular.

Protestant Ethic: A doctrine of Christianity which provided much of the cultural content of capitalism, such as, individualism achievement motivation, hostility to inherited wealth.

Purity and Pollution- It is an ideology which considers one person or object or colour ritually pure (purity) and other ritually impure and unclean (pollution)

Race: Race is widely considered as a basis of categorization of human beings in various categories depending upon their physical features. However, since race is a social construct, those categorization of human beings are socially based and categorized.

Racism: It is a set of beliefs that one group is superior to another due to its physical features such as skin colour. It is a form of prejudice and a process of discrimination to categorize human beings based on physical differences.

Rural-urban continuum: A process of socio-economic interaction between the villages and the towns or cities.

Sacred: Refers to those elements of a social system which relate to religion or are set apart for the worship of deity i.e. God/Goddess.

Social Change: Alterations that occur in the social structure and function of a social system.

Social Structure: It is the organised pattern of the inter-related rights and obligations of persons and groups in a system of interaction as seen in terms of statuses, roles, institutions governed by social norms and values.

State: A political association characterized by territorial jurisdiction, non-voluntary membership, definable rights and duties of members and monopoly over legitimate use of power.

Subaltern: Subaltern implies group or individual of inferior rank may be for their religion, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, gender etc. Gramsci coined the term subaltern in his Prisons Notebook to denote people who are marginalized and are outside of the power relations

Textual View: Views or opinions formed after studying written books/articles/documents/records etc.

Twiceborn: Generally the upper castes like Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas who had to undergo an 'upnayan ceremony' and were supposed to wear the sacred thread which elevated them to the status of twiceborn'. It meant that a person (male) has had not only a physical birth but also a spiritual birth.

Unilineal: The system of descent in which relationship with the ancestor is recognized in one line only, i.e., either of father or of mother.

Urbanization: A process in which people migrate from the villages to the cities. It refers to the proportion of population living in towns and cities to the total population of the country. Generally both the push and pull factors affect the role of urbanization. In sociological sense, it refers to a way of life associated with living in the city.

Utilitarian Rationalism: Practical use of logic and rationality as a system of philosophy.

Westernization: Westernization is the process of the adoption of the western lifestyle and values, especially of the Britishers.

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