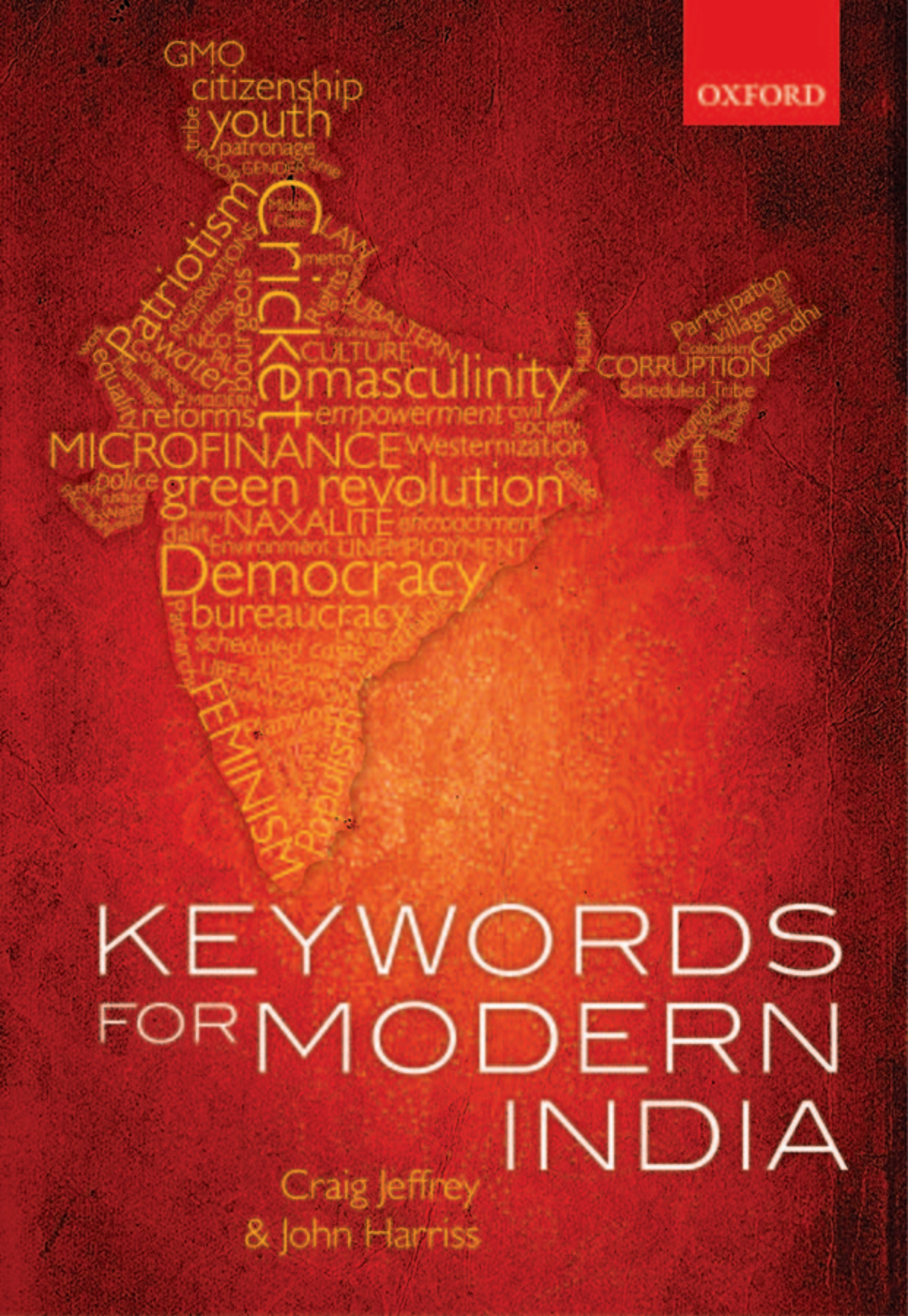

KEYWORDS FOR MODERN INDIA

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A

Adivasi

Literally, '*adivasi*' means 'the original peoples of India', but more accurately it is a generic term for communities that are described, or seek to describe themselves, as the first populations of India. Adivasi is the term by which most of the indigenous 'tribal' people of India refer to themselves. Early censuses of British India referred to the aboriginal and semi-Hinduized aboriginal populations of India, of which there were more than eighty in Chota Nagpur and Santal Parganas in the late nineteenth century. Post-Independence, the official list of Scheduled Tribes for the same region, Jharkhand, runs to just thirty communities. Detribalization has been a common fate for 'aboriginal' communities that accumulate wealth or status. There is substantial continuity, however, in the modes of governance proposed for India's adivasi communities, both in central India and in the north-east of the country. The colonial state essentially took the view that India's 'primitive communities' had to be protected from unscrupulous Hindu landowners and merchants. They were to be ruled directly by the British in Scheduled Areas. The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908, which is intended to prevent the sale of tribal land to non-tribals, neatly expresses the view that adivasi men and women are incapable of holding their own against later 'Aryan invaders' (whether caste Hindu or Muslim).

India's Scheduled Tribes make up about 8 per cent of the country's population. Although many of the largest adivasi communities are to be found in central India—the Bhils, Gonds, Mundas, Oraons, and Santals—they make up just 12–15 per cent of that region's present population, while in the north-eastern states communities including the Mizos and the Nagas make up 20–30 per cent of the population. Far more than India's Scheduled Castes—the ex-untouchable communities who, along with the country's Scheduled Tribes, exist outside, or in some senses underneath, the Hindu caste system—India's adivasi communities have generally owned the land they work. The poor quality of tribal lands, however, which are mostly unirrigated uplands, has condemned many adivasis to acute income poverty. It has also necessitated a reliance on non-agricultural incomes, including in many cases from timber and non-timber forest products. The association of tribals with forests has led both to a romanticization of the Tribal Other—supposedly in touch with nature through their sacred groves and animistic gods and goddesses: relative gender equality being another feature of adivasi societies—and to a crass depiction of India's adivasis as ignorant '*junglees*', often drunk on '*mahua*' or other distilled products. This latter depiction has been strengthened over the years by the poor quality of government education in tribal areas. Many adivasi communities prefer to keep the state at a distance, and this distancing has been mirrored in some places by a breakdown in local state institutions. One of the attractions of the Maoist

movement in tribal central India is precisely that it offers alternative forms of governance and public service delivery. Another, which is particularly to the fore in the mineral belt of central India, is that it contests the loss of tribal lands to mining companies and other corporations.

Policy debates on India's adivasi communities have embraced both isolationism and assimilationism. The discourse on isolationism was advanced most notably either side of Independence by Verrier Elwin. It informed Prime Minister Nehru's views that the wit and wisdom of tribal peoples had to be defended against mainstream (or more 'advanced') society. If, in Elwin's case, this led to charges that India's tribals were to be placed in a 'zoo' and sheltered from modern life, more recently some elements of the same discourse have been mobilized by tribal leaders themselves to valorize adivasi languages, cultural festivals, and popular heroes (for example, Birsa Munda in Jharkhand). Assimilationism likewise describes a spectrum of views and policies. Central to the state's dealings with its Scheduled Tribes has been a policy of compensatory discrimination. This has sought the progressive integration of tribal communities into 'mainstream India' by means of reserved places in higher education institutions, seats in legislative bodies, and jobs in government and public sector corporations. Legislation to this end was first passed in 1950 and was meant to last for ten years, by which time affirmative action was supposed to have done its job. The fact that similar legislation continues to exist tells its own story. India's adivasis continue to be among the very poorest in India, whether measured in terms of incomes, education levels, or health care outcomes. It also indicates the power of tribal India to act as a voting bloc that mainstream parties find hard to ignore. This is especially the case for the Congress party, which historically has won the most votes from tribal India. A tougher form of assimilationism was proposed in the 1940s by the great Indian sociologist G. S. Ghurye, in debate with Elwin. This holds that India's 'so-called tribals' are lapsed Hindus who need to be brought back into the fold.

The latter is the position taken by the Hindu nationalist *Sangh Parivar* (*see* Hindutva), which uses the term *vanvasi* (forest dwellers) in preference to a word—adivasi—that implies that the tribal people were the first inhabitants of India. This idea is in conflict with its claim that the Aryans, who brought Vedic civilization to the country, are the original inhabitants of the land. The Sangh has a number of organizations working amongst adivasis with the aims of 'bringing them back' into the Hindu fold, and of countering conversion to Christianity. In the 1990s, cadres of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (the organization that is the core of the Sangh Parivar) moved into tribal areas of Gujarat, Jharkhand (then still part of Bihar), and Orissa, among other states. Sometimes violent struggles ensued with Christian tribals and local or foreign Christian missionaries. This violence is ongoing, and adds to the state/Naxalite conflicts that continue to disturb lives and livelihoods in much of tribal central India. Sixty-five years after Independence, the lives of many adivasis are becoming more precarious, not less.

• See also ***commons, forests, reservations***

which the best known is Reliance, founded by Dhirubhai Ambani, who famously started out in life as a petrol pump attendant.

The use of the word 'bourgeois' in writing on India, therefore, rarely refers to a 'mercantile or shopkeeping middle class'. There is good reason for this since, as Raymond Williams notes, 'A *ruling* class, which has the socialist [Marxist] sense of bourgeois in the context of historical description of a developed capitalist society, is not easily or clearly represented by the essentially different middle class.' When Kosambi, for instance, used 'bourgeoisie' and 'middle class' interchangeably in his review in 1946, he introduced some confusion, for he was certainly not suggesting that merchants and shopkeepers constituted the class that was 'firmly in the saddle' in the new India that was then emerging. The 'mercantile or shopkeeping middle class' is more commonly referred to in writing about India as constituting, rather, the 'petty bourgeoisie' (people who, according to Marx's analysis, may both buy and sell labour power or do neither—being the owners of small amounts of capital). It is widely considered, for instance, that support for the *Jana Sangh*, the precursor of the present-day Hindu nationalist *Bharatiya Janata* Party (*see* Hindutva), came principally from among the petty bourgeoisie of the smaller cities and towns of north and central India—meaning shopkeepers, traders, and moneylenders. There is a school of thought which holds that India, certainly in the 1950s and 1960s, presents an example of an 'intermediate regime', according to a concept proposed by the Polish economist Michał Kalecki (1899–1970). This is the controversial idea of a regime in which the petty bourgeoisie, in combination with the rich peasantry, constitutes the ruling class. Even those who do not hold to this notion may agree that the petty bourgeoisie of the bazaars of Indian towns and cities has played an important political role since at least the eighteenth century.

• See also ***class, middle class***

Bureaucracy

The word 'bureau' came into use in English in the eighteenth century to describe a chest of drawers that is also equipped with a writing board—though Williams tells us that the original meaning of 'bureau' was the baize used to cover desks. In the following century it also came to mean 'an office especially for the transaction of public business; a department of public administration . . . an agency for the coordination of related activities, the distribution of information, etc.'. And the word 'bureaucracy' had come into use by this time to refer to 'government by bureau' or 'government officials collectively', and also (reflecting the often negative evaluation of rigid public administration) 'officialism'. We may imagine that the connection between the item of furniture and the organization of public business was that bureaus were used extensively to equip offices. The bureau, as a site for writing and for keeping records or files, is an apt symbol as well as a practical instrument of a particular form of administration.

The form of administration that the bureau stands for is that classically analysed by the German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) as an essential element of what he described as

rational-legal authority. Weber set out an ideal type of bureaucracy as an efficient form of administration bound by clear rules, which maintains records of its actions, and in which decision-making is not dependent on the personal whims of the officials employed within it. Bureaucracies should be bound by transparent, impersonal rules, applied universally; they should keep records (in the 'bureau') so as to be accountable; they should have clear lines of authority (it should be clear exactly where 'the buck stops'), which means that they should have a well-defined hierarchy of roles; and entry into them, and then promotion through the hierarchy, should depend on ability. Recruitment and career paths should be determined, in other words, meritocratically. Some recent research has shown that the developing countries that have such meritocratically recruited and run bureaucracies do tend to have better records of performance.

The Hindi words for bureaucracy—'*naukarshaahi*' and '*adhikaarivarg*'—are less commonly heard in India than the term '*prashasan*', which translates as 'administration'. It is also common to hear people on the ground referring to specific bureaucracies simply as '*sarkar*'—a word that also refers to 'the state' in general. This elision of the bureaucracy with the state partly reflects people's awareness that bureaucrats are often linked via a nexus of corruption to politicians, political parties, and the machinery of state power more broadly.

India has a higher-level bureaucracy (the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the lineal descendant of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) of the colonial era) that is quite fiercely meritocratic in terms of recruitment, and has many senior officials of exceptionally high calibre. It was the ICS, and since Independence it has been the IAS, that has supplied the District Magistrates, or the officials still described in some states as the Collector, who run India's administrative districts. Their powers in the colonial period over the collection of revenue, the administration of justice, and the maintenance of law and order were sweeping, and the role acquired a quite legendary status in some of the annals of empire. Their powers are still extensive, though rivalled these days by those of the District Superintendents of Police. Their roles now have much more to do with the management of development programmes, in which they are assisted by lower-level officials, among them the Block Development Officers, who are responsible for the coordination of programmes in the 'development blocks' into which districts are divided, and each of which includes several *panchayats*.

Senior bureaucrats from the IAS are generalists, though some do manage to develop particular expertise. Their career paths are much less clearly meritocratic than is their recruitment. And even their recruitment, as well as the career paths of the very large numbers of lower-level civil servants, is rarely entirely meritocratic, being subject to a great deal of personal and political discretion (to patronage, in other words). One of the critical problems of Indian bureaucracy, at all levels, is that officials are subject to 'transfers'. They may be moved frequently between positions according to the dictates, in the end, of politicians. Originally intended as a check upon inefficiency and corruption, the transfer system has become a major instrument of corruption in government. There is a more or less institutionalized—though of course quite unofficial—system of payments for securing, or avoiding, appointment to particular places and positions. Government teachers and health

workers, for example, make payments to seniors in order to avoid being posted to remote places; or officials in irrigation departments may make payments in order to secure postings to areas in which they can expect to make a substantial income from side payments made to them by farmers. At even the highest levels in the civil service, officials may be moved between positions if they stand in the way of politicians' efforts to profit from their office. Frequent transfers detract from efficiency because even capable officials rarely have a chance to build their expertise in regard to a particular position. A further crucial problem is that at senior levels government is very often *under*staffed, so that sensitive functions depend very heavily on the skills of very few people. In international trade talks, for example, Indian delegations may include only a handful of competent officials, who are greatly outnumbered by their Chinese or Brazilian counterparts.

'Bureaucracy' can and should be a fair and effective way of managing public administration, but it is widely disparaged in India as elsewhere in the world. Bureaucracy is seen, often fairly, as blighted by 'officialism', and by 'red tape'. Officials in India are very commonly quite literally barricaded behind piles of files, each of them tied round with red tape—and only very slowly are the necessary records of government being computerized. There is an art to the management of files, which can be used to advance or to hold back the completion of an action. Official writing is commonly executed in line with the letter, but not with the intention, of government policy. Officers strive to meet the 'targets' that have been set for them, but without any concern for realizing the objectives those targets were supposed to satisfy. Thus, for example, agricultural officers distribute new seeds, but with no regard for whether they reach the people who can make best use of them. Bureaucratic action is very generally characterized by the indifference of officials to those whom they are supposed to serve, as well as being quite systematically biased against adivasis, Dalits, Muslims, and women.

Absenteeism is a huge problem in the bureaucracy. One research study in Rajasthan has shown that the diagnostic and other skills of doctors and nurses in the public health system are better than those of private providers. Yet people, even very poor people, overwhelmingly choose to go to private clinics where they also pay much more, because they can rarely be confident that the government health staff will be in their posts. Senior bureaucrats may connive with absenteeism because they benefit from side-payments made to them by health staff.

Reform of the bureaucracy so as to improve the responsiveness of government to citizens and to counter corruption remains an urgent and difficult task in contemporary India.

• See also ***corruption, patronage, politics, state***

C

Capitalism

According to the *OED*, capitalism is 'an economic system in which private capital or wealth is used in the production or distribution of goods and prices are determined mainly in a free market'. This is surely a common understanding of a system that is assumed to have come into being first—at least in an industrial form—in the United Kingdom in the eighteenth century. Marxists, however, insist that capitalism is at heart a system in which wage labour is a commodity that is bought and sold like other commodities. Labour is formally free and not indentured in any form. They also maintain that capitalists are forced to compete with one another in ways that short-change the labouring classes, while producing constant technological change. Plato is credited with the phrase that 'necessity is the mother of invention'. But it is in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) that a system of economic production is first described that *compels* the creation of new worlds. 'All that is solid melts into air', as Marx and Engels neatly put it. Standing still under the rule of capital is not an option—unless, that is, one wants to perish. Marx (1853) also famously inveighed against the brutality and unreason of Hinduism, the caste system, and Oriental Despotism in Hindustan. He welcomed British rule there to the extent that it allowed capitalism to take root, and with it the seeds of future 'social revolution'.

Later versions of Marxism have qualified this paean to modernity, just as they have also challenged the view that pre-capitalist forms of production and social organization must always give way to capitalism. By the early part of the twentieth century, it was commonly argued that an era of competitive industrial capitalism had given way to an era of monopoly capitalism. In the wealthiest countries some of the surplus generated by the new conglomerates paid for an emerging welfare state or was otherwise used to buy off an aristocracy of labour. The exploitation of labour and natural resources was then focused on the periphery of an emerging capitalist world system, and was made possible by new regimes of imperial subjugation.

Both these developments proved vital to Indian understandings of capitalism, at least until very recently. Early Indian nationalists spoke of a drain of wealth from India to the UK. They also bemoaned the way that Britain ran a balance of payments surplus with India to offset its losses with China. According to this analysis, which in key respects was adopted later on by the Communist Party of India, capitalism was held back in India by the interests of Empire. Instead of liberating Indians from casteism and 'feudalism', as Marx had earlier forecast, European capitalism was accused of reproducing itself on the back of super-exploited labour in the Indian countryside and by virtue of the destruction of local trade and industry. It was the duty of the state at Independence, Nehru and others maintained, to

build up a domestic bourgeoisie and local forms of industrial capitalism, whether in the private or public sectors. In the context of the Keynesian revolution in economic thought in the mid-twentieth century (which itself was galvanized by the apparent collapse of mainly market-based forms of capitalism during the Great Depression), and given the poverty of credit and stock markets in newly independent India, not to mention immediate concerns about foreign currency shortages, it is hardly surprising that in the 1950s India opted for a *dirigiste* model of industrial capitalist development. The Second and Third Five-Year Plans (1956–66: the period of the so-called Nehru–Mahalanobis model of growth and development) called for a de facto squeeze on investments in agriculture and the building up of large-scale enterprises in heavy engineering and chemicals, supported by improvements in transportation and power supply. Largely based in the public sector, these new developments were planned to complement existing capacity in textiles and iron and steel.

What we might call 'capitalism with Indian characteristics' was made even more distinctive by virtue of the fact that India's enclaves of industrial capitalism sat amidst a vast sea of enterprises in the informal sector, most of which were not fully subsumed under the logics of capital. Much effort was expended by social theorists in the 1970s and 1980s on working out how unambiguously capitalist enterprises interacted—or 'articulated'—with enterprises that danced to another beat. Many farming enterprises, for example, were based on the self-exploitation of household labour, or even on indebted/bonded labour. They were nonetheless linked to the broader capitalist economy in India by circuits of mercantile or usury capital. Very often, indeed, it was apparent—and still is apparent—that the reproduction of formal sector enterprises in India depends on the parallel reproduction of forms of unfree (or bonded) labour. It is a mistake to suppose that India has to be characterized as either capitalist or non-capitalist, just as it is a mistake to suppose that capitalism can't coexist with forms of socialized medicine. The reproduction of broadly capitalist relations of production and exchange is consistent with a huge spectrum of political forms (from democracy to dictatorship), as well as with diverse systems of ownership, governance, and management. Capitalism comes in many varieties.

Failure to recognize this fact has led to some confusion about India's recent economic reforms. In an economy in which nine out of ten people work in the informal sector it is hardly helpful to maintain that India is ditching socialism and embracing capitalism. Less unhelpful is the suggestion that capitalism in India is 'neo-liberalizing'—so long as the phrase is used carefully to describe certain forms of deregulation in formal sector labour markets and a general direction of travel in trade, fiscal, banking, and monetary policies.

• See also ***bourgeois, class, development, neo-liberal***

Caste

In common parlance, caste suggests a system of stratification manifest in everyday aspects of lifestyle that is more institutionalized and slower to change than are other systems of hierarchy and which involves a greater degree of separation between strata than is typically

characteristic of class-stratified societies. Thus, the assertion that a particular institution—a university, government bureaucracy, or hotel, for example—has its own 'caste system' conjures up an image of hierarchically ranked sets of people, functionally linked with one another but otherwise having little in common and, probably, eating and socializing independently.

This common-sense definition of caste—the assumption that caste equates with hierarchy and the underlying idea of caste as an especially 'deep' form of social difference—sits awkwardly with the contemporary Indian scene. There is no direct translation for 'caste' in India, where it seems to come from the Portuguese word *casta* meaning 'pure breed'. 'Caste' in India most closely approximates to two terms: *varna* and *jati*. Varna—which means literally 'colour' in Sanskrit—refers to the four subdivisions of the traditional Hindu hierarchy, first mentioned in Vedic literature written sometime between 1500 BC and 500 AD: Brahmins, who were traditionally priests; Kshatriyas (warriors); Vaisyas (merchants); and Sudras, who performed a broad range of other tasks. The Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas together comprise the 'twice born' or 'Forward' castes, the Sudras being commonly termed the 'Backward' castes (termed 'Other Backward Classes' or 'OBCs' in legal parlance). 'Dalits' lie outside the varna hierarchy altogether. Each varna is held to include very many jatis. Jati means 'species' or 'type', and refers to endogamous caste 'groups' historically associated with particular occupations and each with their own notion of how they are placed with respect to the varna hierarchy (although their position in the varna hierarchy may have changed through history). There are castes among Christians, Sikhs, and Muslims in India as well as Hindus. It is also important to note that there is a regional geography to caste within India. For example, there is a relatively high proportion of Sudras, and historically very few Brahmins and Kshatriyas, in the south of the country.

Not too long ago it was fashionable in some intellectual circles to imagine caste as a *colonial* invention: the British created caste, for example, by including caste on the census and inducting dominant castes into the lower reaches of the colonial administration. Caste was also a means to justify British rule because it entailed depicting Indian subjects as in some sense irrational. But caste ideas and elements of a caste system existed long before the British extended administrative control over India in the eighteenth century—colonial rule strengthened caste, but it did not manufacture it out of thin air.

In the first few decades after Independence there was a good deal of research on caste in India. Among the most prominent contributors to these debates was the French anthropologist Louis Dumont, who used an analysis of Hindu scriptures and existing village ethnographies to argue that notions of purity and pollution underpin the caste system, and that all castes are linked together via a complex system of ritual acts. In Dumont's writing, Brahmins were imagined as occupying a position at the top of this system. Other work examined caste more squarely as it was being practised in Indian villages. These studies showed that a landowning 'dominant caste'—usually from a higher caste but not very commonly Brahmins—was often found at the village level in India. These 'patrons' made payments (usually in kind, especially grain) to various less powerful castes ('clients') who were associated with hereditary trades—one jati might make pots, one might wash clothes,

and one might carry water for the patron, and so on. The resulting set of social relationships among people of different jatis, underpinned by rules about the sharing of food, bodily contact, and marriage, came to be described by anthropologists as the '*jajmani*' system ('*jajman*' meaning 'patron' in Hindi).

This caste system broke down to a considerable extent during the second half of the twentieth century. Economic growth, India's policy of caste-based reservations, and the Government of India's attempts to empower low castes have had the cumulative effect of severing the link between caste and occupation; most castes do not perform the hereditary occupations with which they are putatively associated—Brahmins are not very often priests and Chamars are rarely leatherworkers, for example. Improved communications and urbanization, education, the expansion of the media, and the spread of notions of universal citizenship have altered what is considered acceptable in terms of the everyday practice of caste. Hierarchical notions of caste have become less evident (although they have not disappeared), and people regularly come into contact across caste lines. Moreover, in the sixty years since Independence, Dalits and other lower castes have increasingly challenged the notion that higher castes are their natural superiors, for example through their participation in social movements.

But as caste has declined somewhat as a 'system', it has been reinvented as an identity in the sphere of modern competitive politics. Political parties use caste in their search for votes, and the continued existence of caste-based reservations (selective benefits) offers a tool for politicians to manage the difficult business of competing in elections. The advantages that are perceived as attaching to reservations have, ironically, persuaded members of some erstwhile 'high' castes to claim a lower status for themselves—as has happened, for example, amongst Nambudiris in Kerala and Jats in Uttar Pradesh. Caste also influences politics at the everyday level, including union ballots, district board elections, even appointments to neighbourhood associations and student unions.

The partial decline of caste as a hierarchical system in villages and the rise of caste as an identity within politics led the Indian sociologist M. N. Srinivas to claim that a shift has occurred such that castes are now arranged 'horizontally'—separated from each other on the basis of their different identities—rather than 'vertically' along the lines of purity and pollution. But inequalities between higher and lower castes, and associated notions of hierarchy, persist. Dalits remain well behind upper castes and OBCs in terms of their access to education and secure salaried work. This is partly because of the manner in which caste and class overlap—low castes are, generally speaking, poorer than higher castes. It is also because of continued caste prejudices among those with the power to recruit to professional positions; there is considerable evidence of caste discrimination in interviews for jobs in information technology (IT) and other lucrative sectors of the economy—in these situations being higher caste often acts as a form of 'cultural capital'.

Marriage is another sphere in which caste hierarchy remains important. There has been no widespread move away from a system of caste-based arranged marriages in India, and advertisements for brides and grooms in newspapers and on websites are often organized by jati or varna. Moreover, caste in marriage has a hierarchical element: parents of higher castes

are usually less concerned about a son or daughter marrying another higher-caste jati than about them marrying a Dalit. Such judgements are rarely made openly, but operate instead on the unconscious levels of presupposition and taste—caste is a type of reflex located at some deep level in the psyche. The continued importance of caste hierarchy is also evident in recent writing on untouchability in India. A survey of 565 villages across eleven states of India found that in over half the villages sampled Dalits were still denied entry into non-Dalit houses, and the Dalit Human Rights Commission has chronicled the continuing problem of caste-based violence in both rural and urban India, often a result of caste prejudice.

The debate about caste in contemporary India is therefore no longer about village 'caste systems' or about providing some type of definitive description of the rules of purity and pollution. Rather, the debate is about how caste continues to matter as an identity and aspect of everyday practice.

• See also ***class, Dalit, equality, faction, Hinduism, panchayat, reservations, tradition***

Charity

Charity is a word of profoundly ambivalent meaning. As Raymond Williams points out, it has come to mean Christian love between man and God, and between man and his neighbours, by about the twelfth century, and the sense of 'benevolence to neighbours' and specifically of 'gifts to the needy' became established not long afterwards. The latter meaning—of 'help to the needy', which is how charity is most commonly understood today—was probably already dominant by the sixteenth century, and the idea of a charity, an institution, was established in the following century. But the word took on a negative sense at about the same time, reflected in the phrase 'cold as charity', which expresses the feelings of many of those who are the needy recipients of 'help'—as Williams puts it, they may experience 'the freezing of love'. The ways in which charity is given may offend the dignity and self-respect of those who are the intended beneficiaries, and so it may be rejected and incur resistance. Charity may also be subject to qualification, being restricted to 'the deserving poor' rather than showing general 'benevolence to neighbours'. Thus it is that sometimes governments have defended welfare spending as 'not a charity but a right'.

The concept of charity, in these common senses, evokes the idea of 'a gift'—referring to the 'transference of property in a thing by one person to another, voluntarily and without any valuable consideration' (*OED*). Gift-giving, which is of great importance in Indian ethical traditions, is culturally meaningful, and generates moral relations—such as relations of solidarity (as when gift exchange is reciprocal), or dependence (as may be the case if the recipient of a gift is unable to reciprocate), legitimacy, or reputation—among persons or groups of people. Conceptions of kingship in India included the expectation that kings should 'give' to the community over which they rule, with the effect of ensuring their legitimacy. On the other hand, giving gifts to state officials was often thought perfectly acceptable, though it has come increasingly to be seen as bribery, and therefore corrupt. Gift-

[illegible] writers have begun to identify 'alternative citizenships' or 'insurgent citizenships' in India. People may have a keen sense of their rights and responsibilities with respect to each other, and therefore be engaged in developing forms of 'citizenship', but they do not understand these rights and responsibilities with reference to the nation-state.

• See also ***civil society, constitution, fundamentalism, Hindutva, reservations, secularism***

City

India has often been thought of—by nationalist leaders and later policymakers as well as by travel writers—as a land of villages. There is good reason for this, given that even by 2011, according to the census of India, the share of the population classified as 'rural' had dipped only marginally below 70 per cent (it was still 68.8 per cent of the total). India has urbanized much less dramatically than many of the other former colonies. These considerations, however, may lead to underestimation of the significance of the city in Indian society and civilization. There have been urban centres in the Indian subcontinent since the construction in the Indus Valley of Mohenjodaro and Harappa in the third or fourth millennium BC. Some anthropologists have argued that it was in the towns and cities that the caste system was most fully developed, while others think that Indian society was centred more on the courts of kings, around which urban settlements developed, than it was around the pre-eminence of Brahmins.

British officials and scholars, perhaps because they associated urbanization with industrialization, may not have fully recognized the significance of pre-industrial urbanism in India—cities such as Ahmedabad, Surat, and Cochin that were important commercial centres, or those like Benares or Madurai that were great religious cities, as well as political and administrative centres, amongst which Delhi was only the most notable. The layout and social organization of these cities, in neighbourhoods of work and residence, segregated by caste, sect, and religion, was quite distinct from that of the cities that the British created. With few exceptions—such as Jaipur in present-day Rajasthan, which was laid out for its princely ruler in 1727 in spacious rectilinear streets—Indian cities were not planned. But large parts of some of the old cities were demolished by the British to make way for planned urban spaces. This gave rise to a pronounced duality, with a closely packed and perhaps once-walled old city, commonly beside a fort or a palace, and then laid out beyond it a severely designed military cantonment, as well as the more generously organized 'civil lines', with a British club and perhaps a racecourse. The great colonial cities, however, and the capitals of the three major presidencies of British India—Calcutta (now Kolkata), Bombay (now Mumbai), and Madras (now Chennai)—had their own distinctive character, deriving in the first place from their initial establishment as bases for trade. They were organized around the two axes of Fort and Government House on the one hand, and wharves and docks on the other. They were clearly divided, too, between 'Black Town' and 'White Town'—as the different urban areas occupied by Indians and Europeans were once designated in Madras.

The major cities of India are, therefore, 'creatures of colonialism, or ripostes to it', as Sunil Khilnani has put it. The British created, he says, 'a masquerade of the modern city, designed to flaunt the superior rationality and power of the Raj, but deficient in productive capacities'. The Marxist intellectual Boudhayan Chattopadhyay once put it more pithily when he suggested that whereas British cities are the creation of a production system, those of India are rather 'the excreta of a consumption system'—sites for the consumption of wealth derived from exploitation of rural people. Neither this statement, nor Khilnani's, is entirely accurate, of course, for there were new industrial cities, such as Kanpur and Coimbatore, as well as Bombay, where the cotton textile industry became established in the later nineteenth century. The 'masquerade of the modern city' reached its heights in the architectural splendours of New Delhi. The city designed by the architects Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944) and Sir Herbert Baker (1862–1946) was meant to advertise the staying power of the Raj. First proposed in 1911, it was largely completed by 1935—ironically, just twelve years before the British were driven from India. Lutyens was also keen to ensure that India's capital was writ large with the straight lines of 'western Reason', much as Pierre Charles L'Enfant had achieved in Washington DC. The greatest riposte, meanwhile, to the colonial city was probably Ahmedabad, the principal city of present-day Gujarat, which had long been both an important political and commercial centre, and was largely ignored by the British. Ahmedabad modernized on its own terms, becoming known as 'the Manchester of India' (reflecting the success of its many textile mills).

After Independence the city came to be seen as the engine of modernity. Nehru took a close personal interest in the design by the celebrated French architect Le Corbusier of Chandigarh, which was to become the capital of Punjab. The city that he created was resolutely modern in its conception, and stripped of all historical associations. For Nehru it was 'symbolic of the freedom of India, unfettered by traditions of the past, an expression of the nation's faith in its future'. Yet the city was laid out in such a way as to reinforce a strict social hierarchy.

In the twenty-first century, the importance of the cities as cradles of 'the new generation of Indian enterprise' has been widely proclaimed, and both the English word 'city' and Indian language equivalent terms, such as '*shahr*' in Hindi, are metonyms for modernity. The major metropolitan cities (city regions, with populations in 2011 of more than 5 million)—the 'metros'—Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore (now Bengalaru), Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Pune, and Surat, are generally thought of as the principal sites of the 'new India' and as homes to the 'new middle class' of young professionals and entrepreneurs. No city in India, however, is more symbolic of the dynamic 'new India' than Gurgaon, the satellite city south of Delhi, which was no more than a village until the 1990s. Described as 'the millennial city', it has experienced phenomenal growth, but both architecturally and socially it is marked by deep divisions and inequality. Gradually, smaller cities and even the erstwhile '*mofussil*' (provincial) towns have taken on something of this character too. Each of the metros has plans for becoming a 'global city', with Singapore often taken as a model. Bangalore and Hyderabad have vied for recognition as the 'cyber capital'—the dominant centre of the IT industry—of India. Over the first decade of the twenty-first century, their

development has made them scarcely recognizable to those who knew them before. The flip side is the further marginalization of the poor, even as work in the cities—especially in construction and the provision of private security services—has come to have ever greater importance in the ways in which very many poor people survive.

• See also ***globalization, middle class, modern***

Civil Society

Civil society is a slippery term. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain, it referred to a social order shaped by government and counterposed to an anarchic state of nature. But in the nineteenth century Georg Hegel argued for a vision of civil society distinct from government. Hegel also linked civil society to a particular form of sociality: in civil society, people meet as autonomous individuals, blind to differences of background and status. During the last third of the twentieth century, commentators seized on this Hegelian vision and attributed to civil society a range of causative powers. Civil society, in this sense, can nurture democracy in formerly authoritarian states, trigger social harmony in the wake of sectarian strife, prevent communal and ethnic violence, and even promote economic growth through its positive effects on levels of trust and cooperation in society.

At the same time, many influential commentators argued that developing countries could not reap these benefits because they lacked a broad-based civil society. Partha Chatterjee made a version of this argument for India. In Chatterjee's view, it is only the very rich in urban metropolitan areas in India who have developed modern associations analogous to civil society, and it is only in elite circles that one encounters the English phrase 'civil society'. The poor and lower middle class occupy instead a sphere of 'political society', in which they form into specific groups on an ad hoc basis to bid for state resources. Political society is comprised of temporary mobilizations and usually underpinned by particularistic solidarities based, for example, on caste and religion. Political society is often violent and para-legal in nature, and operates through vertical networks of patronage and clientelism.

Chatterjee's tendency to imagine the rich as guardians of civil society is problematic, however. There is considerable evidence of the uncivil and antisocial nature of elite political action in India, as recent reports of land-grabbing and slum clearance make clear. More importantly, the poor often do participate in civil-society-type organizations in India, such as grassroots environmental protest, Dalit resistance, and mobilization in defence of rights, even if they do not often understand their action with reference to the term 'civil society' or any local language equivalent.

People also often inhabit some type of 'civil society' and political society at the same time. Student leaders on provincial Indian campuses frequently campaign in organized groups against corruption, while also launching violent mobilizations to obtain resources for their particular caste group. Likewise, the poor in many parts of India strike secret deals with local brokers to get access to state services, while also campaigning for greater transparency. Such

apparent double dealing reflects conflicts between people's short-term interests and long-term goals and between pragmatism and principle.

There are also many forms of politics in India that have some of the characteristics of civil society in its Hegelian guise but not others. For example, there are caste associations that campaign for the rights of fellow caste members and provide scholarships, schooling, health care, and employment advice to poorer members of their caste. These associations exhibit many of the characteristics of civil society but are founded on a communal identity rather than impartial solidarities. A similar point might be made about Hindutva organizations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). There are also many examples of local activists conducting civil-society-type work—helping poor people get access to state services, motivating poor populations, critiquing corruption, for example—who are nonetheless not part of named associations. It is also unclear whether legality and non-violence should always be imagined as prerequisites of civil society: para-legal organizations that sometimes employ strong-arm tactics—such as illegal student unions in colleges—might be included in the ambit of actually existing 'civil society' in India if they are also deliberative, inclusive, and function as a check on the abuse of state power. It may be necessary to broaden notions of civil society in an Indian context to take account of non-institutionalized political forms and those based on particularistic identities and, possibly, to take account too of political actions involving some level of violence and illegality. The stakes in these debates over labelling are not only academic. 'Civil society' is a term loaded with positive associations, and the claim to be part of civil society can be important in the efforts of individuals and organizations to bid for resources.

The meaning of civil society in India is changing in other ways, too. An increasing number of civil-society-type organizations in India emerge out of public/private partnerships or more complicated amalgams of grassroots organizations, government bodies, and larger NGOs, in part reflecting the particular institutional effects of economic reforms across the country. The state has often withdrawn from its commitment to providing health, educational, and other services to its population, and increasingly invites or allows the private sector to take up the slack. For example, government schools in India are in practice run by a collectivity of social actors, including government teachers, instructors appointed by the state to assist with teaching through development programmes, and oversight committees partly comprised of local citizens.

Likewise, the scale of civil society organizations and networks is changing radically. New technologies—most notably mobile phones and the internet—offer a means of knitting together interests across space in ways unimaginable even two decades ago. Partly reflecting these trends, international bodies have become much more active in intervening in the civic life of India, creating new opportunities but also new dangers for local NGOs and activists. For example, the International Dalit Solidarity Network, a civil society group putatively representing the interests of Dalits in India and abroad, has been accused of serving only elite sections of Dalit society and ignoring issues such as land rights that are at the forefront of Dalits' minds on the ground. In a more positive vein, Arjun Appadurai has argued that

transnational organizations can improve poor people's access to key services, thus constituting a type of global civil society.

• See also ***Dalit, democracy, politics, state***

Class

Raymond Williams devotes nine pages to 'class', the longest entry in his *Keywords*, and he starts his discussion by saying that it is 'an obviously difficult word, both in its range of meanings and in its complexity in that particular meaning where it describes a social division'. Deriving from a Latin root—a word referring to a group of Roman citizens distinguished on the basis of property—the word entered the English language in the sixteenth century, and fairly soon took on the general meaning of a group or division (or 'a set of things having properties or attributes in common'). It was applied to people as well, but other words such as 'order', 'rank', 'estate', and 'degree' all remained more common descriptors of social divisions into the nineteenth century. These terms, however, carry the strong connotation that the distinctions to which they refer are determined by birth, whereas class 'as a word that would supersede [such] older names for social divisions relates to increasing consciousness that social position is made rather than merely inherited' (Williams). This consciousness developed in the period of the reordering of English society in the context of the industrial revolution between about 1770 and 1840. Distinctions such as 'lower class', 'middle class', 'upper class', and 'working class' all came into use in this period and were common terms by the mid-nineteenth century. They then came to have particular meanings in Marx's analysis of capitalism—though Marx himself actually wrote rather little about the concept of 'class'—and later, in sociology from the early twentieth century, through the work of Max Weber (1864–1920). A critical difference in the meanings of class in reference to social divisions is that of whether it is used only descriptively, or—as it is in Marx's work—to refer rather to a social process.

The sociological concept of class, whether derived from Marx or from Weber, refers to the significance of economic endowments—whether material means of production or possession of particular skills ('human capital'), cultural traits (sometimes referred to as 'symbolic capital'), or social connections (sometimes described as 'social capital') that influence a person's power in the markets for labour or for money—for the differences in the sets of opportunities and constraints that confront all human beings as they 'make out' through their lives. Different groups of people broadly share particular combinations of opportunity and constraint according to their positions in the structures of production and distribution through which societies are reproduced; and their relationships are substantially determined by these differences in class position. This is the class structure, or what Marx refers to as 'class-in-itself'. It is another question as to whether the groups of people defined by the class structure actually think of themselves in these terms and are aware of and act upon their commonalities. This is the dimension of *class consciousness*, or of 'class-for-itself' as Marx defines it. It is possible then to examine the historical social processes of *class formation*—

those that bring about collective organization among people who broadly share class positions—and of *class struggle*, when classes pursue their interests in opposition to those of others. A Marxian interpretation of history finds in these processes the essential dynamics of societal change over time, while in the Weberian view class is only one dimension of power relationships (the others being 'status' or honour, and 'party') and it is envisaged that change comes about as a result of complex interactions among the different dimensions of power.

The historian Christopher Bayly has shown that by the 1840s in India there was a radical intelligentsia, amongst whom there developed a 'sociological imagination' (he uses the term of the American sociologist C. Wright Mills). These radicals—many of them students of a remarkable Eurasian radical, Henry Derozio (1809–31), who taught at the Hindu College in Calcutta, and who was commemorated in a stamp issued by the Indian Postal Service in 2009—knew little, Bayly says, of the European Marxist tradition that was emerging at the time. They rather discovered for themselves 'class and positional social subordination' through their observations of the effects of landlordism and rack-renting in the Indian countryside, and of the fate of coolie labour exported from India as the international economy developed in the mid-nineteenth century. The radicals developed a critical sociology of their own, recognizing that India was divided by class as well as by caste, and presaging 'the emergence of a powerful and enduring Indian left, at odds with the very social order from which its members had emerged'.

The colonial government of India, meanwhile, was also greatly concerned to classify the population over which it ruled, but it sought to do so—most clearly in the decennial census, first attempted in 1871—through the categories of caste, in particular, and also occupation. The word 'class' was used principally in the label 'backward classes', applied from the mid-nineteenth century onwards to adivasis and low-caste people in general, and then in the term 'depressed classes', which came into use in the 1920s to distinguish 'untouchables' from others on the list of 'backward classes'. This use largely ceased with the Government of India Act of 1935, which introduced the idea of drawing up a 'schedule' of social groups that should benefit from affirmative action, and gave birth to the categories of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Later, after Independence, the Government of India started to extend the principle of affirmative action to other groups, described as 'Other Backward Classes' (OBCs) (*see* reservations). In these cases 'class' is used with reference to a category of people presumed to have the same social status.

The Marxian, relational concept of class was brought into analysis and reflection upon Indian society early in the twentieth century, principally by communists, such as E. M. S. Namboodiripad (1909–98) who was for a long time an influential communist leader in Kerala. The mainstream of Indian sociology, however, focused on caste, arguing that this is the way most Indians themselves regard the principal divisions in their society. For some time scholars opposed a 'class view' of Indian society to the 'caste view'. Thus the few sociologists influenced by Marxian ideas were concerned with analysis of class formation in Indian rural society, and with distinguishing between 'rich', 'middle', and 'poor' peasants, while most researchers were interested much more in caste relations. The possibility that

class relations might be experienced in terms of caste, for example when employers such as larger landowners come mainly from one caste group, and labourers largely from another, lower-caste group, was hardly considered.

In practice, caste solidarities can contribute to the development of class consciousness and class mobilization, where there is a near identity between caste and class in particular contexts, or cut across them where workers, whether in the rural economy or in cities, are drawn as they often are from different groups. The possibilities of working class political mobilization are also cut across by the important distinction between the small share of the Indian labour force that is in formal employment, enjoying the benefit of various protections under labour law, and extensively organized in trades unions, and the great majority of informally employed workers, who do not enjoy protection and who, when they are unionized, mobilize rather against the state, in agitating for welfare benefits, than against their employers. The extent to which the working class in India has been mobilized politically as a 'class-for-itself' (in Marxian terms) has been severely constrained, outside a few centres such as Mumbai and Kolkata, at some times, and few people refer to the language of 'class'. It is nevertheless evident that many people on the ground do have a sense of themselves as belonging to a particular economic 'stratum' within society, as most clearly expressed in the idea of being 'poor' ('*garib*' in Hindi).

India's upper or dominant classes, too, are divided, as the capitalist class, or 'big bourgeoisie', and the commercial cultivators or landlords and rich peasants have competed over access to resources from the state. Now an increasing share of the population of India is considered to be middle class, and shows signs of greater consciousness of common class interest, and of having the ability to pursue it politically, certainly than the working classes of the country. Many people in India, including prosperous sections of the rural population and middling sorts in urban areas, are using the term 'middle class' to refer to their position.

• See also ***bourgeois, capitalism, communism, labour, land, peasant, socialism***

Colonialism

Deriving from a Latin word, by the sixteenth century the word 'colony' in English had come to have the meaning of 'a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state' (*OED*). The United States of America, of course, has its origins in the thirteen such colonies of settlement that eventually fought to break away from their subjection to their 'parent state'. But the term 'colony' also came to be used more broadly to refer to those territories—literally 'overseas'—over which European maritime powers exercised rule. India was never a 'colony' in the sense of a settlement—and indeed remarkably few British people ever actually settled there on a permanent basis. The numbers of Britons in India, in relation to the numbers of Indians, were always remarkably small, even by comparison with those of the citizens of other European powers in some of their Asian colonies. By the later nineteenth century, 'colonialism' was used to refer to 'the colonial system or principle', or in other words it referred to the ways in which Britain and

other imperial powers exercised their rule and for what purposes. As the *OED* goes on to note, the term has come often to be used 'in the derogatory sense of an alleged policy of exploitation of backward or weak peoples by a large power'. This is certainly very often how it is used and understood in India.

Modern India has been influenced in many ways by colonialism, and it remains a major focus of enquiry and debate among scholars. The economic nationalists, including Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917), who is considered to have been one of the founders of the Indian National Congress, argued forcefully well before the end of the nineteenth century that British colonial rule had impoverished India for the benefit of Britain. In the language of later theorists, colonialism had *underdeveloped* India, and for all the systematic efforts of a good many economists and economic historians—starting, in some sense, with Marx in the 1850s—to prove the benefits of colonial rule, there remain very powerful arguments in support of the nationalist view. It is important, however, also to recognize the role of many powerful Indians in the economic structures of colonialism, and that there were Indian capitalists who benefited very significantly from them—though this is not to support the colonialists' fiction that their rule over India was for the good of Indians. On the other hand, there is also an important argument which holds that British colonial rule created modern economic institutions in India which have together supplied the framework for the country's recent successful economic growth.

There is a complementary debate about the social impact of colonialism. Did it bring about fundamental change in Indian society—the 'first social revolution' to have taken place in India as Marx anticipated? Or rather was there continuity between the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods? Did colonialism actually consolidate and entrench existing structures of power and domination? There is evidence and argument on both sides. There is no doubt that colonial rule often did depend on local powerholders, and so consolidated their positions, but the view expressed by the historian Eric Stokes, that 'The modernizing impulse [of the colonial government in the mid-nineteenth century] was not the less real or significant because society in the Guntur district [for example] still appeared to be quite untouched by the transfer of power to British hands', is one that is widely accepted. And while it is not accurate to think of democracy and ideas of universal citizenship as being the 'gift' of the colonial power to India, it is important to recognize the influence of colonial institutions in their establishment in independent India.

More recent historical scholarship on India, forming a significant part of the current of postcolonial studies which examine and respond to the cultural legacies of colonialism, has focused on the colonial construction of knowledge about India, and on the uses of that knowledge in colonial governmentality. Scholarship on India actually anticipated much of the influential argument of Edward Said about what he called 'Orientalism'—about how Europeans constructed, or understood, the Orient, and how they used this knowledge as an instrument of rule. The British, as the historian Nicholas Dirks puts it, defined to their own satisfaction what they thought to be Indian rules and customs, and Indians then had to conform to these ideas. Colonial government worked through a 'rule of difference': Indians were held to be in some fundamental ways different from Europeans, and for this reason had

remained outside the path of progress that had been achieved in the West. Colonial rule was then sought to be legitimated as being the means whereby India was to become 'modern'. The work of Dirks, and earlier of his teacher Bernard Cohn, has produced convincing evidence and argument about the ways in which colonial rule helped to create what was thought of as 'tradition'. It led, for example, to the idea that 'Hinduism' is a distinct and coherent 'religion', and to its construction as 'a systematic . . . all-embracing religious identity', when it seems clear that there were in fact a number of very distinct religious traditions in Hindu India. And while Dirks most certainly does not argue that British rule invented caste, he offers a powerful case in support of the view that the ways in which the British used their understandings of caste in government substantially created 'the caste system' as it appeared as a focus for study by anthropologists in the middle and later twentieth century. He argues, for example, that 'The idea that varna—the classification of all castes into four hierarchical orders with the Brahmin on top—could conceivably organize the social identities and relations of all Indians . . . was only developed under the peculiar circumstances of British rule.' According to this school of thought, therefore, colonialism did bring about a great deal of social and political change, but it did not modernize India in the way that both some scholars and some colonial officials anticipated.

In sum, colonialism in India may be seen as a form of rule in which the exercise of power depended substantially upon constructions of difference, both between colonial rulers and the ruled, and among the latter. It brought about a great deal of change, but not invariably in such a way as to bring what Westerners construed as modernity to India. Colonialism was in many ways a deeply conservative force.

• See also ***caste, history, modern, tradition***

Commons

Raymond Williams says of the word 'common' that it has 'an extraordinary range of meaning in English'. Underlying many of its uses, however, is the sense of 'generality'; and one of its specific meanings is that of something 'belonging to the community at large [or "in general", or to a [particular] community . . .' (*OED*). One of the key understandings of the related word 'commons' in English is that of natural resources—and cultural resources, too, which have become increasingly significant—to which all the members of a society, or the members of a particular group of people or community, have rights of access. This use of the word, which is distinct from the meaning 'common people', or the third estate in the English and some other political systems (as in the House of Commons, the lower house of parliament), is of particular significance in regard to land use and government in India.

The original idea of 'the commons' was probably that of an area of land, usually pasture or forest land, to which the members of a community had rights of access and use (by virtue of their membership in the community). Similarly, there might be common rights to fishing, or to water, or to other resources. Such resources have come to be labelled 'common property

This group, known as the Naxalites, formed the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) in 1969. The lineal descendants of those militants, many of whom were killed by security forces—now lead a Maoist insurrection that affects, it is said by the Government of India, around a third of the districts in the country.

Indian communism has always been constrained by the general lack of a mass base, especially from among the rural working class, outside a few pockets. The notable exceptions to this general rule are the states of Kerala and West Bengal. The CPI won elections to the state assembly in Kerala in 1957—the first time that a communist party had won power through the ballot box anywhere in the world—and in this state in particular the CPI, and later the CPI(M), have been supported by mass movements of peasants, workers, and women, and have delivered higher levels of social welfare (or 'human development') than in any other major Indian state. The record of the CPI(M), as the core party in left front governments that ruled the state of West Bengal continuously from 1977 through to 2011, is more controversial, though here too the party has a positive record in regard to alleviating rural poverty.

Though the communist parties have never won much support nationally, outside their bastions in Kerala, West Bengal, and in the small north-eastern state of Tripura, they have at times played a critically important role as opposition parties, as they did in 2004–5, when they helped to ensure the passage of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The CPI(M), for some time the more powerful of the two leading parliamentary communist parties, remains staunchly anti-imperialist and is strongly critical of India's recent tilt in its foreign policy towards the United States.

• See also ***class, constitution, equality, labour, politics, socialism***

Community

Raymond Williams argues that the range of meanings of this commonly used English word gives it considerable complexity. It became established in the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries with several uses that refer to actual social groups, and others that refer to a particular quality of relationships. One of the former uses, from the fifteenth century, is that of 'the body of people having common or equal rights or rank, as distinguished from the privileged classes; the commons; the commonalty'. *OED* describes this as now being obsolete, and yet it still reflects one of the contemporary senses of 'community', meaning a group of people that is fairly homogeneous, with an equality of rights and where status distinctions are held not to be significant. It conveys, too, ideas about the quality of social relationships, implying the existence of a sense of social obligation and mutual dependence, and of social solidarity.

From the seventeenth century onwards, Williams explains, a distinction started to be made between community and society, which became particularly important in the nineteenth century, in the context of urbanization and industrialization. It was thought that these social forces must often draw people away from more immediate close-knit relationships

based in small localities into bigger, impersonal societies in the rapidly expanding cities. The title of one sociological classic, 'the loneliness of the crowd', suggests the distinction between living among large numbers of others in an atomized and individualistic society, and life in a community in which people know each other well, share many relationships, and are mutually dependent, and where there is a sense of social solidarity. 'Community' is a term often used to refer to experiments in alternative living, which set out to recreate what is believed to have been lost in modern societies. Whether or not the distinction between community and society accurately reflects reality—and there is empirical evidence to support this, but other evidence that falsifies it—the conception itself has become a very powerful idea. One influential idea of nationalism holds that 'the nation' is an 'imagined community'. The members of a nation cannot possibly know each other in the way that is supposed to be the case in a small, 'face-to-face' community, but nationalism is founded on the idea of such intimacy in the relationships between people.

The idea of community, with its connotations of mutuality and social solidarity, has been very important in India. The notion of 'the village community'—sometimes rendered in Hindi as the '*biradiri*' (literally 'brotherhood')—was significant in Gandhi's thought, and his conception of an independent India was that it should be a nation based on such solidarities, administered by their local councils, the panchayats. These ideas entered only very partially into the way the Indian state has been organized, but they have continued to influence some official perceptions and the ideas of some activists in civil society. Gandhi had also encouraged educated young people to go to work in the villages, for their own and the villagers' 'improvement', and this experience was one of the influences behind the Community Development Programme established by the Government of India in the 1950s. An important assumption made in the design of the programme was that 'village communities' across the country are fairly homogeneous, and that their members are ready to act collectively in the interests of all. In practice this assumption was often proven unjustified, as village elites took over the resources made available through the programme for their own private benefit. Still, the idea that Indian society is characterized by a strong sense of community, and that this is one of the more important ways in which the country, and other postcolonial Asian countries too, are distinguished from the West, remains important among some intellectuals. Partha Chatterjee, for example, once argued that 'in the new political societies of the East communities are some of the most active agents of political practice'.

There is another sense of the word 'community' that is of particular political significance in India (though it is not quite the sense that Chatterjee had in mind). This is the idea of 'the adherents of a religion considered in their totality', which was in use in English in the eighteenth century, and again has its equivalent in Hindi, where people sometimes refer to co-religionists as members of their 'biradiri'. In some cases people in India refer, rather euphemistically, to 'the members of a certain community' or 'members of our biradiri', which remains unnamed but is clearly, in the particular context, referring to either 'Hindus' or 'Muslims', or sometimes 'Christians', or perhaps the members of a particular caste group. This is the idea of community that informs the concept of communalism, which the *OED* tells us is 'originally and chiefly South Asian'. It means 'strong allegiance to one's own ethnic

or religious group, rather than to a society or nation as a whole; religious factionalism, ethnocentrism. Also: the structuring of society or politics on the basis of this.' It was used in the latter sense in an article in the London *Times* in 1923, in the course of a discussion of the implications of separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims. It is used quite frequently in India today with reference to what is more generally described as 'ethnic conflict' or violence. Communalism, it is held, is conducive to conflict between social groups, though it is important to recognize that some instances of 'communal conflict', at least, have been the outcome of manipulations by influential people, and sometimes by criminals. The political scientist Paul Brass, on the basis of the study over many years of communal relations and of riots in the north Indian city of Meerut, has concluded that in such Indian cities there may be an 'institutionalised riot system', or in other words leaders and groups of people who have the potential quickly to turn a small incident into a violent confrontation.

• See also ***Muslim, nation, panchayat, village***

Congress

'Congress' is the common shorthand for the name of India's leading political party, the Indian National Congress (INC). The party started out, in 1885, as an association originally set up at the instigation of, among others, a British former civil servant, Allan Octavian Hume, to lobby with the colonial government for the interests of mainly upper-caste and upper middle-class Indians, who were mostly lawyers and editors. The name comes from the fact that the association was brought together each year in a 'congress'—where the language spoken was usually English. Early in the twentieth century it became the first organized group seeking independence from colonial rule. It was Gandhi, however, who more than anyone else built the Congress into a mass movement, through the organizational work that he carried out at the beginning of the 1920s, opening it up to mass membership and encouraging the use of Indian languages partly through the establishment of local and provincial Congress committees. Mass movement though it became, the top leadership of the Congress remained in the hands of a mainly high-caste, English-speaking professional elite, and the fears that were expressed by some non-Brahmins as early as 1889, when they published a paper proclaiming 'We do not want the National Congress because it does not represent the interests of the people', may well be thought to have been justified. By the 1930s, however, the local leadership of the Congress was increasingly taken over by larger landed proprietors, with the result that the social progressive fraction of the top leadership, around Nehru, when in government in the 1950s found itself unable to implement the more radical policies to which it had been committed, such as redistributive land reform. After Independence, the party became a political machine in which the links between locality and centre were welded by patronage.

The Congress and its national leaders enjoyed great authority in the early years of Independence, after 1947, and the party was absolutely dominant in national politics—until 1967 winning the great majority of seats in national and state-level elections, albeit with

For all these difficulties, and the wide (and possibly widening) gap that has obtained between the reforming intentions that are set out in the Constitution and the reality of what successive governments have achieved, it is generally considered that it has provided a foundation for political stability and the establishment of an open society. It has been an instrument of social change that has contributed to weakening the hold of caste values in Indian society. Universal citizenship is still constrained in practice and, as some scholars maintain, the rights and freedoms that the Constitution lays out may only be meaningful for a relatively small fraction of society. Yet there is also reason to think that the values that are encapsulated in the Constitution have become a point of reference among very many people, even at the bottom of society, and that India's political culture bears its indelible marks.

The status of the Constitution in India's political culture is very different from that of the Constitution of the United States in that country. It is significant that, whereas the Constitution of India has by now been subject to more than a hundred amendments, the United States Constitution over its much longer life has been subject to only twenty-seven, and ten of these were passed in 1791 as the Bill of Rights. Governments of India have always been ready to change the Constitution according to perceptions of need and interest, or in other words to treat it as a 'living' document. And while there are Indian jurists who seek in their judgments to interpret the intention of those who drew up the Constitution, the idea of the 'Founders', and of their intentions, is much stronger in the United States. There is an influential body of opinion in the United States which holds to the principle that is now described as 'originalism'—the idea that judgments should be based on the original meaning or intent of the Constitution. Any such sentiment is much less pronounced in India.

• See also ***citizenship, democracy, federalism, justice, reservations, secularism, socialism***

Consumerism

A first and perhaps primary meaning of consumerism is 'the protection or promotion of the interests of consumers', but it can also refer to 'the preoccupation of society with the acquisition of consumer goods' (*OED*), where 'consumer goods' refers mainly to non-essential, often branded, products such as televisions, refrigerators, and cars. The first definition is older, coming into use in the first two decades of the twentieth century in the West. The second definition only came into widespread use in the 1950s, with the USA's global economic hegemony resulting in the increased flow across the world of brands such as Levi jeans and Coca-Cola.

In 1986, the Government of India passed a Consumer Protection Act that gave consumers a right to safety, right to information, right to choose, right to be heard, right to redressal, and right to consumer education. This led to the establishment of consumer tribunals in different parts of India and fairly widespread use of public interest legislation to defend consumers' rights. But it is consumerism in its second sense—a 'preoccupation with the acquisition of consumer goods'—and the linked process of globalization that has been a much greater concern in recent years. Up until the mid-1980s in India, even wealthy urban

households tended to rely on state-run television. The purchase of something as simple as a small motor scooter required weeks of negotiation and form-filling, and consumerism in the local market was often limited to the purchase of a small assortment of household products. But this situation changed in the mid-1980s, when Rajiv Gandhi began to move away from India's post-Independence policy of protectionism and import-substitution industrialization towards encouraging private-sector growth (*see* development). In 1991, the Indian Government made a more decisive move to open up Indian consumer markets to foreign brands. The past two decades have been a story of growing, indeed in some people's views 'rampant', consumerism in India. Economic growth and the emergence of a financially powerful elite in metropolitan India have partly powered this trend. An Indian 'new middle class' has emerged which defines itself in large part by reference to its purchasing power and consumer choices. At the same time, corporate efforts at expanding distribution networks and producing smaller packaging have opened up the enormous rural market in India. Soap, TVs, fans, wristwatches, shaving blades, toothbrushes, and mobile phone credit are among the most significant non-food items being sold, in terms of value. Simultaneously, a decline in subsistence agriculture in some areas has resulted in increased consumption of store-bought food. The rapid rise of privatized health and education markets are also forms of consumerism.

The social and material implications of these transformations are profound. Consumerism has created new forms of social stratification and a new medium for the expression of caste and class inequalities. Consumerism has also transformed intimate aspects of the human experience in India including sex, via the spread of contraceptive devices, and marriage, especially through the practice of dowry. Likewise, the physical landscape of India has changed substantially through the erection of signboards advertising brands, the construction of shopping malls, and the rapid effective 'urbanization' of villages, many of which have come to resemble small towns.

For some economists, the spending power of Indian citizens is a major sign of strength and acted as a bulwark against economic recession in the period between 2007 and 2010. But for many others in India, consumerism is a dirty word. There is a political critique from among those representing Hindu nationalist parties or organizations, especially the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (*see* Hindutva). In their view, consumerism is a form of cultural imperialism, corrosive of India's traditional (Hindu) cultures. Gandhians also pick up on the idea of cultural imperialism but with the emphasis on a disjuncture between a foreign consumer ethic and India's tradition of equity, frugality, and self-provisioning (*swadeshi*). Others focus more centrally on the environmental damage done to India by increased consumption, either with reference to the problem of waste or through focusing on the poor environmental records of major corporations producing branded products.

Champions of consumerism, such as ex-Procter and Gamble executive Gurcharan Das, say these arguments miss the point. According to Das, consumerism is absolutely essential for Indian development, and citizens cannot pick and choose which aspects of consumerism to allow into the country: 'you cannot have computer chips without potato chips', Das once pointed out. Likewise, Das claims that India's culture is resilient and polyglot—it can survive

the overlay of new ideas. Advertisers and corporations have busily tried to communicate the same message, often incorporating into their campaigns a nostalgic appeal to tradition, Hinduism, Gandhi, or India's natural environment—even critiques of consumerism have been commoditized.

• See also ***development, media, middle class, neo-liberal***

Corruption

Corruption (*bhrashtechar* in Hindi) is defined in many social science textbooks as 'the abuse of public office for private gain'. In India it refers to a much broader range of practices and ideas, including the nefarious practices of citizens and business. It is also a term that constantly wriggles free of simple definition because what people regard as 'acceptable practice'—and therefore what they regard as 'corruption'—changes as you move around India, according to the person you ask, and through time. Thus, for example, a person bribing a guard to get a better berth on a train might be considered corrupt by one individual and not by another, and the person who regarded it as corrupt might think so today but not ten years later.

It is no surprise that corruption is widely discussed in India. The abuse of public office for private gain is endemic in the country. It manifests itself when huge scams come to light, for example when it emerged that state officials had appropriated money in the marketing of bandwidth for second-generation mobile phones—the notorious '2G scam'. Corruption is also evident at the everyday level, where government bureaucrats demand or expect payment for providing services that they should offer free of charge; where government officials or private contractors embezzle the money earmarked for development projects; or where a police officer excuses a motorist from paying a large traffic fine in return for being given a small tip—known euphemistically as 'money for water and tea'. In these examples, a portion of the money collected 'on the ground' is passed up through government hierarchies—for example, from police constables to police inspectors to superintendents of police—and on up to politicians, who use the funds in part to pay off supporters and finance elections (*see* criminal). A normal 'income' becomes unofficially attached to each post in this hierarchy, and superiors will expect inferior officers to pass on a fixed-in-advance portion at regular intervals. In this system, it is very difficult to remain 'straight', and a popular joke in India concerns the degree to which even the vigilance officers appointed to stem corruption have themselves become corrupt.

People debate everyday corruption vociferously in India. Everyday systems of corruption systematically disadvantage marginalized sections of society, partly for the simple reason that the poor lack money and partly because transactions within this system are never straightforwardly about money but also about respect and reputation. A poor, low-caste man with no 'connections' in a government office will pay more, say, for a driving licence than will a rich man with a friend in high office (although this may not always be the case and the rich may sometimes be tapped for more money, for example in the case of a

traffic offence). Corruption is therefore partly a system through which the powerful mark, reproduce, and extend their social advantage.

Corruption carries heavy moral overtones. By labelling an action 'corrupt'—using the English word or an Indian language equivalent—people stake out what they find acceptable and unacceptable about the everyday practice of state representatives and others. Citizens may regard it as appropriate for a police officer to assist a relative in getting a post cleaning the police station, but they may criticize as 'corrupt' a fellow officer who makes money by hiring out a police vehicle for weddings. Because corruption can refer to many different things at the same time—from embezzling funds meant for school scholarships to taking a tip to allow someone to cremate a relative's body on a favoured spot by the river—the word serves as a type of discursive thread connecting disparate public concerns together. By going out on the street against 'corruption', citizens can simultaneously express their anger at the obstructive clerk in the local electricity office, the teacher who demands a bribe before he will give a class, and the high-level officers making money out of large scams.

Some social scientists have argued that the anger internationally over Indian corruption is simply the function of Western ideas being inappropriately imposed on a place where things happen differently. But people in India across the social spectrum increasingly regard corruption as morally wrong. The Anna Hazare movement active in India in 2011 and 2012 has been especially important in channelling this public anger, and in so doing politicizing corruption. Hazare has called on the Indian Government to introduce a *Lokpal*—a type of public ombudsman committee made up of reputed notables with the legal power to investigate charges of corruption against government. But beyond these large movements, and probably more important than them, there have been numerous smaller-scale efforts at ensuring that corruption becomes a matter of pressing political debate. This includes village-level and regional movements, legal battles involving people's use of public interest legislation, NGO- and government-led efforts at reform (some of them involving Western academics), and piecemeal efforts by individuals to bring 'corrupt' officials to book—especially common since the passing of the Right to Information Act in 2005, which allows citizens to request information on almost any aspect of government functioning. These various efforts have been partially successful in terms of reducing corruption, and they have been more successful in changing the public mood, providing an outlet both for India's new middle class, frustrated by state inefficiencies, and for the poor, who regularly lose out as a result of corruption.

Whether corruption will continue to be at the forefront of political debates in the future is unclear. There are some areas where corruption seems to be on the wane, for example in elections, where vote rigging and the capture of electoral booths is much less common than it was in the 1960s, and also in recruitment to some government jobs. But in equal measure the growth of the Indian economy and the increase in government spending on development projects have created new niches for brokerage and corruption, and increased the overall quantity of money being made. The common mismatch in contemporary India between people's ambitions and opportunities has led to a new pragmatism in some sections of society and new vocabularies of corruption. Many young people in India have started to

make a distinction between 'corruption', the ordinary system of kickbacks and bribes, and 'fraud', where an official takes a bribe and still does not act, or comes up with some outrageous new practice that is not part of the moral system of corruption. This point reminds us that corruption can also be about honesty: keeping to the rules of a shadow system of practice may in certain situations be a 'lesser evil' and not as bad as 'fraud'.

• See also ***caste, criminal, democracy, patronage***

Cricket

Cricket has its origins in England, and was played in India before the end of the eighteenth century. It was not until about the middle of the nineteenth century, however, that Indians themselves began to play it. Interest was partly stimulated by some of the Indian princes, who fought out struggles for status through their patronage of the game, bringing together teams that crossed lines of caste and class; cricket also became well established in the colonial cities, where it was the symbol of modernity. Since that time, the game has assumed great significance in India. An influential Indian intellectual, Ashis Nandy, has said that 'Cricket is a religion in South Asia'—a remark that reflects, in part, the way the game became a vehicle for nationalism. Playing cricket well was a way in which Indians could prove themselves and their masculinity in relation to the colonial power—even if this involved a tension between whether this meant, in a sense, 'becoming British', or rather asserting 'Indianness'.

Later, after Independence, when Indians seem often to have felt their country to be of marginal significance internationally, cricket became the most important way they could aspire to become world leaders—as indeed they have. Indian teams have at times been the best in the world, and the country is now emphatically the centre of world cricket. Indian cricketers are national heroes in a way that is true nowhere else in the world, even in the other South Asian countries, with the possible exception of Sri Lanka—and the game is a particularly important arena in which the relations between Indians and Pakistanis, as well as those between their nation states, are worked out. For these reasons, among others, as Ashis Nandy has also said, 'Cricket is an Indian game accidentally discovered by the English.'

If at first the game involved players from across castes and classes, it became for a time in the twentieth century rather an elite sport. Latterly, however, it has come to have a mass following, in rural as well as in urban India, and the images of the leading players are seen everywhere, especially in advertising. The commercialization of cricket in India has transformed the sport internationally—towards shorter and more immediately exciting forms—reflecting the country's changing economic values and the elevation of competition, efficiency, and productivity, as well as showing up the blight of corruption. The Indian Premier League (IPL), which began in 2008 with some of the world's best players representing city-based franchises owned by India's rich and famous, is the latest example of the extreme commercialization of cricket. By 2010, a consultancy firm pegged the value of the IPL at US$4.13 billion. The commercialization of cricket has come at a price, however, with the IPL

Development

The root of the word 'development' is in an Old French term meaning 'to unfold' or 'to unroll'. By the eighteenth century, development had come to have such meanings as 'evolution', or 'bringing out from a latent or elementary condition', and in the nineteenth that of 'bringing out the latent capabilities (of anything)' (*OED*). The latter sense is reflected in the way the word is used in photography, when the process of developing a film brings out the image that is latent in the chemicals with which it is coated. The word also came to be used to refer to the act of developing an estate, mine, or other property—action which is intended to bring out the potential that is latent within the property. These are the senses of the word that are reflected, as well, in what Raymond Williams refers to as 'the most interesting modern usage . . . [that relating] to certain ideas of the nature of economic change'. By the mid-nineteenth century, the idea was being expressed that societies pass through definite stages, with the later manifestations of their historical development 'being potentially present in the earliest elements', and a clear link was established with the idea of progress. In the later twentieth century, in the aftermath of the Depression of the 1930s and of the Second World War, economic development became a major focus of public policy, especially in regard to former colonial territories. A whole body of theory began to be built up, concerned with explaining how and why the process of economic development takes place, and with determining how best it can be encouraged. 'Development' then became a field of contestation, in which different ideas about what constitutes a good society came into conflict with each other. Another line of debate was over whether the former colonies should be thought of as being simply undeveloped, or as having been actively underdeveloped as a result of their exploitation by colonial capitalism. And then over whether the support given to international development by rich countries didn't show that it was really about continuing the dependence of the poor countries on them, and on their big capitalist corporations.

The idea that India had been subjected to active underdevelopment as a result of colonial rule was central to the thinking of those known as 'economic nationalists'. As they saw it, India had been impoverished by the drain of its wealth to Britain, by the taxation of agriculture in the form of land revenue, and as a result of the ways whereby the colonial power had destroyed Indian industries—what came to be referred to as 'deindustrialization'. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, reflected these ideas when he argued before the Constituent Assembly that 'The first task of this Assembly is to free India through a new constitution, to feed the starving people, and to clothe the naked masses, and to give every Indian the fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his capacity.' The legitimacy of the newly independent state then came to depend very substantially upon its project of bringing about economic development, through industrialization, which was to be achieved by means of planning. At this time—in the mid-twentieth century—the necessity of economic planning was almost universally supported, not least because of the apparent success of the Soviet Union in bringing about the very rapid industrialization of what had been considered to be a 'backward' economy. India has had a whole series of five-year plans since the first,

which was initiated in 1951. The Twelfth Five-Year Plan is being implemented in 2012–17; and the Planning Commission, chaired by the prime minister, though it is less powerful than it was in the 1950s, remains at the heart of economic policymaking.

Nehru's statement before the Constituent Assembly suggests an idea of human development—that of 'every Indian [being given] the fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his capacity'—which corresponds closely with the view of the Nobel prize-winning economist, Amartya Sen, that development should be understood in terms of expanding the real freedoms of people to lead lives that they have reason to value. But in practice Indian governments have always given absolute priority to the goal of achieving high rates of economic *growth*, and social goals—such as the fulfilment of the constitutional commitment to realizing basic education for all within ten years—have had to give way to this prior objective. It has always been argued by policymakers that achieving economic growth is essential if social goals such as, especially, the elimination of mass poverty, are to be achieved. While there is no doubting the truth of this, there is still a great deal of room for disagreement—as there has been among Indians—about *how* economic growth should be brought about, and over an appropriate balance between objectives of growth and of the distribution of wealth and opportunity through society.

The period of India's first three five-year plans saw the achievement of high rates of growth in the industrial economy, and its transformation, with the establishment of a heavy industrial base. But by the end of this period it was also recognized that India was still characterized by very high levels of acute poverty. Economic planning itself entered into crisis, partly because the state was no longer able to maintain investment. Economic growth continued thereafter, but at lower levels, and India continued to be regarded as more or less the archetype of a poor developing country.

This has changed since the 1980s, and over the closing two decades of the twentieth century and the first of the twenty-first, India has generally sustained high rates of economic growth; the country is no longer seen as a developing economy, but rather as an 'emerging market economy' that is already one of the largest economies in the world. The explanation of the change that has come about is much debated among economists, but there is little room for doubt that the 'economic reforms' that began to be implemented in earnest from 1991 have played an important part. The reforms have seen the application of neo-liberal ideas in India's economic policymaking, with the intention of establishing a liberalized market economy. They connote trade liberalization, deregulation, and, in principle, privatization—though in practice the privatization of state-owned enterprises has often been resisted. In general, indeed, economic reform has not gone nearly as far as its protagonists have desired. At the same time, critics point to the failure of economic growth in India to create productive jobs. India, they say, has experienced 'jobless growth'; and because of this the stated aim of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (of 2002–7), of realizing 'inclusive growth', has not been achieved. Goals of human development—of improving the quality of people's lives, as Nehru suggested was the purpose of India's freedom from colonial rule—have not been achieved. People on the ground are increasingly voicing concerns, too, over the negative effects of economic development on the environment.

that was meaningful to the mass of the people meant that political mobilization depended essentially upon a chain of factional networks, linked by clientelism, between the village and the district and the state. The Congress party, notably, was described in these terms, as a pyramid of such patron–client relations between factional networks. It appeared to the political scientist Paul Brass to be unlikely that party loyalties or ideology would play much of a role in local politics in India for a long time.

Later, such ideas as these came to be seen as reflecting an Orientalist mindset, founded on the colonial construction that there is a fundamental difference between East and West. Critics such as the historian David Hardiman suggested that observers were so influenced by the idea that Indian politics is all about faction that they failed to recognize the significance of horizontal solidarities, whether of class or caste, in explaining, for instance, the way the nationalist movement had worked in different parts of India. And developments in Indian politics over the last thirty years or so, which have seen the rise of various political parties based on caste or regional identities, show that faction is no longer, if it ever was, necessarily the dominant mode of political organization in India.

See also ***caste, patronage, peasant, politics, village***

Family

The 'family', which takes many different forms, is the 'elementary' (or foundational) unit of social life in almost all societies, and the arena in which, for most people, the drama of life primarily unfolds. The word itself, in English, is polysemic—with a wide range of meanings—from that of 'the retinue of a nobleman' to the idea of a group of objects of some kind that are connected together or have features in common that distinguish them from other such groups or assemblages. Perhaps the most important meanings, however, are those of (i) 'the body of persons who live in one house or under one head, including parents, children, servants, etc.' (what might also be referred to as a 'household'); and (ii) 'the group of persons, consisting of parents and their children, whether actually living together or not; in a wider sense, the unity formed by those who are nearly connected by blood or affinity'. When 'family' is understood in this way—as it is, very commonly, in India—then the definition of its boundaries becomes problematic: what, for instance, distinguishes a 'family'—'*parivaara*' in Hindi—from a 'clan' or a 'lineage' ('*biradiri*' or '*gotra*')? And, indeed, another understanding of the meaning of the word is of 'those descended or claiming descent from a common ancestor: a house, kindred, or lineage' (all of these definitions from *OED*). The translation and explication of terms in different Indian languages relating to kinship remains a challenge for anthropologists; whether the different terms that are held to be equivalent to 'family' mean quite the same thing for Indians as the English word does for native speakers is still a matter of debate.

Over most of India, families are patrilineal (descent is reckoned down the male line) and they are usually virilocal (a bride moves to her husband's house and joins his family of birth). Amongst most Hindus it is held, in law, that the family is a 'joint family'—a unit consisting

of a common ancestor and all his lineal male descendants up to three or more generations, together with the wife or wives (and widows), and unmarried daughters of the common ancestor and the lineal male descendants. The joint family is a commensal group (its members share food); its members worship together; and they share property, under the management of a senior male member. It is usually thought of also as a co-residential group, though in practice it may be that brothers live and work in different places but still share property. Families of this kind—in which, perhaps, one brother remains in the village to manage the family lands, while others take up other occupations outside, but all continue to share property and income—have been described by anthropologists as 'share families'.

The idea of the joint family and the principle of 'jointness' are widely shared amongst Hindus, and reinforced in their epics and in folk tales as well as in law, but the practice of family life is often very different. Historically, it seems that family organization has differed between classes. It is likely that the incidence of joint families was generally higher amongst wealthier, higher-caste people, and probably therefore—given the higher proportions of people from such backgrounds in urban centres—higher in towns and cities than in villages. It has commonly been supposed that with economic and social development, and the progressive 'modernization' of Indian society, the numbers of joint families will decline and that the 'nuclear family' (composed of a married couple and their children), which is thought to be the characteristic family form of the West, will become the norm in India as well. Empirical research, however, challenges this presumption. It is clear neither that the incidence of joint families is declining, nor that the values that are associated with the joint family are weakening.

There are now large numbers of people who are part of the Indian diaspora, and among them there are many 'transnational families'. Modern means of communication and of relatively cheap international travel make it easier than it used to be for Indians who have migrated to other parts of the world to maintain strong and meaningful family relationships. And it is not only among such diasporic Indians that what are held to be 'Indian family values' are seen fundamentally to define what it means to be 'Indian'. Some of the most successful Indian movies of the past twenty years—such as *Dilwale Duniya Le Jayenge* (Aditya Chopra, 1995)—take as their theme the tension between the idea of marriage as a relationship that is freely chosen between individuals who are able to fulfil themselves and their desires, and family values that stress the principle of the joint family, the idea of marriage as an alliance between families rather than between two individuals, and the rights of parents to dispose of their children in marriage. Differences between their respective family systems have long marked out the distinction between Indian society and the 'West'. Even now, among highly educated, sophisticated young people who are employed in well-paid middle-class jobs, for example in the IT industry, it is very often the case that they defer to 'Indian family values'. Many young women may recognize injustice in the ways in which they are subordinated in family relationships, but still accept parental—mainly paternal—authority.

In the context of a society in which, until very recently, there has been little or no public provision of social welfare, family ties have been the most important form of insurance

available to people. The strength and the significance for people of family and kinship networks can partly be explained in this way. 'Family-centredness' helps to account, however, for the way in which Indian society is segmented, and—clearly—may give rise to nepotism, when those in positions of some power give preference to their relatives. This happens, not least, in politics. The Congress party has been led through most of the life of independent India by a member of 'the family'—that of Jawaharlal Nehru.

The joint family has been, historically, the basic unit of Indian business. Though India has long had joint-stock companies, and now has some highly successful modern corporations, even some of the very biggest and most successful of Indian companies, still, are family businesses. Family relationships may be the basis for trust, which is essential in successful business enterprises. But then giving preference to family members in recruitment to senior positions can mean that businesses come to be poorly managed, and tensions between family members can create difficulties that lead eventually to the breaking up of once successful companies. Academic specialists in the management of family businesses in India often advocate the establishment of separate boards, one for the company—in which professional outsiders may be involved—and one for the management of the family. Tensions remain, in different spheres of life in India, over the positive and the negative aspects of strong family ties.

• See also ***caste, marriage, middle class, modern***

Federalism

The general meaning of federalism, according to *OED*, is 'that form of government in which two or more states constitute a political unity, while remaining more or less independent with regard to their internal affairs'; and the word has been current certainly since the eighteenth century. The first great experiment in establishing a federal form of government was in the United States of America in the later eighteenth century, when the thirteen original colonies, each with its own government, came together to form a union. Then 'centralizers'—those who sought to establish a more highly centralized state—came into conflict with 'provincialists', who wanted more powers to remain with the individual states. This opposition has characterized other experiences of federalism as well.

Federalism, together with democracy, secularism, and socialism (in some form), may be seen as one of the founding principles of independent India. The Indian experience is somewhat different from that of other countries, partly because the provinces of India, thanks to the last constitutional acts of the British government of India, were already members of a federal union during the period of the framing of the Constitution. As Dr Ambedkar said in the course of the debates of the Constituent Assembly (that drew up the Constitution), 'The Federation was not the result of an agreement by the States to join in a Federation' and 'the Federation not being the result of an agreement no state has the right to secede from it'. In this context the task of deciding on the form of federalism was made easier by the fact that there was a strong party, the Congress, with nationwide authority, while

It is also increasingly obvious that feminism in India is itself comprised of multiple competing feminisms—and there are intense debates over what precisely the term means and who can claim to be feminist. One example of such a debate is that between eco-feminist, Vandana Shiva, who has critiqued modern science as inherently 'Western' and patriarchal, and Meera Nanda, who has argued that scientific rationality can generate a critical stance towards patriarchal practices and discourses. Another debate concerns the extent to which feminists in India are becoming 'NGO-ized' or 'neo-liberalized' and, by implication, somehow less radical. At the same time, scholars have started to write of a 'third wave' of feminism in India to reflect the point that feminism is being expressed in a wide variety of new ways, often outside formal politics and organizations. This includes, for example, women's increased focus on lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender rights; greater use of the internet (especially social media); and greater consideration of masculinity and issues of disability and gender.

• See also ***gender, masculinity, politics, rape***

Forests

Something approaching one-quarter of the Indian land mass is reportedly under forest cover—which is not at all the same thing as saying that dense forests cover 25 per cent of present-day India. The degradation of India's forest stock has been a significant political issue for most of the past forty years. This remains so notwithstanding some improvements in the management of India's temperate and tropical forests since the 1990s. Loss of effective forest cover has been blamed on increased demand for timber and non-timber forest products, as well as on governance arrangements that have provided few incentives for forest-dependent populations to manage local forests in sustainable ways. More recently, loss of forest cover has been associated in the public imagination with changes in local and national climate regimes, as well as with human-induced climate change more generally. The proper pricing of forest products (and carbon), and of ecological services, is an issue that exercises government planners and economists.

In the mid-nineteenth century, extensive forest cover in India encouraged a view that the supply of timber was more or less limitless. The colonial power(s) represented forests as distant, unproductive, and even evil (or enchanted) domains. They were home to wild animals and communities of aboriginals and other untutored 'junglees', or 'primitives'. The conversion of forests to agricultural land was broadly to be encouraged, and with it the slow introduction of India's adivasis to civilization, the apogee of which, of course, was the town or the city, or simple urbanism (*see* commons).

Demand for timber—particularly sal (*shorea robusta*) and teak (*tectona grandis*)—increased dramatically with the development of a railway system in India, and began to prompt a first set of murmurings about what later would be called environmental sustainability. The British established an Imperial Forest Department in 1864 and enacted the first Indian Forest Act a year later. It is really with the Forest Act of 1878, however, that the

British began to assert their authority over India's 'wastelands'. From this time, too, came a forest governance system that would define forest management in India for more than a hundred years. Under this system, Reserved Forests were established under the sole authority of the Forest Department (FD). FD officers trained in the principles of scientific forestry were now responsible for key planting, coppicing, and harvesting decisions. Timber was made a priority, rather than the non-timber forest needs of local communities. Indeed, local populations found themselves excluded from forests in which previously they had collected edible products, drugs, and small timber (or bamboo), and in which they grazed their animals. There were also Protected Forests, which granted more usufruct rights to local populations than Reserved Forests, but it was only the much smaller and soon overused Village Forests that remained under the control of local communities.

Struggles over access to and use of government forests were common in the colonial period. Arguably, they became more common still in the postcolonial era, not least as more timber was removed from the hills to feed India's growing towns and cities. Timber mafias played a large role in the resultant deforestation. One of the best-known forest struggles in the 1970s and 1980s was the Chipko movement in Uttarakhand. Taking its name from the imperative form of the Hindi verb 'to hug', Chipko has been presented in some quarters as an essentially feminist movement. Women in Kumaun and Garhwal were lauded for opposing the alleged 'masculinism' of development policies based around big timber and big roads. Such policies failed to trust the wit or wisdom of local people and didn't respect an assumed fellow feeling for nature among forest-dependent rural women. In still other quarters, Chipko has been painted as a customary rebellion that mobilized long-standing ideas about the moral economy of the peasantry: about what men and women can legitimately expect of their rulers. In this discourse the forest is less explicitly gendered—although it is still often seen as a female space—and more explicitly made the property of a deliberative community.

Struggles over India's 'Unquiet Woods' in the 1970s and 1980s, as Ramachandra Guha once described them, led in the 1990s to Joint Forest Management (JFM) legislation. This required FD officials to regenerate India's degraded Protected Forests with the help of local user populations. JFM Committees have been formed in all states. They are expected both to replenish India's forest stock and to defuse difficult and sometimes violent relationships between forest beat officers and local communities. Committees vary in their composition and obligations, although most are expected to include a minimum number of Scheduled Tribals and women. A major study by Bina Agarwal has found that forest regeneration in Gujarat and Nepal is enhanced when significant numbers of women are party to decisions that enforce strict conservation rules, including rules that impose particular hardships on women (as, for example, in the collection of firewood). This is an encouraging finding, not least because it links the empowerment of women to environmental enhancement and sustainability. Whether or not some innate female 'nature' is in touch with nature more generally, it is certainly the case that women in India are crucially engaged in the management and hopefully regeneration of India's forests.

• See also ***adivasi, commons***

G

Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), known as the '*Mahatma*' (meaning 'Great Soul'), the most famous of all Indians, is described by the *OED* as a 'political leader and social reformer'. He was also a thinker who is seen by some philosophers as having developed a profound critique of Western rationalism—though by some other scholars, like the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, as having been confused and muddled, and a sham. He has been described as having articulated a postmodern critique of industrial society and of the modern state before there was a current of thought called 'postmodernism'. He was deeply religious without having had very much at all to do with any religion in the formal sense. He has been seen both as a revolutionary and as a deeply conservative traditionalist, who endorsed caste distinctions, failed to confront class-based oppression, and whose actions in regard to untouchability were at best ineffectual. His intimate though never uncritical follower, Nehru, described some of his ideas as 'unreal'. Yet he was a gifted organizer, and as a political leader it was he who transformed what had been a largely middle-class and upper-caste political association—which is what the Indian National Congress had been—into what was probably the greatest mass movement in history.

Gandhi is acknowledged as the father of independent India, and is represented in pictures—like those on some Indian banknotes—and in statues all over the country. Yet the efforts of the Nehruvian state to build a modern India, and perhaps even more the present-day pursuit by the state of 'growth-at-all-costs', fundamentally contradict Gandhi's vision of independent India. His idea of India as a state built up from the bottom on the foundations of the village community, though it was championed by some of his followers in the Constituent Assembly debates, had very little traction. The idea of local self-government through panchayats entered into the new Constitution only amongst the (non-justiciable) Directive Principles. His idea of the self-sufficient village and of village industry survives only in the state's continuing promotion of handicrafts and 'village industry'. Most Indian towns and cities have a 'Mahatma Gandhi Road'—but, as a famous cartoon once showed, with their shops and cinemas and advertising hoardings celebrating consumerism they could hardly be further away from the Gandhian ideal of asceticism. Gandhi was committed to religious pluralism, and to non-violence. Yet independent India was born amidst violence bred by communalism, and conflict between ethnic communities has been a recurrent scourge. Though pacifism has had some influence in India's stance in international politics, this has not stopped the country from becoming a nuclear power. So what have Gandhi's life and work and his ideas come to mean in contemporary Indian society and culture?

Gandhi's thought is not easily summed up, but it is widely considered that two ideas were of central importance for him: those of '*swaraj*' (meaning 'self-rule') and '*satyagraha*' (meaning 'truth force' but used to describe non-violent resistance). Gandhi's idea of 'swaraj' was laid out in the book *Hind Swaraj*, published in Gujarati in 1909 and in English translation in 1910, and it is there that Gandhi developed his critique of industrial society and of Western ideas of the state. Sometimes thought to have been just a 'nationalist tract', it actually argues for the transformation of Indians' whole way of life, based on the principles of restraint and self-control—or 'self-rule'—and finds the objective of political independence from colonial rule of any significance only in regard to this higher goal. There is evidently a connection between 'swaraj' in this sense and non-violence. It is the method of non-violent resistance that has perhaps been Gandhi's most important legacy, taken up most famously by Martin Luther King in the United States in the struggle there over civil rights.

Gandhi remains an ideal and a kind of a reference point in Indian political culture, but Gandhism has little practical meaning. His ideas and his memory are cynically invoked by politicians and others for their own ends; and they are at most a distant influence on those individuals and those actions that are described as 'Gandhian' in India today. There are still associations that claim to follow Gandhian principles, meaning that their leaders and members attempt to follow a relatively austere way of life and to carry on '*sarvodaya*' ('service on behalf of others')—in practice often some kind of community development work. Sometimes a particular figure is described as having taken on the mantle of Gandhi. This happened in 2011 when Anna Hazare, a sometime soldier in the Indian army, who had won a reputation for himself as a social worker in his native Maharashtra, emerged as the central figure of a popular movement against corruption. Hazare, who has a Gandhian style in his public persona—wearing, for example, what is sometimes called a Gandhi cap—led mass protests and called for civil disobedience against corruption. He also used the tactic of the threat of fast-unto-death, which Gandhi himself had deployed on some occasions, in order to bring pressure to bear on the government of the day to take action in regard to corruption. Hazare, however, also appeared sympathetic to Hindutva, and what he wanted the government to create to fight corruption would be in practice a bureaucratic monster, quite in contradiction with Gandhian principles.

It should be noted that Mrs Indira Gandhi, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru and herself prime minister of India in 1966–77 and 1980–4, her son Rajiv, who was prime minister in 1984–9, his wife Sonia Gandhi, and their son Rahul—both of them contemporary leaders of the Congress party—have no kinship connection with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

• See also ***Ambedkar, community, congress, constitution, Nehru, panchayat***

Gender

The word 'gender' was once employed to indicate the class, order, or kind of something, but usually refers today to the cultural characteristics associated with being a man or woman (although, as the *OED* points out, gender is also sometimes used synonymously with 'sex' to

denote 'male' or 'female'). Where 'gender' is invoked it implies a determination to expose the processes through which cultural attributes are attached to the different sexes and the arbitrary character of such ideas. Gender theorists show, for example, that there is nothing natural about the qualities and roles typically assigned to the two sexes. This point is especially pertinent to contemporary India, where patriarchal ideas about women's qualities—for example as diligent, caring, and vulnerable—are extremely persistent, and where the educational system, legal apparatus, police force, and other bureaucracies (as well as NGOs and the media) have tended to reinforce these assumptions and corresponding ideas about the roles appropriate for men and women in society. Society tends to expect that men will take major decisions within the household, control ownership of major assets, enter paid employment, and deal with public matters pertaining to the family, whereas women are imagined principally as homemakers and mothers. This is not to say that nothing has changed. The rise of an upper middle class in urban areas has been associated with new gender relations in parts of India, for example as young women find jobs in IT and couples absorb Western ideas about companionship and equality in marriage.

Gender inequalities are marked. The sex ratio is badly skewed in India and it is getting worse—from 972 women per 1,000 men in 1991 to 933 in 2011—reflecting the greater value that parents typically place on male children and, consequently, the higher level of care they provide to sons in cases of treatable disease. Among adults, a recent study based on data from the National Health Survey showed that between 1999 and 2006 malnourishment—especially anaemia associated with iron deficiency—increased for women from disadvantaged groups. The female literacy rate has risen from 9 per cent in 1951 to 65 per cent in 2011 but men's literacy rate (80 per cent) remains much higher. Far fewer girls are enrolled in schools than are boys, and parents are more likely to take girls out of school in the case of a family financial or medical emergency. Men are grossly over-represented among India's formal sector employees and among business leaders, and in the informal economy women typically conduct the poorest paid, most insecure jobs.

Gender violence is rife. There has been a substantial increase between the 1980s and 2000s in the murder of young women over dowry and the harassment of young brides on this question. Women are very commonly victims of domestic violence, and the intimidation and rape of women in public settings remains a pressing problem.

Aside from a thin urban upper middle class, wherein ideas about gender are beginning to change, men have a far greater capacity to spend time in urban and rural public space across India. They have more autonomy in terms of when and with whom they socialize and in their choices around leisure and cultural activity. Likewise, men have much greater freedom than do women to participate in the political life of the nation—from parliament, which remains heavily dominated by men, to district-level party organizations and representative bodies, down to the lowest levels of government in the village and urban neighbourhood.

Feminist scholars have recently stressed the danger associated with focusing solely on gender as a form of inequality. For all the points about women's vulnerability, gender cannot be imagined as the only, or even in many cases the most important, line of difference shaping social life in India. The hardships that mark the lives of women in India vary according to

women's caste, class, religion, and age; women are often responsible for exploiting other women, for example in the case of mothers-in-law harassing new brides on the question of dowry; and it is often the manner in which gender intersects with another aspect of inequality, for example the status of a person as a Dalit, which renders them so vulnerable to poverty and marginalization. There is also an emerging gender literature on the particular difficulties faced by men in India, for example in relation to unemployment and associated 'crises of masculinity', and on the status of Hijras: transgender subjects who are often exploited in Indian society.

Post-structuralist feminist writers such as Judith Butler have also argued that in much of the mainstream gender literature the terms 'woman' and 'female' are prematurely and problematically stabilized, such that, for example, a person's status as a woman is taken for granted rather than analysed as a set of performances. One particularly troubling aspect of the 'work' that the term 'gender' performs in India is its tendency to subtly or directly attribute particular characteristics—such as vulnerability, victimhood, and marginality—to Indian women.

Another potential problem with gender analysis is its tendency to stereotype women as victims and men as aggressors. Since the 1980s in particular, women's organizations have become much more active in campaigning in India around a whole range of issues including alcoholism, rape, land rights, dowry, and domestic violence. Women have also been prominent in many rights campaigns. Further, women are often active at the local level, for example as representatives of their communities in everyday engagements with the state.

At the same time, and partly in response to such mobilization, the Indian state has made some efforts to improve women's political position. The seventy-third and seventy-fourth amendments of the Indian Constitution reserved 33 per cent of seats in village and town councils for women, and emerging evidence suggests that this may have had a positive impact on women's power and the manner in which government resources are disbursed in some regions. The Indian Government is currently engaged in legal reform around the issue of rape, and, at the local level, has made efforts to improve the responsiveness of the state to gender concerns, for example by introducing female-only police stations.

• See also ***equality, feminism, masculinity***

Generation

Generation is a major axis of social difference and inequality in India, where patriarchal norms dictate that younger generations respect their seniors, and younger people often worked for elder kin on farms or in household businesses. But the gradual movement of households outside agriculture, combined with rising education among young people, is slowly eroding such arrangements. Parents increasingly spend a large part of their incomes on education, and young people, who are more likely to be in school, have less time to do household and paid work. Attitudinal changes have accompanied this partial shift. Youth sometimes have forms of knowledge and experience that raise their status vis-à-vis older

youth generation working alongside other sections of the population. Whether generation can 'trump' class, caste, and gender inequalities in the long term is a moot point in India.

One of the difficulties for analysts and public commentators in India, as in other parts of the world, is that it is practically very difficult to identify specific social generations; people are born continuously, not in clumps, and there are numerous logics that can be used for classifying populations into generations. This haziness allows institutions and individuals to dream up all types of generational groups. Perhaps the most famous such effort is Salman Rushdie's book, *Midnight's Children*, which reflects on the specific experiences of a fictional character—and his contemporaries—born at the precise moment at which India achieved Independence. Capitalist organizations are also involved in the invention of generations: 2G, 3G, and 4G mobile phones for example. India is often supposed to stand to benefit from a 'demographic dividend' because it has an exceptionally large younger generation so that the numbers of those who can be productive greatly outweigh the numbers of those who depend on them (*see* population). The speed of social and economic change in India, however, means that generations—when applied to consumer goods and also to people—often topple over each other.

• See also ***development, education, youth***

Globalization

Globalization—the proliferation and density of connections between different parts of the world associated with the development of capitalism on a global scale, new technological advances, and the increased movement of people across national boundaries—is conventionally dated to the later nineteenth century in the context of imperialism. These processes are often said to have retreated in the early to mid-twentieth century, before re-emerging and more vigorously so from the later 1970s. Certainly India, which had been pursuing a path of development that was marked by 'export pessimism' and detachment from international trade, has been much more tightly drawn into global circuits of capital and information since that time, and especially from the early 1990s onwards. Economic reforms since the 1990s have bolstered international trade and encouraged foreign direct investment, and the communications revolution has ushered in a period of intense international exchange in ideas.

In practice, 'globalization' commonly refers to India's emergence as a major service hub, for example in the processing of data for foreign firms—leading, of course, to growing concern in the West over offshoring and the loss of employment at home. Indian firms are now outsourcing some activities to other parts of South Asia and to China. Globalization is also used to describe the process through which India has been more tightly drawn into global networks of manufacturing. In addition, globalization refers to India's growing importance as a market for foreign firms, as they recognize the buying power of India's middle class—and even of those at the 'bottom of the pyramid'. The involvement of large foreign banks in the marketing of microfinance services to the Indian poor is a notable

example of this trend. The interest of foreign universities in establishing branch campuses in India is another example, as is the importance of India as a market for military hardware. The key significance of India as a market can be measured in the seriousness with which the US and European countries woo Indian leaders through trade delegations, while the country has actually turned increasingly to trading relations with other Asian countries.

'Globalization' is also used in India to refer to the country's rising prominence, especially since the 1960s and accelerating in the 2000s, in networks of tourism and migration, circuits of international development aid, global cultural production (especially through the rising popularity of Bollywood movies), and networks of communication, as evident in a sharp hike in mobile phone ownership and growing access to the internet.

There is increasing recognition that the bundle of processes grouped under the term 'globalization' has had unequal effects, boosting metropolitan cities and leaving many other places behind. There are parts of India—such as remote regions of the Indian Himalayas—that may in certain senses be becoming less global rather than more so, reflecting the manner in which they have been marginalized within India economically. Nor does globalization result in some type of giant melting pot. Local people imbue iconic 'Western' products such as Coca-Cola with new meanings and utilize such symbols in ways that the manufacturers could not have anticipated: 'glocalization', as some would have it. Moreover, people's growing exposure to images and ideas emanating from outside India heightens their awareness of their distinctiveness vis-à-vis others, for example in terms of community, identity, and nation (*see* culture).

Globalization is often used to refer to the diffusion of ideas, people, and cultural practices from the West to other parts of the world: what is also sometimes termed 'Westernization' or 'McDonaldization'. This often mainly cultural understanding of globalization looms large in the collective Indian psyche, reflected in the subjects of Bollywood films and also occasionally the target of political opposition, for example from Hindu nationalists who want to protect a mythical Hindu India from the depredations of modernity: English-medium schools, Valentine's Day celebrations and Kentucky Fried Chicken have all been the targets for Hindu nationalist protests.

The West remains a major reference point for Indian citizens, but the notion that the West is gradually conquering India is a fiction. Most Indians are not learning to conform to Western practices, as the continued importance of arranged marriage shows. The notion of 'globalization as Westernization' also ignores how other non-Western places influence India, for example where city planners in India look to Singapore as a model, or where young people yearn to buy Japanese electronic goods and may have to settle for cheaper Chinese ones. Moreover, India is influencing the West as well as the other way round, as is evident in the popularity of Bollywood movies and Indian innovation in software—a point that has led some commentators to refer to a process of 'reverse globalization', but which instead simply indicates the multi-centred nature of globalization.

Globalization is sometimes used in the more specific sense of the spread of market-oriented approaches to the economy from Euro-America (especially the USA) to other parts of the world and the associated internationalization of corporate operations; globalization is

a synonym for neo-liberalism. Some commentators and sections of the public in India welcome a new era of relative connectivity in the economy and market-centred economic planning, seeing in it the possibility for India to exploit its comparative advantage in terms of its population, spirit of enterprise, and natural resources. For powerful institutions such as the World Bank that advocate neo-liberalization, 'globalization' can be a useful tool of political discourse: it suggests newness and also a levelling of opportunities for participation in the economy over time.

But many oppose and resist neo-liberal globalization in India—from Gandhian NGOs to tribal villagers, socialist youth to environmental organizations. Anger at the involvement of foreign corporations in human and environmental catastrophes such as the Bhopal gas leak in 1984, Indian involvement in the Occupy movement, and also concern over the role of large corporates in the process of illegal land acquisition (land-grabbing) all attest to the force of such protest. Demonstrators often self-consciously style themselves as 'anti-globalization'. But interestingly the forces of anti-globalization are themselves highly globalized, often drawing on motifs of struggle from other parts of the world.

• See also ***consumerism, culture, development, neo-liberal***

GMO

The acronym 'GMO' refers to 'genetically modified organisms', and in regard to agriculture, certainly in India, it has taken on a very negative meaning and become a symbol for all that environmentalists and the critics of neo-liberal economic policies seek to oppose. This is quite ironic, given that all agriculture, from the very beginning, has depended upon genetic modifications brought about by selective breeding carried on, initially, by ordinary cultivators. What have come to be labelled as 'GMOs', however, are varieties of plants that have been genetically *engineered*.

In genetic engineering, desirable genes (and their inherent characteristics) are transferred, in a laboratory, between organisms (and usually across species) so as to create desirable traits that it would otherwise be impossible to bring about through conventional breeding. An important example of such genetic engineering is that of the insertion of a gene from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt)* into plants to provide them with insecticidal qualities—the resulting *Bt* protein, when ingested by certain pests, causes the insects to die. This particular process has been widely approved with cotton and maize (used for fibres and feed respectively—though *Bt* enters the food chain from both sources) but has so far been highly contested for use in food staples such as rice. The process involved is more accurately referred to as recombinant DNA (rDNA) technology, and the cultivars produced by it are better described as 'transgenics'. It may sound to be a difficult process, but in fact such genetic engineering is regularly carried out by ordinary college students of biology. It is not, after all, so very 'hi-tech'—and this is why, contrary to the arguments of anti-GMO campaigners, it has been possible for these to have sprung up a veritable cottage industry in parts of India, China, and Brazil, for the production of transgenics, often

incorporating genetic material 'pirated' from big corporations (very much like 'pirate' film and music CDs).

Protagonists of the use of genetic engineering in agriculture argue that it has the potential to bring about a new agricultural revolution, comparable with the green revolution, and that it can deliver benefits to both farmers and consumers, for example by reducing the requirement to use plant protection chemicals, if pest resistance is built into plants genetically. Or it may make it possible to develop cultivars that are more drought tolerant, or capable of being grown in saline soils that are otherwise uncultivable. Or it may produce plants that give higher yields. But there is widespread fear of the technology as well, reflected in such epithets as 'frankenfoods'. The insertion of genetic material from another species into a plant is thought to be 'unnatural'. It is argued that the cultivation of GMOs involves unacceptable risks to human health and to the environment, and that—because the technology was developed initially by a small number of powerful, mainly American, chemical companies—it will be of benefit mainly to these corporations which own patents to control the use of genetically engineered crops. The costs for small farmers in India of using these plants will impoverish them—or so it is argued. For these reasons there has developed powerful resistance to the application of genetic engineering in agriculture, mobilized around the 'GMO' acronym, in Europe and in both India and China.

In India, thus far, anti-GMO campaigning has been successful in restricting the use of the technology, except in regard to cotton cultivation. In this case, as one scholar has put it, 'farmers have voted with their ploughs'. They have successfully resisted efforts by the central government to control the cultivation of *Bt* cotton. Such cotton, much of it grown using 'pirate' or 'stealth' seeds produced, not by the big corporations, but by local seed merchants, now accounts for more than 90 per cent of the cotton grown in India. Whether farmers have benefited from this, and in so far as they have, whether their benefits are sustainable, remains fiercely contested. And anti-GMO campaigning was successful in 2010 in causing the central government minister responsible to place a moratorium on the release of a *Bt* variety of brinjal (aubergine, or eggplant) in India—though this had been partly developed in public agricultural research institutions, and subjected to extensive testing. Resistance to the introduction of GMOs is powerful, while other techniques applied in agriculture such as mutagenesis (induced mutation) have largely escaped attention, and genetically engineered pharmaceutical products (such as insulin) have been very widely accepted.

• See also ***environment, green revolution***

Green Revolution

This term seems to have been first used by the chief administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 1968, to refer to the impact of the introduction of new agricultural technology, based on the cultivation of what were then called 'higher-yielding varieties' (HYVs) of the major cereals. What he envisaged was an agricultural revolution in Asia and Latin America that would restrict the prospect of a

communist-inspired 'red revolution'. There continued at the time to be considerable concern among security analysts in the United States about the possibility that rural poverty in Asia and Latin America, understood to be at least in part the consequence of inequality in the distribution of land ownership, made for social conditions favourable to the spread of communism. They also recognized, however, that efforts to address these problems directly, through land reform, had generally—and certainly in India—been unsuccessful. The introduction of HYVs held out the prospect of a technological solution to these political problems.

HYVs, or 'modern varieties' as they were later described, were the products of conventional plant-breeding carried on in research centres in Mexico and the Philippines, funded by American foundations. They were bred to be fertilizer-responsive and proved capable of much higher yields, if grown with adequate supplies of water. Such varieties of wheat began to be introduced into India in 1966, in the context of severe shortages of food grains, and what became known as India's green revolution took off, especially in Punjab, towards the end of the 1960s.

But the green revolution, particularly in India, became the subject of fierce controversy. Some observers believed that far from heading off the possibility of 'red revolution', the introduction of the new technology, requiring as it did a package of purchased inputs, including seed, fertilizer, pesticides, and water—often supplied by pumping up groundwater—would end up by encouraging revolution. This was because the technological package must often be beyond the financial means of smaller cultivators. It would, it was believed, increase the advantages of the bigger cultivators and so increase inequality amongst India's peasants. The possibility, then, that there would be political mobilizations of poor peasants and landless people was a matter of concern for the Government of India by the end of the 1960s. Would the 'green revolution' actually turn 'red'? Other critics argued that the new technology would in the end be of most benefit to the mainly American corporations that (they said) supplied most of the inputs. The capitalist agriculture that the technology encouraged would see the further impoverishment of a majority of the peasantry and bring about the degradation of the environment.

As it turned out, the green revolution in India remained restricted largely to areas with relatively good irrigation facilities, and smaller cultivators in these areas, as well as big farmers, were able to take advantage of the new technology. Cereal production was successfully increased and India became self-sufficient in food grains. Poorer people, who depend on purchases of food grains for their basic subsistence, benefited because of lower prices, and in some areas because of increased wages that followed from the labour demands of green revolution agriculture. The green revolution did not, however, supply the technical fix to the problem of rural poverty that the administrator of USAID had hoped for.

• See also ***development, environment, GMO***

distinguished mainly by vocabulary and script, one a modified version of Persian and the other the Devanagari script of Hindi. They are generally mutually intelligible except in their higher, more literary forms. 'High Hindi' contains so many Sanskrit words, and the corresponding level of Urdu so much Persian and Arabic, as to render them mutually unintelligible. It was only as a result of a political struggle in the nineteenth century that Hindi became clearly established as India's major language—even though it is the language of only about half of the population.

• See also ***Hinduism, language, nation***

Hinduism

Hinduism is now commonly regarded as one of the great religions of the world. This is not an idea that is shared by all contemporary religious leaders in India, however. Rather, they often refer to their religious belief and practice as the '*sanatana dharma*', meaning (roughly) 'eternal way of life', though sometimes translated as 'the eternal religion'; and they consider that all other theologies and religious practices are in some way encompassed by their own. Theirs is, simply, 'religion', not just one of a number of religious traditions.

This is one reflection of the extraordinary diversity of belief and practice that is found in what has come to be described as 'Hinduism', and it helps to explain why many Hindus, like Gandhi, believe that their religious tradition is distinctively and peculiarly syncretic, or inclusive, and encourages tolerance. As Islam spread into India, Muslims certainly thought of other Indians as practising a different religion. Then the British, first in Bengal in the later eighteenth century, confronted by a plethora of religious practice which they at first thought was largely incoherent primitivism, finally came to regard it through the lens of their own religious culture, and assumed that there must be a coherent system of beliefs that could be compared with those of Christianity. By the early nineteenth century they spoke of 'Hinduism', when Indians themselves may well still have thought of their religious identities in other terms, such as those referring to the followers of one or other major deity (of Shiva, or Vishnu, for example, or one or other of the goddesses who embody divine power), or of the sects created by particular religious leaders. Then some of the policies pursued by the colonial government, resting on the presumption that there was a distinct religion in India, helped to bring one into being. Meanwhile, reform movements developed amongst Hindus that sought to define and to bring coherence to their religion. 'Hinduism' is therefore often seen by scholars as a modern concept, formed as a result of what might be described as a process of reification.

The *OED* shows the word as having been in use by 1829; the Dictionary now defines 'Hinduism' as 'The polytheistic religion of the Hindus, a development of ancient Brahminism, with many later accretions.' There is something of a tautology here, given that 'Hindu' is defined as an Indian who 'professes Hinduism'. But if it was first the British who defined the religion of many Indians in such a way as to imply a structured coherence that it did not necessarily possess, Indians themselves began to use the term in the course of the nineteenth

century, and to organize around it in various reform movements. In this 'reformed' Hinduism, the Vedas—four texts written down about 3–4,000 years ago that are the most ancient of Hindu scriptures—were generally identified as the foundational holy book. Hinduism was recognized as a 'world religion', associated—as are both Islam and Christianity, for instance—with a particular holy book on which religious authority is based. In 1893 Hinduism was represented at the 'World's Parliament of Religions', held in Chicago, by one of the most significant of the religious leaders of modern India—and a major influence on the Indian struggle for national independence—Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902). He taught that Hinduism, based on the Vedas, is a universal and tolerant faith, though he also believed that Hinduism is superior to other religions because of this.

Other religious traditions are characterized by diversity and difference, of course, but such are the inconsistencies and contradictions within Hinduism that in the words of one contemporary scholar, the German Indologist Heinrich von Stietencron, it 'certainly does not meet the fundamental requirements for a historical religion of being a coherent system [though] its distinct entities [the so-called "sects"] do. They are indeed religions, while Hinduism is not.' Among many points of difference, others of the major world religions are generally held to be much more highly organized than is Hinduism—within which there is nothing like 'the Church'—even though an eighth-century religious leader, Adi Shankara, founder of the philosophy of *Advaita Vedanta* (espoused by Vivekananda) created four monastic Orders which still have their *maths* ('*mutts*', or 'monasteries') today. Whether or not Hinduism is less 'organized' than other major religious traditions may perhaps be debated, but this perceived lack of organization was a matter of great concern for Indians who began to resist British colonial rule—which was associated with an evangelical form of Christianity—in the middle of the nineteenth century. They thought that Hindus must organize themselves as they had not before, and they began to do so through the formation of Hindu *sabhas* (or associations), brought together in 1915 in the *Hindu Mahasabha* (formed originally as a group within the Congress party), which subsequently played a significant part both in the struggle for independence and in the formation of a distinctively Hindu nationalism (*see* Hindutva). Hindu nationalism has come to project a notion of Hinduism as a unified religious tradition which is catholic internally (so it downplays differences between castes), but exclusive and intolerant in regard to those who are considered to be 'others', whose religions are held to be characterized by intolerance.

Religious scholars continue to debate the concept of 'Hinduism', even while very large numbers of people throughout India define themselves unconcernedly as 'Hindu'. Is there some coherent set of ideas that underlies the diversity in their religion? Some scholars argue, like Vivekananda, that there is unity deriving ultimately from the significance of the Vedas. To see these texts, however, as 'the canon of Hindu scripture' as they have been by some scholars, and as they are also regarded by many Hindu nationalists, is perhaps to reflect a Western frame of reference and a belief that there must be a foundational (or 'fundamental') text. It is also a reflection of the 'high' or Brahminical form of Hinduism, that defined by Brahmin priests, on whom the colonial rulers depended so much for their own information about those over whom they ruled—and, unsurprisingly therefore, referred to quite

specifically in *OED*—when there may be no explicit reference at all to these scriptures in the rituals and practices of the popular or 'folk' forms of Hinduism that are its most common manifestation. In so far as there is unity in 'Hinduism', it perhaps derives most—as the anthropologist Christopher Fuller has shown—from similarities in such religious practice across the country, having to do with the everyday interactions of people, through *puja* (worship), with the multitude of deities who are held to have power over the world.

The Supreme Court of India has been compelled on a number of occasions to take a stance on what defines Hinduism. Several significant judgments by the Court have rested on an inclusivist view of Hinduism, holding that it is an all-embracing religion, but it also held in one case of 1966 that Hinduism 'may broadly be described as *a way of life* and nothing more' (emphasis added). The same argument led the Court thirty years later to conflate Hinduism and Hindutva, on the grounds that the latter too refers to the way of life of the Indian people. It cannot, therefore, according to the arguments of one judge, be equated with 'narrow fundamentalist Hindu religious bigotry'. The Court thus bridged the inclusivist view of Hinduism, propounded for example by Vivekananda, and the exclusivist arguments of Hindu nationalists. Both views, in holding that there is a unity in the religious traditions of 'Hindus', have the effect of homogenizing, and both proclaim the superiority of Hinduism to other faiths.

• See also ***constitution, Hindu, Hindutva, secularism***

Hindutva (Hindu nationalism)

This word, which began to appear in writing in English early in the twentieth century (*OED* cites a text published in 1913), was originally understood, as the Dictionary says, to mean 'Hinduness' or 'the state or quality of being Hindu'. That it should go on to say 'In later use [Hindutva is] an ideology seeking to establish the hegemony of Hindus and the Hindu way of life: Hindu nationalism' is the result, largely, of the writings of Vinayak Damodar ('Veer') Savarkar. His two tracts, *Essentials of Hindutva* (*c.*1922) and the later *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (1923), have a strong claim to be considered the foundational texts of Hindu nationalism. Savarkar (1883–1966) remains a hugely controversial figure in modern Indian history, one both admired and despised. As a young man studying for the bar in London at the beginning of the twentieth century, Savarkar became involved in revolutionary activities that led to his being imprisoned by the British in 1910. He wrote his texts on Hindutva while still in jail. After his release in 1924, he became for a long time the President of the Hindu Mahasabha (*see* Hinduism), a fierce critic of the Indian National Congress, and he was one of those accused of having plotted the assassination of Gandhi in 1948. It is a mark of the controversy that surrounds him even among Hindu nationalists that the English language website of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the party political arm of the broader movement for Hindu nationalism, the Sangh Parivar, does not cite him as an authority when it explains its use of 'Hindutva': 'Hindutva or Cultural Nationalism presents the BJP's conception of Indian nationhood . . . It must be noted that Hindutva is a nationalist, and not a religious or

remove Article 370 of the Constitution that provides for the special status of Jammu and Kashmir (India's only state with a Muslim majority) within the Indian Union; and to build a Hindu temple, dedicated to the god Rama, on the site of the Babri Masjid, a sixteenth-century mosque at Ayodhya (in Uttar Pradesh in North India). The last of these provided a powerful focus for the political mobilizations of Hindu nationalists in the 1980s, and, despite the opposition of the central government, and in the face of an injunction against them by the Supreme Court, they succeeded in demolishing the mosque in December 1992. The construction of a temple on its site, however, has still not been accomplished, and the failure of the BJP to complete this task in the period from 1998 to 2004 when it headed coalition governments has been an important source of tensions within the Sangh Parivar.

• See also ***community, fundamentalism, Hinduism, Muslim, nation, politics, secularism***

History

History has a range of connotations in English, though they converge around the ideas of 'narrative' or 'story' and of a chronological 'record' of events. Williams argues that the root of the English term is in a Greek word that had the early sense of 'inquiry' and then later that of 'an account of knowledge'. In their early uses in English, both 'history' and 'story' were applied to accounts both of imaginary and of real events; but the idea of history as organized knowledge about the past—involving 'inquiry', and the attempt to explain what has happened—became current from the later fifteenth century, and this remains the predominant use of the word. There are many different approaches to the way in which historical inquiry is conducted and historical narratives written.

English writers in the nineteenth century took it as self-evident that Indians altogether lacked historical sensibility. It was noted that while Muslims had at least produced chronicles of past events, Hindus hadn't even done that. The idea was even extended, as it was in some of his work by Marx, to the notion that India had no real history before the colonial era. For all the evidence of changes of dynasties, Indian society, it was held, had not changed at all in any fundamental sense. No contemporary scholar makes any such suggestion, but the idea that the lack of a sense of history—or ahistoricism—is one of the defining features of Indian civilization is accepted by some historians even now. Others disagree, referring to the existence, for example, of caste histories and family chronicles. One scholar, Peter van der Veer, has said that he finds the idea that Indians lacked a sense of history to be 'ridiculous'—though he also concedes that 'Hindu discourse often tried to avoid historical referentiality'. But whether Indians in the past lacked historical sensibility or not, there is no doubt at all that the writing of history has become an extremely important part of nation-building in modern India, as it has elsewhere in the world, and that the interpretation of the past, in school textbooks, and in regard to current events, is most intensely contested. And Indian historians have come to be recognized internationally as standing amongst the most influential members of their profession.

In the earlier nineteenth century Indians themselves responded to their own, and to their colonial rulers', understanding that they in some sense 'lacked history'. In 1838 a number of Bengalis formed a Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, in Calcutta, and the first lecture they heard was one 'On the nature and importance of historical studies'. From about this time Indians began to engage in history writing. Others, however, believed that India's rich religious and epic literature contained historical knowledge. The great epic, the *Mahabharata*, came to be treated not as an allegorical myth but as history, and it is still regarded as such by many Hindu nationalists for whom Krishna is a historical figure. In a similar way, many caste histories bring together myth and history. And the success of a political movement such as the Dravidian movement in the southern state of Tamil Nadu has to do in part with the skilful creation by some of its leaders, who were writers and film-makers, of a mytho-history of the Tamil people.

In the twentieth century Indian nationalists drew on contending interpretations of the past. Nehru's *Discovery of India*, published in 1946, sought to portray 'the essential unity' of India, for all its enormous diversity of language, religion, and culture, and provided a kind of charter for his conception of Indian nationalism—a multicultural conception as it might now be described. History teaching was, however, for a long time influenced by the work of R. C. Majumdar, which was solidly informed but included such ideas as that the period of Muslim ascendancy constituted the 'dark ages' of Indian history, and that Muslims and Hindus in India were two 'separate nations'. At the end of the twentieth century and in the present millennium, historical understanding has become an important battleground between Hindu nationalists and their secular opponents. Both sides have, for example, called historians to their aid in regard to the dispute over the site of the old mosque, the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya; and there have been bitter fights over the content of school textbooks, and over the writing of an official history of India's freedom struggle. It is perhaps hardly surprising that historians are now especially well represented amongst India's most notable public intellectuals. Among their peers across the world both India's left-oriented historians and those of the so-called 'Subaltern School', who offer fundamental criticism of postcolonial modernity, are very highly regarded.

• See also ***colonialism, community, Hindutva, modern, nation, subaltern***

be formed in relation to her parents, other urban citizens, and students in other parts of the world, while the audience for her performances might be students, teachers, or a partner. Likewise, in the case of class, caste, and gender identities, the identity of a particular group—middle classes, Brahmins, women—always emerges partly from what they are not (poor, Dalits, and men) and in performances that take place in real-world contexts: at the water tap, in the bus, in the school playground. People's frame of reference—and the audience for their identity projects—is changing rapidly in contemporary India with the rise of cable and satellite television, increased travel, and greater exposure to foreign visitors and media. These changes in turn alter the extent to which and how people in India imagine their distinctive national, regional, group, and individual identities.

'Identity politics' is usually defined as politics based on the characteristics of a specific group, such as caste, class, gender, or some other particularistic quality, such as sexuality or place of origin. Identity politics is distinct from more ideological forms of politics, as well as from party politics and civil society action, and identity politics is strong in India, reflecting the power of group identities in the country and also the relative absence of broad cross-community understandings.

The Government of India's introduction of a new identity card (ID) scheme has politicized the question of identity. The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) was established in 2009 to provide all Indians with IDs. The scheme has the potential to improve people's access to core government services and banking, but has been criticized from the standpoint of civil liberties and with reference to issues of national security.

• See also ***community, individual, modern, nation***

Individual

The notion of a singular person as an 'individual' is a central tenet of Western Enlightenment thinking, associated especially with the writing of Descartes. In this Western view, the individual human being is separable and discrete from other humans, with an independent capacity for thought, feeling, and action. The anthropologist Louis Dumont famously argued that this conception of the person—as a bounded, unique being with his/her own discrete centre of consciousness—is not widely applicable to India, although he suggested that a certain type of individualism does exist in India in the form of the 'renouncer', a spiritual figure who abandons society in favour of focusing on his own, individual, salvation. Dumont asserted that most Indians developed their sense of identity through relations with others, especially other members of their family, kin, or caste—the individual person was always subservient to these wider collectivities, and caste, in particular, formed the organic whole of which individual people were simply the part. McKim Marriott developed this idea, positing that people in India are better thought of as 'dividuals' rather than 'individuals'. Individuals are linked through the circulation of various substances—Marriott called them 'substance-codes'—such as blood, alcohol, and food, and these are transmitted between bodies, families, and castes.

The writing of Dumont and Marriott has since been challenged. The notion that India lacked an ethic of individualism is founded on a mid-twentieth-century vision of culture in which particular areas were imagined as having certain unchanging 'traits', such as an ethic of community. A more historical examination of the question of the individual in India would consider shifting concepts of personhood through time. It would entail acknowledging, for example, the importance of individualism within the *bhakti* tradition of devotionalism as well as within Buddhism, which emphasizes devotees' individual relationships to god. India has also changed a great deal since Dumont and Marriott formulated their theories. The spread of education and government efforts at development have had the general effect of loosening ties of family, kinship, and caste. For example, young people increasingly think about their marriages in 'individual' terms, and with reference to ideas of companionship and romantic love. After marriage, they place greater emphasis than did a previous generation on the satisfaction of individual goals and desires.

Another set of changes is bound up with the liberalization of the Indian economy since the early 1990s. Economic reforms ushered in a particular form of individualization based on an ethic of self-maximization through market consumption. Advertisements often encourage people to reflect upon the self and express individual difference through consumerism. Simultaneously, powerful institutions and organizations such as the World Bank enjoin people to take responsibility for their own individual lives, and 'individualism' (in English) or related Indian language terms such as '*vyaktivaad*' have gained increased currency. Another effect of modernization and liberalization has been the increasing personalization of religion and spiritual life. To a certain extent—and most prominently among the middle classes—temple worship has been partially replaced by the efforts of individuals to cultivate links with specific religious spiritual leaders. There are parallel shifts in the political sphere, again especially in the middle classes. People may be becoming less interested in collective mobilization than in individual efforts to shape society through organizational work. Others have argued that a broader process of political individualization is at work, wherein all forms of collective politics are withering away and people's political participation is increasingly limited to the individual act of voting.

But modernity and neo-liberalization are contradictory sets of processes; there has been no simple shift from community to individual understandings and practices. For example, in the social sphere, parentally arranged marriage remains predominant, even as young people formulate individual goals with respect to partners. In the economic sphere, many of India's microfinance organizations stress the importance of mutual responsibility with others, and enterprise is fostered within small self-help groups. Politically, India has witnessed many collective demonstrations over the past decade, and—in the cultural sphere—the idea of India as a society rooted in an ethic of community spirit and collective endeavour remains important in all manner of arenas, such as Bollywood films, novels, and advertisements. Moreover, some feminist scholars have pointed out that the notion of India's growing individual orientation is a product of gender power: women may not see the world in these terms. There is some anthropological work that supports this idea, showing that

women are more inclined to view themselves as part of an organic, wider kin unit than are men in India.

In contrast to the *OED* definition, which pits the individual against the human 'group', the issue of the individual's relationship to the surrounding material and natural environment is also live in India. Some environmentalists would argue that the notion of growing individuality in the subcontinent underplays the extent to which people are part of the natural system they inhabit, and perhaps think of themselves in these terms to a greater extent than is the case in the West. Indeed, the growth of discourses critical of environmental degradation may result in new theories of people's 'relationality' that pit an 'individual West' against a supposedly more organically interdependent India.

• See also ***caste, consumerism, family, neo-liberal***

Informal

When applied to economic activity, the *OED* defines 'informal' as 'carried on by self-employed or independent people on a small scale, especially unofficially or illegally'. Much of this definition does not apply very well to India and the global South, where the informal sector is sometimes regulated by the state or NGOs, straddles the boundaries between legality and illegality, and includes elites as well as the poor. The term 'informal sector' originates in the work of the anthropologist Keith Hart in the later 1960s in Ghana, and in its subsequent adoption by the International Labour Office (ILO) in a study of Kenya made in 1971. The ILO researchers saw that development in Kenya was not ushering in a process of smooth 'modernization' manifest in the emergence of large manufacturing units and formal service sector jobs, but was occurring more commonly through the growth of informal types of entrepreneurship—such as street vending, shoe shining, furniture making, and small-scale agricultural production.

This has been true, too, of India. In 2005, the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector in India defined the informal economy as 'all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than 10 total workers'. Other definitions in India place a similar emphasis on the informal economy being comprised of units: (1) operating at a low level of organization, (2) exhibiting little or no division between labour and capital as factors of production, (3) running on a small scale, and (4) involving people mobilizing capital on an individual basis and in situations where expenditure for production is often indistinguishable from household expenditure. According to a National Sample Survey in 2004–5, over 90 per cent of jobs in India are in the informal economy. Even in the non-agricultural sector, over 82 per cent of occupations are informal. In 2004 the informal economy accounted for roughly 50 per cent of GDP in India.

The precise connotations of the term 'informal' when applied to the economy vary according to one's perspective and political position. For many researchers in India, the informal economy is a realm of considerable exploitation (much of it self-exploitation), in

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Labour

The original meanings of 'labour' in English (from around 1300) had the general sense, Raymond Williams tells us, of hard work and difficulty. The word still does carry these connotations. But from the seventeenth century it came to be used in a more abstract way to mean the activity of productive work, and then as a term of political economy—'labour' as a critical factor in the production of commodities, along with capital and materials. In the early nineteenth century the word also came to be used to refer to a social class, and in the course of that century a 'self-conscious and self-styled Labour movement' came into being, while the 'general sense of a political and economic interest and movement' was most specifically defined through the formation in Britain of the Labour Party (quotes from Williams).

In Hindi, the term '*kaam*' is analogous to labour, but people often use the term '*mazdoori*', which is more specifically associated with manual labour, and '*mehnat*', which also has the sense of 'toil' or 'burdensome work'. The English word has been used most commonly with reference to particular categories of employment or groups of workers, as in 'agricultural labour', 'bonded labour', 'contract labour', and 'casual labour'. There is still extensive child labour in India, in spite of the efforts of service organizations and of some NGOs to stop it. The term 'casual labour', commonly used to refer to workers who are employed and paid on a daily basis, is a more formal way of describing those who have historically often been called 'coolies'. This is a term, derived from a word found in several Indian languages, that came to be used in English from early in the seventeenth century, to refer to 'hired labour' or to porters, with the connotation, too, of their 'being of low status'. Agricultural labourers and coolies were, and still are, drawn disproportionately from the lower castes. 'Bonded labour' refers to those labourers who are bound in some way, usually through debt, to a particular employer, and whose freedoms in the labour market are consequently constrained. They may have to work for their employers at wage rates that are well below those currently prevailing in the market. This form of labour was very common in the past, in agriculture especially, where debt sometimes passed from one generation to another, binding a labourer's family to that of a particular employer. It is probably much less common these days in villages, but it persists in many occupations, and some scholars speak of 'neo-bondage' and argue that it remains widespread. 'Contract labour' refers to workers who are employed over a particular period of time to perform a specific task, their remuneration usually being for the completion of that task, rather than a daily or other wage or salary.

These are all forms of employment to which the ideas of 'hard physical work', of 'toil', and of 'pain' and 'difficulty' apply, and which account, between them, for a large share of the

Indian labour force. They are also forms of employment, offering very little in the way of stability, continuity, and security of income, that are particularly associated with vulnerable livelihoods that leave those carrying them on liable to live in poverty. They are forms of informal, or of what is in India often described as 'unorganized', employment, in which workers have no protection, as workers, under the law. For employers, employing casual labour or taking on workers on a contract basis is a way of keeping down labour costs, and in the context of India's liberalizing economy these have become ever more significant modes of employment. The participation of women in the labour force has increased, though this has been particularly amongst women with little or no education, who have entered occupations, often on a part-time basis and sometimes involving home-working, that offer no security. Contract labour is becoming more extensive in India's large-scale manufacturing industry. There is relatively less of what is often described, using the English word, by people speaking Indian languages, as 'permanent' employment, in which workers do enjoy protection under the law. Yet many economists argue that India's labour laws give rise to 'inflexibility' in labour markets—or, in other words, they say that it is too difficult for employers to hire and fire according to the state of the market—and that this is now an important constraint on the more successful development of the economy.

India has a labour movement, institutionalized in the form of several important confederations of trade unions. This is what is also referred to as 'organized labour'. Unions, and the confederations—which have often been at odds with one another—are, however, divided on political lines, and this fact, together with that of the relatively small share of the labour force that is unionized, accounts for the political weakness of the labour interest in the country. Still, the labour movement has been able to resist efforts by governments in the more recent past to reduce the scope of legal protection offered to those workers who do have access to it; and the courts have sometimes upheld labour rights, including even the right to gainful employment, which was legislated for in Part IV of the Constitution of India, among the (non-justiciable) Directive Principles.

The cultural meanings of 'labour' vary considerably across Indian society. High-caste status has been associated historically with avoidance of physical labour or 'toil'—and this is one reason why Bollywood film stars used to be well built, even plump, but not often muscular. On the other hand, the economic success of people from certain middle-ranking caste groups may be explained as being due to their capacity for 'toil'. This is the case among the entrepreneurs who have been responsible for the very rapid growth of the knitwear industry in Tiruppur, a small town in South India. They have worker-peasant origins, and their willingness to labour/toil alongside their employees in the companies they have set up has been instrumental in their success. 'Toil is capital', they say.

• See also ***capitalism, informal, poverty, unemployment***

Land

The idea of 'land', in the several senses of the area ruled over by a sovereign, or in modern history the territory of the nation; of the natural environment; and of an area to be farmed or owned by individuals or communities, is very important for Indians, as it is for people generally—and especially for those who live in what are still substantially agrarian societies. In common parlance, 'land' most often refers to agricultural land—'*zameen*' or '*bhoomi*' in Hindi. 'Land' in the sense of the territory of the nation is an important aspect of nationalism in India, and perhaps especially so for those Hindu nationalists who hold to the idea of Hindutva, which may be understood as a form of territorial racism. Only those whose 'fatherland' and whose holy places are found in the Indian subcontinent can call themselves 'Hindu'. But association with 'the land' is quite generally of deep cultural significance, and particular qualities may be ascribed to groups of people according to what is understood to be the terrain from which they come. Even now, being able to 'eat one's own rice'—food from the land of the place to which one belongs—is important for some people.

Rulers in India have historically had sovereignty over a particular territory, implying some sort of superior right over the land, and both their political power and the economies of their realms have largely depended on how they exercised this right. It has been argued that whereas in the West, certainly by the eighteenth century, the significance of land ownership was for the profit that could be derived from it, in India what mattered was rather the power over people that command over land gave. As one scholar has put it, in India 'land is to rule', whereas in the West it was rather the case that 'land is to own'. Political power in India rested to a large extent on control over people, not land itself. What was of concern to a land controller (as we may say, rather than 'landowner') was to maximize the numbers of those dependent upon him.

The British, as rulers of India, relied heavily on revenue deriving from taxation of land (whereas the Mughals before them had generally taken shares of the crop), so they had to be concerned with land rights. They were often confronted by situations in which, it seemed, different people could claim rights over the same piece of land. There were, apparently, no clear rights of 'ownership'. So one of the first tasks of colonial government was to establish property rights and responsibility for the payment of land revenue. This was done in different ways in different parts of the country—so that different systems of land tenure (a term for the forms of property rights and the social relationships associated with them, which appeared in English first in the nineteenth century) were established. In much of the north and east the settlement of land revenue was made with individuals who exercised rights over large estates. The actual cultivation was carried out by tenant cultivators, from whom the estate owners (commonly referred to as *zamindars*) obtained a share of their product, a part of which was then handed over to the government. Elsewhere (in what is referred to as the *ryotwari* system), the colonial government reached a settlement of the land tax with those they presumed to be individual peasant proprietors (or '*ryots*'—a term which meant 'subject' in Mughal India, but which became synonymous with 'peasant'). Whether in zamindari areas, however, or in ryotwari ones, the level of assessment of the land tax was a

matter of great contention, and there were many instances of rural protest against it. And the leasing out of land to tenant cultivators was found in ryotwari as well as in zamindari areas. The prevalence of share-cropping (in which the cultivator hands over a share of his produce to the landowner, rather than paying a fixed amount as rent), on terms that were generally onerous for them, meant that the cultivators usually had little or nothing left to invest in the land, while the owners had little or no incentive to do so. This sort of land tenure system became known as landlordism, a term which came into the English language in the nineteenth century, at first—according to *OED*—to describe the system of land tenure prevailing in Ireland. But Indians themselves were already debating landlordism and its implications by the 1840s, and collecting information on rack-renting and other practices of landlords.

Outside areas of commercial cultivation, some of it under British ownership, Indian agriculture generally saw very little development in the British period, and Indian nationalists argued that the core of the problem had to do not just with the land taxes levied by the colonial government, but also with landlordism. There was great inequality, they thought, in land ownership rights, and the tenurial conditions under which much cultivation was carried out meant that there were no real incentives for anyone to invest very much in agriculture. To address these problems, Indian nationalists, both some of those in the Congress party and the communists, argued that priority should be given to land reform. By this they meant that rights over agricultural land should be given 'to the tiller'. Shortly after Independence, the zamindari system was indeed formally abolished, but those who secured rights of land ownership thereafter were very often the larger cultivators who already had stronger rights—those who might be described as 'rich peasants'. The same people were very often those who ran the governing Congress party locally, and they used their positions of power successfully to resist subsequent efforts by governments to bring about land redistribution through the imposition of ceilings on the area of land that might be held by any one individual. Only in the states of Jammu and Kashmir, and in Kerala and West Bengal under the leadership of communist-led governments, has much redistribution taken place, though it has been legislated for by all the major states.

'Land to the tiller' remains of central importance in the programmes of all the major communist parties of India. The most important of them, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), for instance, continues to call in its programme for 'radical and thoroughgoing agrarian reforms that target abolition of landlordism, moneylender–merchant exploitation and caste and gender oppression in the countryside'. Latterly, however, the term 'land reform' has come to mean something very different in the context of India's economic reforms (*see* development). Supporters of these reforms look for the repeal of land ceilings legislation, and for changes in the law that will encourage large-scale capitalist investment in the agricultural economy.

Struggles over rights of land ownership and use have become even more intense in the era of the economic reforms. Urban land values have risen, and real estate is the basis of some massive fortunes among India's dollar billionaires. At the same time, what is seen as 'land-grabbing' by corporations or by government on behalf of corporations has given rise to

popular resistance, no more so than in the areas of central and eastern India where there are large numbers of adivasis with traditional rights to forest lands, and in some parts of which there are very valuable mineral resources. The idea of 'land grab' has become (in the words of experts in peasant studies) 'a catch-all to describe and analyse the current explosion of large-scale (trans)national commercial land transactions'. It seems aptly to describe recent trends in India. Resistance to land-grabbing is sometimes articulated by India's Naxalites (or Maoists). On its part, in response to pressures from social movements, the Government of India has passed legislation—the Forest Rights Act of 2006—that offers more protection to adivasis, and new legislation to replace the colonial era Land Acquisition Act of 1894, which may provide for stronger guarantees of the livelihood rights of those who are displaced.

• See also ***development, environment, peasant, village***

Language

The linguistic diversity of India is well known, and the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India recognizes as many as twenty-two languages (not including English). Hindi is the most widely spoken of them, being the language of most of the people of six major states that now account for more than 40 per cent of the population of the country as a whole. It has the status (under Article 343(1) of the Constitution) of being the country's 'official language… in Devanagari script'. Defined by *OED* as 'The great Aryan language of Northern India', it is considered to be an Indo-European language, spoken with very many dialects, and embracing distinct regional differences. In Bihar, for example, three different forms of the language—Maithili, Magahi, and Bhojpuri—are spoken in different parts of the state, each of them with large numbers of speakers.

Nationalist support for some form of Hindi as the national language predates the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885; and a Hindi movement, involving a number of associations in different parts of North India, took shape in the later nineteenth century. The movement was driven by Hindu groups whose close association with Sanskrit and Hindi learning meant that their members found themselves at a disadvantage in competition for jobs in public service, for which familiarity rather with the Persian and Arabic vocabulary of Hindustani was preferred. The movement aimed to differentiate Hindi from Urdu, associated with Islam, and to make Hindi a symbol of Hindu culture. The adoption of slogans such as 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan' reflected the heightening of community awareness and the expression of a Hindu nationalism. In the early twentieth century the use of Hindi as the national language began to be proposed by nationalist leaders. By the time of Independence in 1947 there was widespread opposition to the continued use of English as the official language, but in the debates of the Constituent Assembly that drew up the Constitution of India, the fears expressed by members from those parts of the country where Hindi was not generally spoken led to the provision that English should continue to be the official language of the Union for fifteen years, up to 1965, when Hindi would replace it.

Language had also become important in sub-national political movements, especially in the South, where the four major languages—Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam—are recognized as members of the family of Dravidian languages, and are quite distinct from Hindi. Both Tamil and Telugu became transformed into objects of what has been described as 'devotion', as the social mobilization and political empowerment of their speakers gathered momentum. The historian Sumathi Ramaswamy describes how devotion to Tamil became so powerful as to have led some young men to set fire to themselves, while shouting such slogans as 'Death to Hindi! May Tamil flourish!' And it was the death from fasting of an obscure Congressman, Potti Sriramulu, in December 1952, that finally catalysed the formation of the state of Andhra Pradesh, as that of Telugu speakers. This was followed by agitation elsewhere for language-defined states. The central government was constrained to appoint a States Reorganization Commission, which reported in 1955, and—against the wishes of Nehru, who feared for national unity—finally to concede demands for the redrawing of other state boundaries on linguistic lines.

Opposition in the 1960s to the use of Hindi, seen as symbolizing north Indian and Brahminical domination, especially in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, meant that the constitutional provision limiting the official use of English has still not come to be fully implemented. English continues to be widely used in India for official purposes, and in the context of India's increased integration into the global economy to be spoken ever more widely. The numbers of those who are truly literate in English remain small—generously, perhaps 80 million people, going by the possible readership of English language newspapers—but the rapidly growing numbers of private schools offering tuition in English is an important marker of popular aspirations. So Hindi has still not finally become India's 'national language', even though it is now more widely acceptable and understood than at any time before. This is in part the outcome of the teaching of Hindi as a second or third language, and perhaps in part a result of national television networks and of the energy of Hindi films.

• See also ***federalism, Hindu, Hindutva, nation***

Law

The idea of law, or of 'the law', is that of 'the body of rules, whether proceeding from formal enactment or from custom, which a particular state or community recognizes as binding on its members or subjects' (*OED*). It is very generally held that the most important function of the state is to maintain 'the rule of law' and widely recognized that the law is of great significance both as a reflection of established social order and as a potential agent of social change. But then where does 'the law' come from? Who decides on the body of rules that shall be deemed as binding, and how is its recognition as such established? Many of the particular problems of the law in India may be seen as having to do with the complex relations of formally enacted laws based on English law, with those based on actual or supposed Indian precedents derived from the Sanskrit *sastras* or Islamic *sharia* law, and with

Similarly, MFIs cannot solve the problems that flow from women's lack of power within households over the use and ownership of productive resources.

As commercial MFIs with foreign backing become more visible and influential, the debate over the term 'microfinance' and its links to development has become more intense. Some have argued that the state's promotion of MFIs in a period of economic reform has provided a means by which government has shifted the costs of social reproduction from the state—constitutionally mandated to provide adequate quality of education to its populace, for example—to the poor. Another charge is that commercial MFI interest rates are too high—they are typically around 20 per cent per year. At least one development analyst has pointed out, however, that the interest rates charged by commercial MFIs are fair given the high administrative costs, and also that they are much lower than the rates charged by private moneylenders in India, which are commonly between 60 and 120 per cent a year. Others have claimed that senior management is sometimes placing considerable pressure on field officers to meet performance targets. These MFI field staff members have, in turn, been accused of treating their clients badly, especially when they are young educated men who are responsible for providing loans and other services to uneducated rural women. The pressure being placed on the poor by unscrupulous MFIs, and the associated proliferation of inappropriate lending practices, may even have contributed to a spate of suicides in Andhra Pradesh in 2010. There have also been defaults, partly because—unlike in the Grameen Bank system—Indian MFIs are not required to keep a portion of their clients' savings as an insurance against loss. The MFI (Development and Regulation) Bill is currently under consideration. But new legislation is unlikely to protect the poor from unethical practices.

At the same moment that commentators debate the relative merits and demerits of microfinance, the term has become increasingly politicized. Parties are using SHGs to try to woo sections of the populace, and political organizations are also taking sides in arguments about the appropriateness of commercial microfinance. Microfinance emerges not only as important in its own right, but as a means through which Indian citizens, political parties, and scholars are evaluating the social consequences of liberalization.

• See also ***development, empowerment, gender, neo-liberal***

Middle Class

'Middle class' is a term that, while apparently straightforward, is very difficult to pin down analytically, in part because of the confusion over how precisely class itself should be defined, and in part because the adjective 'middle' is so vague. According to Raymond Williams, 'middle class' first appeared in the early nineteenth century in Britain and was counterposed to 'working class'. The concepts are really incompatible, as Williams points out: working classes being defined by their function and the middle classes by their position in a hierarchy.

There are a number of good scholarly and popular accounts of middle classes in colonial India and the immediate postcolonial period, especially of the 'bhadralok', a Bengali term

meaning literally 'big people' but referring originally to an administrative elite that emerged under the British in the area of present-day Bengal. But the term middle class became much more popular in India in the 1980s and 1990s, in association with economic reforms and the wider social changes wrought by liberalization. The middle class in India was imagined in this period primarily as a consumerist class, a small upper fraction of the population capable of purchasing modern consumer goods such as a scooter and television. In other definitions, the middle classes were defined by their work or income. Those working primarily in non-manual employment could lay claim to middle-class standing, with the additional proviso that they earn a monthly salary rather than a daily wage. What also emerges clearly from studies of the middle class in India is that multiple dimensions of power tend to work in mutually reinforcing ways. As well as having a greater quantity of economic assets and a higher income than the poor, the middle classes also tend to possess better access to useful social networks and a higher volume of what Pierre Bourdieu termed 'cultural capital': educational qualifications and the capacity to speak English, for example.

Until quite late in postcolonial India the middle class, defined in terms of their purchasing power and salary, was very small. As recently as 1997, only 6 per cent of Indian households owned a television. Moreover, in a country where over 90 per cent of the population works in the informal economy, there are very few households that can rely on a steady monthly income, pension, and the employment guarantees historically associated with middle-class status in Western Europe and the USA. Reports of a middle class 250 million or even 300 million strong are inaccurate if the term 'middle class' is to retain any of the sense it has in a Western context. If one were to take English language ability as some sort of proxy for being middle class, one could note that in 2010 there were supposed to be 20 million English daily newspapers on the street every morning. Allowing perhaps four readers to each copy, one would then arrive at the 'comfortable-in-English' population as being perhaps 80 million at the most.

Middle class nevertheless remains an important aspirational category in India. It is possible that India is moving in the direction of the USA, where the terms 'lower class', 'working class', or 'poor' are rarely heard; everyone lays claim to being 'middle class'. This also reflects the fact that an increasing number of people engage in practices that have historically denoted middle-class status in India: ownership of a mobile phone and television, participation in formal education beyond primary school, and 'leisure' activities such as celebrating a child's birthday.

Members of the middle class in India—defined in terms of consumption, income, position with respect to the social relations of production, or in some other way—are more likely to be from middle- or higher-ranking castes. Caste and class overlap. Yet Dalits, Other Backward Classes, tribal populations, and Muslims have now entered the middle classes in India, often continuing to experience certain forms of discrimination, and thus in a certain sense constituting distinct blocs within a wider middle-class formation. There are also other vertical and horizontal divisions within the middle classes: between upper middle classes and lower middle classes; between professional, agricultural, and business sections of the middle class; between urban and rural middle classes; and between older sections of the middle class

with secure positions in state bureaucracies—such as established members of the bhadralok in West Bengal—and newer sections of the middle class, whose claims to have risen above the masses rest more on their consumption power.

Unsurprisingly in this context, there has been nothing like a straightforward middle-class political lobby or mobilization in India, but rather fractured and complex assertions that reflect the interests of particular sections of the middle classes, often teaming up with the poor and/or the very rich. Upper sections of the middle classes in urban India have been important as a reactionary force, for example in their attempts to collaborate with the state to clear slums, or through their participation in Hindutva organizations. The middle classes as a whole have also been involved, perhaps to a slightly lesser extent, in broadly altruistic action, such as paternalist forms of NGO development in cities, environmental lobbying using public interest legislation, and anti-corruption mobilization. There are also many instances in which middle-class activists have formed alliances with poorer and less powerful sections of society to generate social movements, for example against the construction of large hydroelectric dams or in pursuit of the right to education. Research on middle-class politics in India also emphasizes the greater capacity of the middle class, as compared to the poor, to shape state policy or influence the operations of the local state via corruption. At a more social and economic level, an important achievement of recent studies of the middle class in India has been to show that remaining middle class itself requires a great deal of social and political work; class status is never guaranteed.

The rise of what some have termed a 'new middle class' in urban India is reflected in popular culture, for example in the increasing use of Western clothes, such as jeans; the rise of a restaurant and café culture in cities; new types of architecture; the proliferation of personalized forms of spiritualism; and Bollywood cinema, which serves as a stage upon which changing ideas about what constitutes a middle-class style are performed. But the Indian middle classes rarely just imitate a wider global middle class or Western middle-class style. There is considerable emphasis in scholarship and in the media on the distinctively Indian nature of middle-class cultural practices as well as regional middle-class cultures.

• See also ***bourgeois, caste, class, culture, neo-liberal***

Modern, Modernity

Raymond Williams notes that 'modern' came into English from the Latin 'modo', meaning 'just now'. In many contexts—and certainly in popular speech—modern retains this sense of contemporariness. Yet since the sixteenth century in Europe, 'modern' also came to be associated with a particular period of history, first pitted against 'ancient' times and later against a 'medieval' period. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, 'modern' carried with it the sense of a rupture from the past that needed to be justified. But in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it generally suggested something positive: efficiency, productiveness, and cleanliness, for example. An exception was the discourses surrounding the 'modern girl'

that started to circulate across the world, including India, in the first decades of the twentieth century, where the adjective 'modern' connoted ambivalence, even a measure of social danger. During the past century and a half, the word 'modernist' has also been attached to styles of experimental architecture, art, and fashion.

Modernity is a word freighted with political meanings, and powerful institutions have often deployed the terms modern and modernity in ways that reflect their own agendas. For example, the British justified colonial rule in India in part with reference to their own modernity relative to 'traditional' India, highlighting in the process the supposed superiority of Western technology, learning, culture, and society. The notion that India needed to 'modernize' in order to develop also underpinned Nehru's vision of socialism that dominated economic planning in the first two decades following Indian Independence. Indian planners emphasized the importance of catching up with the West and of emulating Europe's experience of modernity through the construction of industrial plants and encouraging urban migration (as laid out in the precepts of 'modernization theory').

Economic reforms in India from the mid-1980s onwards provided a further context in which dominant powers could promote visions of modern success. Large corporations and also local firms in India have used ideas of India's progress towards modernity as a central motif in their advertising and marketing strategies during the past thirty years. The idea promulgated by capitalist forces of being able to 'become modern' through the purchase of consumer goods also underpins the emergence of a new Indian middle class.

Certain parts of India and specific sections of the population are often labelled as being up to date and others, by contrast, as backward; the Indian landscape and Indian society has been temporalized in this important respect. For example, upper middle classes living in metropolitan India are commonly presented, or present themselves, as the face of 'modern India'. Meanwhile, tribal populations, Dalits, or those living in remote mountainous parts of the country are labelled 'traditional' or 'left behind'. Such judgements also characterize the legal language used to categorize the Indian population—'Other Backward Classes' being a case in point.

Scholars frequently associate modernity with a particular mindset. For Anthony Giddens, for example, a modern period is distinctive in large part because it is characterized by people who think of themselves as individuals, make strategic plans for their lives, and reflect consciously on the progress of their plans relative to the progress of others—as distinct, obviously, from a 'traditional' era in which such thought processes and reflexivity were putatively absent. For some early development theorists it was this modernity mindset that, above all else, needed to be planted in the heads of people in India and other parts of the global South. More recently, a broadly similar set of arguments has been rehearsed by those trying to encourage people in India to acquire education, save money, and avail themselves of loans. But there are flaws in Giddens's argument; even those in the most remote parts of India think carefully about how to manage their own lives and plan strategically with reference to long-term goals. But the spread of education, new communication technologies, and urbanization has certainly encouraged people to reflect on their individual lives and broadened their frame of reference.

Anthropologists have laid great emphasis on the plural nature of modernity as it evolves in different places. As for globalization, so for modernity: there is no one model, but multiple ways in which societies may break from a relatively static past and engage in reflexive processes of living. Alternative modernities surface in the efforts of Hindu nationalists or Islamic organizations to articulate a new vision of India, for example, even while such efforts also sometimes, and confusingly, come to be framed as anti-modern or traditionalist. The plural nature of modernity can also be charted in numerous arenas of economic and social life: architecture, film, urban planning, and fashion, to mention but a few. And people often meld practices imagined locally as traditional with those that have arrived more recently: they use computers to organize arranged marriages or mobile phones to communicate about an ancient religious festival. One conceptual response would be to argue that modernity in a place like India is always tangled up with the traditional, but a more proper response would simply be to observe that modernities everywhere are always composed of the fragments of previous eras.

'Modernity' is not a word used in common speech in India, but 'modern' certainly is, and much more often than—say—the Hindi word '*adhunika*'. The negative connotations of the word 'modern' sometimes surface—the term 'modern girl' is sometimes used to refer to young women assumed to be sexually available, for example. At a more general level, many individuals and institutions argue that the modern in India is a dangerous sham and that Indian citizens need to spend much more time focusing on traditional values. But 'modern' remains primarily an aspirational category, one that is used to describe someone educated, urbanized, au fait with happenings outside India, and in other ways 'up to date', and it is therefore no surprise that the adjective 'modern' is regularly appended to almost every conceivable service outlet in India, from schools to barbers, and from hospitals to design firms—as well as to bread made from refined flour.

• See also ***development, globalization, middle class, tradition***

Muslim

Muslims constituted 13 per cent of the India[n] population—160 million people—in 2001 (and estimated at 177 million in 2011, more than 14 per cent of the total), and they arrived in India from as early as the eighth century. The consolidation of Islam in the subcontinent occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Mughal rulers developed a complex administrative structure in the region, encouraged trade, often with other Muslims outside the subcontinent, and promoted Muslim (especially Persian) forms of painting, dance, and architecture—the Taj Mahal being perhaps the most famous cultural product of this era.

'Muslim' is just one way in which those who believe in Islam define themselves; it may not be the most important aspect of their identity, and those who believe in Islam sometimes resent being bracketed in this manner in India. In addition, 'Muslim' is an umbrella category covering a wide variety of beliefs and practices. Most of the Indian Muslim population are Sunnis, who believe that the four caliphs are the rightful successors to Muhammad, as

N

Nation, Nationalism

'Nation' is an old word in English, having been in common use from the thirteenth century, when it had connotations of 'race' or 'breed' rather than of a political entity. Raymond Williams points out that there remains an overlap between these senses of the word, and he argues that it is difficult 'to date the emergence of the predominant modern sense of a political formation'. In current use, the core of the idea is given in the definition: 'A large aggregate of communities and individuals united by factors such as common descent, language, culture, history, or occupation of the same territory, so as to form a distinct people. Now also: such a people forming a political state; a political state' (*OED*). The earlier part of this definition has a long history in English, and this fact has been used by some scholars in support of the idea that the sense of distinct national identities—of 'national feeling'—has a very long history.

'Nationalism', however, is a word that has been in common use only since the mid-nineteenth century, having come into English from an eighteenth-century German term. *OED* defines it as meaning 'advocacy of, or support for the interests of one's own nation, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations. Also: advocacy of or support for national independence or self-determination.' Nationalism or 'nationalist feeling' is often regarded negatively, as Williams points out, because of the implication of exclusion or opposition in regard to others, whereas 'national feeling' has positive connotations, in common with 'patriotism', a word that appears originally to have been used more or less interchangeably with 'nationalism'. Now, however, the latter—in distinction from patriotism—'usually refers to a specific ideology, especially one expressed through political activism' (*OED*). The emergence of nationalism is thought by noted scholars to be a modern development (in distinction from those who see it as having a long history), and to have come about in the context of the development of market economies and then of industrialization and urbanization, which drew people out of the small communities in which they had lived. Then kinship and intimacy among people who had no real connections with each other came to be imagined in the idea of the nation, encouraged by monarchs and political leaders, who found in it a firm foundation of their own legitimacy and who used it in building strong states.

An Indian nationalist movement emerged, in the context of colonial institutions, in the 1870s and 1880s (*see* Congress)—in part in opposition to ideas of the British rulers such as that 'there is not, and never was . . . any country of India . . . no "people of India"' (the words of John Strachey, a distinguished civil servant in nineteenth-century India)—and it eventually became a powerful movement for national independence and self-determination. But

what is 'the nation' in India? There was justification for the colonial idea that there was no 'people of India'. The adjective 'Hindu' only came to be used with reference to people throughout peninsular India in the nineteenth century—and indeed the establishment of a bounded territory called 'India' came only with an Act of the British parliament in 1899. What did exist were more or less strong feelings of identity among different peoples in different parts of the subcontinent—given partly by loyalty to rulers, perhaps by a particular devotional cult and a geography of sacred places, and by some sense of shared history, and ultimately in language. The historian Christopher Bayly describes these as 'old patriotisms'. Among the Marathas of western India, he says, 'an emerging sense of regional culture coincided with the creation of a regional language and the formation of a relatively strong state'. Another scholar describes the development of Telugu 'ethnicity' in the south between 1400 and 1600, while weaker forms of patriotism are distinguished, for example, among Tamils and Bengalis.

Such patriotisms did not immediately provide a foundation for Indian nationalism, and even at the end of the colonial period there was a strongly held view amongst some British officials that independent India would or should be a loose federation of independent nation states. Nations, they and others thought, are built around clear and distinct marks of identity, such as language, especially, or perhaps religion. And India was, and remains, famously diverse, with many different languages, different religious traditions, and various distinct cultures. Nationalists had to confront this diversity. One important approach was that of Hindu nationalists, some of whom drew on ideas that had constructed a unified, homogenized 'Hinduism', while others projected a form of cultural nationalism, Hindutva, which they sought to distinguish from religion, but which effectively excluded adherents to other religious traditions from 'the nation'. India had to be, they argued, a Hindu nation. Late in the colonial period, parallel sentiments developed amongst some Muslims, which led in the end to Partition and to the formation of Pakistan as a distinct (intended-to-be) nation state. The idea of the nation that ultimately prevailed in India, however, was a 'layered' one, according to the argument of Sunil Khilnani, in which people are at once 'Tamil' (say) and 'Indian', and which is based on universal citizenship and shared participation in a project of national development. It is a multicultural concept of the nation that draws on constructions of the past (those expressed notably—Khilnani suggests—in Nehru's book *The Discovery of India* of 1946), and on ideas of there being cultural forms, in mythology for example, that have long been common to the diverse peoples of the subcontinent. This construction, or 'imagining', of the nation has been threatened quite often, and it has been anticipated by some outsiders, and by some Indians, that the unity of the nation must be broken. It has been threatened, in particular, in struggles over the use of Hindi as the national language, and most recently by the resurgence of Hindutva.

Education has often been the forum in which governments have sought to construct a particular idea of 'the nation'—as happened in nineteenth-century Europe. Latterly, contending ideas of the nation in India have been played out in debates over the school curriculum and over the writing of history, between Hindu nationalists, in government between 1998 and 2004, and those holding to a secular vision, based on universal citizenship.

P

Panchayat

'Panchayat' is a Hindi term, with a Sanskrit root, the word for 'five'. Its literal meaning is 'the assembly (or council) of five', and it has entered into the English language literature on modern India with reference to the idea of a village council. Contemporary India has a system of decentralized local democracy, 'panchayati raj', in which the primary unit is the panchayat, which is now an elected council for a village or a small cluster of villages.

The idea of the panchayat as a village council is actually controversial. It seems that it became linked with the idea of the Indian village as a community, which loomed large in the imaginations of some colonial administrators in the nineteenth century, and the social life of villages was presumed to be controlled by such councils. Yet when the attempt was made in the census of 1911 to study village panchayats, it proved hard over much of the country actually to identify them. The census of Bombay went so far as to pronounce that the idea was a myth. The reaction of others to the negative findings of the census was to conclude that these—it was thought—significant instruments of local democracy must have been destroyed because of the impact of colonialism.

Subsequent studies of Indian villages report, most clearly, on the existence of caste panchayats, though there are also references to village panchayats. In some cases the reports show the existence of quite formally constituted bodies, but very often it seems that the idea of the panchayat is that of a gathering of respected men whose authority in the resolution of disputes is accepted by others. They do not necessarily all come together at one time and place, but they deliberate amongst themselves, aiming to reach consensus. Panchayats seem usually to have operated according to principles of deliberative, consensual decision-making, rather than the adversarial practices and majority ruling of many Western councils. Whether or not a village panchayat is at all representative of different castes and social groups is a matter of some dispute, and it certainly appears that local panchayats were commonly gatherings of members of what sociologists have described as the 'dominant caste'. The dominant caste is the caste community that, by virtue of some combination of numbers, control over land and labour and other resources, is able to exercise power over a locality. It is possible, therefore, that what were represented as village panchayats were actually deliberations of the dominant caste, supplying rulings over village affairs. There are some recent reports, however, of 'traditional' local panchayats in which different caste groups *are* represented.

The existence of these institutions of what he saw as self-government, and the principle of non-adversarial decision-making were an inspiration for Gandhi. His idea was that independent India should not have a Western-style state at all, but that it should be governed

through a decentralized 'bottom-up' system, founded on 'village swaraj' (self-government). He envisaged a hierarchy of panchayat institutions, with the village panchayats at its base, and a national panchayat at its apex. There would be no political parties. The idea, as an alternative to parliamentary democracy, attracted no support at all in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly, but the idea of local self-government was eventually adopted, mainly as a way of encouraging rural development, through an article of the Constitution. This is among the non-justiciable Directive Principles, which are expressions of objectives that the state should seek to achieve; Article 40 says that the government should 'organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as a unit of self-government'. Attempts to implement this objective were, however, very largely frustrated—by the opposition of state-level politicians who saw in local councils a threat to their own powers and privileges—until the passage in 1992 of the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution. Since that time, panchayati raj institutions have been established throughout most of the country, though with varying degrees of commitment in different states. The base of the system is the election of representatives to the village (or '*gram*') panchayats, with one-third of seats being reserved for women, and the position of chairman (*pradhan*) being reserved in some cases for women and in others for Scheduled Castes. The village panchayats then elect representatives to the second tier of the system, at the level of the Development Block (the basic unit of the development administration, covering a number of villages); the block panchayats, in turn, elect representatives to the third tier, at the district level. Panchayati raj has become well known internationally as a system of democratic decentralization of government, though how well it works varies considerably.

• See also ***community, constitution, Gandhi, village***

Patronage

In the *Oxford English Dictionary* a 'patron' refers to either a person who gives financial or other support to another person; a customer in a shop or restaurant; a provider in relation to a client, often with the additional sense of 'protector'; or a person or institution with the right to grant a benefice to a member of the clergy. Patronage therefore refers to the act of serving as a patron and can mean providing financial services, other resources, physical protection, or some type of spiritual assistance or favour. As the different meanings of 'patron' also suggest, patronage can be granted out of goodwill or, more commonly, reflects institutionalized relationships of mutuality, based for example on money (as in a shop) or ritual practice (as in the case of a Roman slave owner), and linked to larger regional cultures and political arrangements. Integral to most discussions of patronage, certainly in India, is the vexed question of precisely how to evaluate the phenomenon from a normative standpoint. Patronage has connotations of resource provision in a situation of inequality, and it suggests exploitation. But patronage also connotes an ethic of care, mutual responsibility, and respect.

will act as a patron in the future; they develop special relationships with particular teachers in school; or they cultivate patron–client-type relationships with specific lawyers or judges. Outside of bureaucratic spheres, the rise of spiritualism in India has been associated with the emergence of personalized religious relationships between clients and religious gurus.

The emergence of new forms of know-how and authority associated with the growth of formal education and new technologies may be redistributing opportunities for acting as a patron, while eroding some older patron–client ties based for example on age or ritual authority. Whether this marks an end to patronage or just the emergence of new types of specialist patron or broker—the 'technical wizard' for example—is a moot point. Certainly, the spread of notions of universal citizenship and rights in India over the past twenty years amounts to a challenge to the personalized relationships on which patronage is based. The anti-corruption movement in India, the Right to Information Act, and such phenomena as the formation in 2013 of the Aam Aadmi ('ordinary man's') political party point to popular opposition to the continued existence of patronage in politics and public bureaucracies. These dynamics are lending fresh urgency to the question of how to evaluate patronage from a normative standpoint.

• See also ***caste, colonialism, congress, corruption, democracy, faction, politics***

Peasant

The general understanding in English of the word 'peasant' is that it refers to someone who lives in the countryside, usually working on the land. More specifically, it refers to small working landholders and agricultural labourers. The term was in common use in England certainly by the fifteenth century, but given the transformation of English agriculture over the succeeding centuries it became increasingly redundant, as capitalist relations of production became established and the categories of 'landlord', 'tenant', and 'labourer' more apt. By the nineteenth century, Williams tells us, the word was described as a *new* name, used in a derogatory way by townspeople to refer to country labourers. The older meaning of the word—that of smallholding agricultural producers working with their own and family labour—seemed to apply more appropriately in other countries such as France, Russia, and Ireland. Perhaps for this reason it does not seem to have been a term very much used by the British in India in the nineteenth century. Baden-Powell, for example, in his classic work on land tenure in India (*see* village), does refer to 'peasant proprietors', but not at all frequently.

The word has no strict translation in any Indian language, though the Hindi term '*kisan*' has come to be used in place of the English, as it was by an early authority on the agrarian economy of independent India, Daniel Thorner. In lectures he gave in 1955, Thorner took the word 'kisan' to mean 'working peasants'—defined as 'those villagers who live primarily by their own toil on their own lands. They do not employ labour, except briefly in the ploughing or harvest season, nor do they commonly receive rent.' At the same time, in the mid-1950s, the word 'peasant' was not used very much at all by sociologists of India. A classic collection of village studies, for instance, includes reference to the idea of the

peasant very rarely, except in an essay on 'peasant culture' by an anthropologist who had previously worked in Mexico. The idea of 'peasant culture/society' had by then become current amongst scholars studying Mexico, thanks in large measure to the influence of the anthropologist Robert Redfield. It came into more general use amongst Indian scholars only much later. One of them, André Betéille from the University of Delhi, wrote in 1974 that the term 'peasantry' is 'most meaningfully used to describe a more or less homogeneous and undifferentiated community of families characterized by small holdings operated mainly by family labour'. He went on, however, to question the use of the word in India, given what he saw as the highly differentiated character of rural society in the country.

The idea of the peasant has become current in Indian thought thanks in large measure to the influence on communist activists and left-wing intellectuals of the writings of both Lenin and of Mao Zedong. These communist leaders were both much concerned with the question of which groups of rural people would be most likely to support proletarian revolution, and undertook analyses of the rural economies of Czarist Russia and earlier twentieth-century China, respectively, in order to answer it. Both argued against the idea that rural society was any longer, if it ever had been, characterized by homogeneous communities of families operating smallholdings largely with their own labour. With the development of capitalism, they both showed, rural society became increasingly differentiated. A process of class polarization seemed to take place, so that the rural economy saw the establishment of capitalist farms operated by wage labour, with few working peasant smallholders. Based on their empirical work, scholars and political activists (in India and elsewhere in the postcolonial world) began to distinguish between 'rich', 'middle', and 'poor' peasants, according to their employment, or not, of wage labour and their capacity to produce a surplus. Thus rich peasants, sometimes labelled using the Russian word 'kulak', are those who operate their holdings mainly through the employment of wage labour and who produce a surplus over the immediate subsistence needs of their households; while 'poor peasants' are those who, while cultivating some land and having some resources of their own, are unable to produce a surplus, and must rely to a significant extent on carrying out waged work for others. Only the 'middle peasants', probably a small and shrinking group, correspond to Thorner's idea of the 'working peasant'. These categories have come to be used very commonly in both scholarly and popular writing in India over the last forty years, initially in the context of a controversy over whether or not capitalism was developing in Indian agriculture.

While the idea that rich peasants became politically more powerful in the 1970s—partly as a consequence of the green revolution—was current at the time, in the course of the following decade there developed what were described both in English and in Indian languages as 'farmers' movements'. The change of terminology reflected the recognition that the category even of rich peasant was hardly appropriate to describe the highly commercialized cultivators of the richer agricultural regions of the country. Now, in the twenty-first century, when it is well known that very many rural people across much of India depend upon a whole range of activities outside agriculture, whether carried on locally, or by migration to other areas and to towns and cities, the appropriateness of the peasant idea

is less and less apparent. It seems likely that, just as happened in England in an earlier time, the word will become increasingly archaic.

• See also ***green revolution, land, village***

Police

According to the *OED*, 'police' refers to 'The civil force of a state, responsible for the prevention and detection of crime and the maintenance of public order.' Policing denotes 'The duty to maintain law and order within an area or at an event.' The precise boundaries, however, between the 'civil force of the state' and private citizenry in India are often blurred. For example, high-ranking police officials routinely make use of police vehicles to ferry relatives to social events; students often act as informal police snitches; and low-ranking police officers shade ambiguously into a wider nexus of authority holders, for example where they act as hired security guards alongside private individuals.

There are at least three different bodies of personnel that come under the broad title of 'police' in India: 'general-purpose police forces' with full powers of access, arrest, and investigation for any criminal offence throughout India; special-purpose police, such as the Border Security Force, holding powers of enforcement in connection with a narrow range of offences; and general-purpose police whose jurisdiction is limited to particular territories, such as the Indian Railway Protection Force. When people refer to the 'police' in India, they most commonly mean the first category of general-purpose police (referred to henceforward simply as 'the police').

The Indian police has one of the most elaborate command hierarchies in the world, with six levels—headquarters, range, district, subdivision, circle, and station—and four basic ranks of lateral recruitment: Indian Police Service Officer (the only rank recruited and trained nationally rather than at state level), Provincial Police Service Officer, Sub-Inspector, and Constable. For the vast majority of the police, there is little if no upward mobility through the ranks. Even within the ranks, promotion can be slow. Constables comprise more than 90 per cent of the police in India.

The broad terms of police action were set out during the colonial period under the 1861 Police Act, which emphasized the maintenance of law and order over and above issues of public service and criminal investigation. Under the British, the police were initially charged with protecting European society in India, but gradually became the protectors of propertied classes in general. While policing is formally a state subject, all states broadly follow the guidelines provided by the Police Act.

After Independence, the police continued to protect the rich rather than create an environment conducive to the upholding of the law. Other problems also persisted in the postcolonial period. The police in India are notoriously inefficient and poorly trained; there is very little oversight or review of police activities; malpractice and rent-seeking are endemic; and the police are unresponsive to the needs of local communities, especially the poor.

each other for political office over the last half-century, both claim to speak for 'the Tamil[illegible]'. This is the idea of the 'ordinary Tamil person', or—originally—of the middle- and lower-caste 'Dravidian' people (though excluding the Dalits), who had been robbed of their due by upper-caste people who were supposed to have come from North India. Historically, the ideology projected the idea that Brahmins were the common enemy of the (lower-caste) 'Tamilian'/'people'. This is a classically populist kind of argument.

• See also ***democracy, politics, socialism***

Poverty

There are few English words that are of greater significance in the culture and society of modern India than 'poverty', and the equivalent term in Hindi—'*garibi*'—is also in wide circulation. It is widely known, within the country and outside, that India is home to the largest number of poor people in the world. The relief of poverty has become a constant preoccupation of Indian governments and the focus of a myriad of official programmes, and it is the concern of many groups in India's civil society. At the same time, many other Indians seek to avoid confronting the visible facts of their country's persisting poverty, and even more so its possible causes. Middle-class Indians may see poverty as a threat to their own way of life. This is especially so when they are confronted by the slums in which a majority of the urban population lives, and one response, from the colonial period to the present, has been to seek to remove the poor physically from urban spaces through slum clearance.

Poverty has been a factor in Indian politics since the colonial period, when economic nationalists—notably through the writings of Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917), one of the early leaders of the Indian National Congress, in his book *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901)—argued that British rule had impoverished their country and its people. There is a definite echo of these arguments in Nehru's words in opening the first debate of the Constituent Assembly, when he said 'The first task of this Assembly is to free India through a new constitution, to feed the starving people, and to clothe the naked masses, and to give every Indian the fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his capacity.' This remarkable statement also seems partly to anticipate the later arguments of the Nobel prize-winning Indian economist Amartya Sen about the way in which poverty can best be conceptualized. Nehru's governments did not, however, give priority to poverty in their policies, and it was only after the first serious attempts to measure its incidence in the country, around 1970, that poverty reduction rose up the policy agenda. Indira Gandhi, then the prime minister of India, made the Hindi '*garibi hatao*' (meaning 'abolish poverty') her slogan in the 1971 general elections.

But how is poverty defined? *OED* offers a definition that certainly reflects everyday understandings: 'The condition of having little or no wealth or few material possessions; indigence, destitution.' The same ideas of 'lacking' or being 'deficient', and of being 'deprived' (of something of value), recur in the *OED*'s definitions of related words such as

'poor'. And in the main, 'poverty' or 'the state of being poor' is understood as meaning 'lacking' or 'being deprived', particularly of income. This is the principal way in which economists, not only in India, have gone about measuring poverty. But what level of income should be taken as indicating that a person is poor? Is there some absolute standard that can be used? The standard approach has been first to take it as axiomatic that a certain level of intake of dietary energy (calories) is necessary for life itself to be sustained and for people to be active; then to ask what 'basket' of basic commodities is required to supply that amount of energy on a daily basis; then to calculate how much this basket costs in the relevant economy (so defining the 'poverty line'); and finally to measure what proportion of the population does not have sufficient income to secure the basket (or in other words, lacks the income to live above the poverty line). This is what is meant when it is said that x or y per cent of the people are poor/live in poverty. Poverty measurement in India has become increasingly refined, beyond this basic approach. Yet it remains the case both that many assumptions have to be made, and that the survey data on which so much reliance has to be placed are highly imperfect—depending substantially on people's willingness or ability to recall their consumption expenditure over a period of time. It is for these reasons that the definition of poverty, and of the poverty line, and assessment of trends in the incidence of poverty over time, have become so controversial in India. Further, whether or not a certain level of income will supply a person with an adequate basket of commodities will be influenced by many other factors, such as whether or not he or she suffers from chronic illness or a disability, or has access to adequate amounts of clean water. Early in the twenty-first century different official bodies have come up with widely divergent estimates of the incidence of poverty in the country, ranging between about 25 and as much as 80 per cent of the population. This very wide gap should be a reminder that poverty, thus understood, in terms of income deprivation, is only a construct, depending on more or less arbitrary judgements.

The severe limits of the conventional construction of poverty in the sorts of measurements on which government depends have been recognized in arguments about the need to take account of dimensions of poverty beyond income, including assets—such as the quality of housing (which is more easily observed than income or expenditure)—and access to public goods such as water and proper sanitation; and in the view that account must be taken of the perceptions of the poor themselves, in which, for example, self-respect may matter as much as material possessions. This latter position resonates with Amartya Sen's argument that the conventional way of understanding poverty rests in any case on a very narrow view of what constitutes a worthwhile human life. Mere survival is hardly an adequate goal. Rather, should we think in terms of people's 'capabilities' for leading lives that they have reason to value (which seems to go back to Nehru's wish that Indians should be able to develop themselves 'according to their capacity'). These ideas have contributed to the greater emphasis that has been given by Indian governments to 'human development', taking account of life expectancy—and hence, in principle anyway, of the quality of health care—and of access to and levels of education, as well as of income. The main priority of

government remains, however, to reduce poverty as income deprivation, both as a matter of ethical principle and in the interests of political legitimacy.

Successive governments have introduced a wide range of policies and programmes intended to reduce income poverty, including efforts to provide poor people with some assets, or with gainful employment—as in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme introduced in 2005—as well as direct subsidy of consumption through rations of essential commodities supplied through the Public Distribution System, or most recently through cash transfers. Debate continues about whether or not these schemes and others should be made universal, or be subject to targeting. Latterly (as in the Food Security Bill passed by the Indian parliament in 2013), the principle of targeting has been adopted, and this has given great salience to the category 'Below the Poverty Line (BPL)', which is used as a basis for adjudicating on who should be entitled to state subsidies. But how is the state to identify those who are living below the poverty line? Measuring individuals' incomes is extremely difficult in what is still predominantly a rural society, and there is reason to be concerned both about 'errors of exclusion', when those who need assistance miss out because they are not listed as 'BPL', and on the other hand 'errors of inclusion', when relatively wealthy people have been counted among the poor. Poverty programmes may be subject to massive 'leakage' through various forms of corruption.

• See also ***development, land, politics, state***

Society

The first meaning of 'society' in the *OED* is given as 'the aggregate of people living together in a more or less ordered community'. This notion is not inherently linked to any particular scale—it is possible to talk of 'European society', 'British society', and 'London society', but it tends to be most associated with people living in a relatively large area, and 'society' is especially linked to the nation. This point is implicit in Raymond Williams's first definition of society: 'a body of institutions and relationships within which a relatively large group of people live'.

Some maintain that this notion of society has limited relevance to India. Sudipta Kaviraj argued that the British in India and Congress leaders after Independence—rather than fostering a sense of belonging to 'Indian society'—deepened fissures in the social fabric, especially caste and local divisions. '[The Nehruvian elite's] basic failure', Kaviraj writes, 'seems to have been the almost total neglect of the cultural reproduction of society, a common thicker sense of we-ness.' In a similar vein, Partha Chatterjee argues that people in India characteristically mobilize with reference to ideas of locality, caste, and kinship—what he terms 'political society'. In Chatterjee's view, 'civil society'—founded on the notion of the existence of a large body of like-minded individuals—is too abstract a principle for the masses, and exists only in the minds of India's upper middle-class elite.

But Kaviraj and Chatterjee perhaps underestimate the existence of 'society feeling'. Broad-based notions of belonging to 'Indian society' have probably coexisted with caste, local, and other sectarian loyalties for a long time. The rise of education (citizenship education is a major part of the curriculum) and the emergence of new technologies, especially the television and internet, have strengthened people's sense of belonging to something like a 'society'. There have been several movements recently in India that have attracted broad-based support among people who see themselves as part of 'Indian society', such as the Anna Hazare anti-corruption movement of 2011 and 2012 and the large-scale women's and students' demonstrations that took place in December 2012.

'Society' can also mean a club or association, as can the related terms '*samaj*'—perhaps the most direct translation of 'society' in Hindi—and '*sabha*', which can mean 'society' but more often refers to a particular forum or meeting, as in Lok Sabha (literally: people's forum, and the name of the national parliament in India). There are very many such societies—or 'samajs' or 'sabhas'—in India, from those associated with education, such as the Delhi Public School Society, to ones that reflect specific sporting or cultural interests, such as chess societies and drama societies. The number of such societies has been growing rapidly as a result of the expansion of education and urbanization.

There is a complex politics surrounding how the word 'society' is deployed in India. Political parties, NGOs, or associations use 'society'—or the words 'samaj' or 'sabha'—to advertise their inclusivity and support base. For example, the 'Bahujan Samaj Party' (literally 'the majority of society party') has traded on its capacity to represent the masses during a series of elections since the early 1990s in Uttar Pradesh.

Another aspect of the politics of 'society speak' is the manner in which the word is often defined asymptomatically as everything that happens outside the sphere of the state and state power. The growing presence of the state in people's lives in India since Independence—either as a source of development, a mode of disciplining the population (the police), or in the form of political parties and politicians vying for attention—has therefore been important in raising people's consciousness of belonging to 'Indian society'. At the same time, a decline in the legitimacy of the state has encouraged people to view Indian society as a type of bulwark against the excesses of politicians, or at least as less governed by self-interest and corruption.

Raymond Williams argued that society is often used to refer to a force, as in the phrase 'society's norms'. This is a very common way in which the English word 'society' or 'samaj' are used in India. People complain at the everyday level about the weight of society's 'expectations' or about society as a type of barrier. 'I would have got married to him, but I was worried about what society would think.' This sense of being oppressed or constrained by society is often especially keenly felt among historically subordinated groups, and it is linked to the way in which relatively powerful sections of society try to lay claim to being representatives of society. For example, Hindu nationalist leaders have tried to equate 'Indian society' with 'Hinduness', and especially upper-caste forms of Hinduness.

There is a much older meaning of 'society', from the Latin 'societas' meaning 'companionship'. India is imagined by scholars such as McKim Marriott as a place of 'society' in this sense, somewhere where notions of the individual and individuality are relatively muted and where life is lived, as it were, in public. Yet economic and social change has frayed some of the social ties binding people together, for example on the basis of joint families and extended kinship groups, and notions of individuality are becoming more marked. Alternatively, it might be argued that new forms of 'society'—in the sense of companionship—are replacing others. Anthropologists have noticed a novel emphasis on companionship in many circles when families assess the suitability of a bride or groom for their son or daughter, and have also noted that ties of friendship are becoming important in generating social collectivities, especially in modern settings such as universities and using new technologies such as the mobile phone.

• See also ***family, individual, state***

(The) State

The state refers to both 'a nation or territory considered as an organized political community under one government', and 'the civil government of a country' (*OED*). The modern state in this sense is conventionally dated to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which brought the Thirty Years War in Europe to an end and marked the emergence of a new European order of sovereign states. These new political arrangements transformed a situation in which populations were subject to a variety of overlapping sources of authority into one in which

rulers were acknowledged as governing a specific territory within a wider set of European states. Postcolonial states were established on the same basis—subject to the rule of a single governing authority and an equal member of a larger system of states.

The state in India therefore refers to the main organs of democratic government, including legislative, judicial, and parliamentary institutions at different scales, as well as bureaucracies. But 'the state', in a more anthropological sense, is also distributed across social life, embodied, as it were, in a government jeep, a police file, a truncheon, or perhaps something as intangible as the particular swagger of a visiting official or the manner in which he drinks his tea. 'Stateness' is a term sometimes used to indicate how aspects of state functioning blend into everyday practices.

India is a country with a huge state machinery and in which stateness inveigles itself into people's lives in numerous subtle and not-so-subtle ways. For a child in school, the state ('*sarkar*' in Hindi) might be the public bus, the stick used to beat children, the textbook, and the midday meals which are distributed free of charge across primary educational institutions in India. For the university student, the state might manifest itself in the police officer patrolling the campus, the government sweeper cleaning a hostel corridor, and the examination paper for the state's provincial civil services. For a poor rural Muslim labourer, the state might be constituted mainly as an absence: the lack of an effective port of call after being harassed by a higher-caste Hindu official, or if the derelict local village health centre is choked with weeds and garbage.

Much of the debate on the state in India has focused on the upper echelons of government—politics, political parties, and questions of rights and citizenship—and the question of power. Scholars have often adopted a Marxist perspective to show how powerful capitalist forces influence state policy. Feminists have made parallel arguments in relation to gender. Others focus on the implementation of state programmes, showing how clientelism and corruption shape people's access to goods in ways that reflect social inequalities. There are often fewer teachers posted in villages with high proportions of Muslims in North India as compared to Hindu-dominated villages. A higher-caste land revenue officer will tend to favour another higher-caste over and above a low-caste labourer. Women often find it difficult to engage in the nitty gritty of negotiating with state officials in public offices.

Other commentators have concentrated to a greater extent on the enabling power of the state, showing for example how affirmative action based on caste and gender can sometimes improve the position of previously subordinated groups. Where low-caste leaders come to power at the state level, a measure of caste empowerment may occur. The state, more generally, may at the very least have staved off mass famine in India since Independence and it has been a fairly effective guarantor of many basic political rights. For all its failings, the state, too, has raised people's educational levels, increased life expectancy, and reduced poverty, albeit not as fast or as effectively as many hoped.

An important line of work in this regard is that which focuses on the state as a public keyword—a word used regularly on the ground. For all the evidence of the state's inability to fulfil people's aspirations in modern India—and notwithstanding evidence, too, of the frequent violence and corruption of the state—most people in India continue to believe in

the idea of the state and cling at some level to the belief that 'the state' can and should work better. Other commentators have examined how certain qualities become associated with the state, which is often imagined as a circle of institutions 'up there'. It is interesting to note that the Hindi word for state—'*sarkar*'—also means authority in general.

The rise of neo-liberalism and globalization is throwing the question of the appropriate remit of the state into some doubt, generating fresh debates about the state's role in development. For some, the priority in India is the continued rolling back of the state to make way for market forces, and in a related move many lower middle-class and middle-class parents and young people are increasingly looking outside the state sector for educational and employment opportunities. Others emphasize the importance of the state as a countermanding influence on market liberalism, for example as a guarantor of rights, or stress the significance of various types of state/corporate/third-sector collaboration in the delivery of services, such as education and microfinance.

Paralleling these debates, and interrelating with them, is a growing body of anthropological writing on the manner in which the stuff of the state circulates within and beyond government bureaucracies—paper files, photographs, technical equipment, and the like—which serves in turn to enumerate, discipline, and control local populations—or 'governmentalize' them, in Foucault's memorable terms. Also crucial to this literature is the point that the state can only reproduce its authority through frequent performances of power.

'State' and 'society' are often imagined as distinct. But society is not the opposite of the state in India but rather a setting in which stateness is enacted: for example, where police business occurs in a tea stall or a land revenue officer brokers a deal in a rich farmer's front room. In such examples, state practice often departs wildly from official protocols and the letter of the law. In the economist Lant Pritchett's terms, India is a 'flailing state' wherein a rational head is disconnected from its out-of-control limbs.

• See also ***constitution, corruption, democracy, justice, rights***

Subaltern

Literally 'a position in the army below the rank of captain' but commonly referring to a 'person of lower status' (*OED*), subaltern is a term widely used in South Asian studies to refer to a person oppressed within power regimes, especially colonized subjects during the period of imperial rule. The word was popularized through the work of both Indian and English historians who came together first in Britain in the late 1970s to discuss how to rewrite South Asian history 'from below'. Oxford University Press published their first collection of articles under the heading of *Subaltern Studies* in 1982.

Subaltern studies academics set out to revise how scholars and popular audiences would imagine the history of South Asia by challenging Eurocentric accounts. Historian Ranajit Guha was the leading figure in the movement, gathering together a number of younger scholars including Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, David Arnold, David Hardiman,

Time

In the *Oxford English Dictionary* the noun 'time' has two main meanings: first, 'the continuous progress of existence and events in the past, present, and future'; and second, 'a specific point in time'. It is the first definition of time—the constant flow of events—that is most important in India, where the abstraction of time into hours and the passage of days and years—clock time and calendar time—is a relatively recent phenomenon. The spread of colonialism was bound up with the dissemination of new ideas about how the passage of life and events should be ordered and understood. Clocks, calendars, and such like became part of the 'civilizing mission' in Africa and Asia and also integral to the opening up of distant lands for capitalist exploitation. These new visions of time typically came into contact with older ways of dividing up the passage of days and seasons, many of which were tied to religion and agriculture. The spread of colonialism also resulted in the proliferation of new ideas about how the human life cycle should be mapped onto the passage of time. Colonialism superimposed notions of childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age on other countries, where they sometimes meshed with older models of 'life stages', such as the Hindu notion of *ashramas*—the four phases of life: *brahmacharya* (student life), *grihastha* (household life), *vanaprastha* (retired life), *sannyasa* (renounced life).

Colonialists tended to imagine India as a society in which culture was fixed, and therefore a place lacking history. Such a view also colours accounts of contemporary India, where various practices—such as caste—are wrongly imagined to have existed unchanged 'for time immemorial' or 'for centuries'. During the postcolonial period, another temporal trope has come to dominate foreign imagination of India: India is depicted as in a stage of transition or development towards a more evolved (Western-style) society and economy.

One of the popular stereotypes of contemporary India—which is also repeated within the country—is that people lack an understanding of time. 'Time has no value in India' is the type of statement that one hears quite often in conversations with people in India. The notion of Indians' aversion to 'time' as a disciplining device is a trope of several Bollywood movies, too: scenes in which an Indian tourist is befuddled by European train timetables and traffic lights, for example. In some cases, people refer to 'Indian time' as a parallel system in which deadlines, punctuality, and timekeeping are unimportant. But concern over the passage of time features prominently in public and private discussion in India. People complain about having to expend time either in repetitive work or in meaningless activity, such as waiting on public transport or queuing in government offices, and for some marginalized people time may become an almost overwhelming topic of concern, as for example among those forced to migrate away from their families in search of work. In many agrarian societies, too, time—when to plant crops, when to harvest, the timing of weather events—is a pressing everyday concern. The division of each day into auspicious and inauspicious times or phases, shown in popular almanacs, is also a common matter of concern. A journey, for example, should not be started in one of the inauspicious periods.

Poor education, rising unemployment, and an absence of effective state welfare mean that time is often a particular worry of youth in contemporary India. They are unable to

obtain the social goods, such as a secure white-collar job, that connote 'development'; they cannot move into gendered age-based categories, especially male adulthood; and they are incapable of conforming to dominant visions of how people should comport themselves with respect to linear time—they 'miss years' or have 'gaps' on their résumés, for example. In the face of such temporal suffering, unemployed young people in urban North India sometimes refer to their lives as simply exercises in 'timepass', a word that suggests a sense of endless surplus time, detachment from the world, and a feeling of being trapped in a life phase of chronic youth.

Conversely, the rich in India have been able to use their control over time to bolster their position. The upper middle classes are often able to avail themselves of time-saving devices, such as the washing machine, and technologies that allow them to communicate or travel more efficiently. At a more everyday level, upper middle classes can often use money to conquer time, as for example when they bribe school principals to allow their children to miss out a year of school, or where businesspeople pay off the state with a view to jumping the queue for planning permission. At the same moment, even among the middle classes, issues of waiting and boredom may be becoming more important, sometimes reflecting a broader dissatisfaction with contemporary urban life. It is small wonder, then, that the English word 'time' is now widely used in the Indian subcontinent.

• See also ***development, education, history, modern, youth***

Tradition

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'tradition' as a long-established custom or belief. Alternatively, it can refer to a method or style established by an artist subsequently taken up by their followers. For something to qualify as 'long-established' it is typically imagined that it should have been transmitted from at least one generation to the next.

India is currently moving from a period in which social, economic, and cultural beliefs and practices were *relatively* stable and 'long-established' to a period in which such beliefs and practices are being eroded. Joint families are sometimes becoming nuclear in form. People are abandoning hereditary occupations. Well-established norms around gender, caste, and authority are being questioned in new ways. Moreover, new forms of individualism and a greater degree of reflexivity about one's 'life' and 'career' are becoming more evident in contemporary India.

But we must nevertheless resist the idea that India is moving straightforwardly from an era of tradition to one of modernity, if for no other reason than that what counts as tradition is often not, when subject to scrutiny, in fact very long-established. In their seminal work *The Invention of Tradition*, the historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger point out that tradition is a myth, something conjured up for politically motivated reasons to persuade other people to do certain things or think certain ways. For example, Bernard Cohn has described the process through which the British in India in the mid-nineteenth century tried to establish consent for rule through inventing a range of public ceremonies (called

'*durbars*') at which loyal Indian subjects were showered with titles and gifts, a reinvention of a Mughal practice of patronage that was given the imprimatur of being a tradition.

Many of India's so-called traditional features emerge on close analysis to be fairly recent phenomena. For example, the types of caste system analysed by anthropologists in the mid-twentieth century were not a taken-for-granted cultural form that had existed unchanging through time, but rather reflected the particular social and economic conditions prevailing in different parts of India at that time. Similarly, the practice for the parents of a bride to give a dowry to the groom's family at the point of marriage has waxed and waned in different parts of India at different times—it is nothing like a static tradition.

Reflecting on these points, anthropologists and others have tended to recoil from trying to analyse transitions from tradition to modernity, in favour of studying how people and organizations use the idea of tradition to advance their own political goals. As Edward Said famously argued, colonialism was founded in part on an ideology that pitted a positive modern, rational, flexible 'West' against a negative traditional, heathen, leaden-footed 'East'. The British frequently depicted India as a place of relative disorder in which aberrant traditional practices—such as caste, and the burning of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres—were rife. Early development theorists of the so-called 'Modernization School' made somewhat similar moral judgements about India. Tradition was what India needed to abandon in order to enjoy the fruits of modernity. The political scientists Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, however, in a seminal book with the felicitous title *The Modernity of Tradition*, showed how in many different ways traditional institutions served modern ends.

Reactionary sections of society in postcolonial India have often invoked tradition to justify their political campaigns: Hindutva activists have promulgated the notion that traditional India is unequivocally Hindu; higher-caste men in pockets of North India have used appeals to tradition as a means of justifying the meting out of harsh punishments on young people who marry out of caste; men have also commonly explained their control over paid employment and family decision-making in the name of tradition or with reference to an equivalent word in an Indian language such as '*parampaara*' in Hindi. Tradition is also a marketing device. The Government of India has deployed images of traditional India to attract tourists, and Indian corporations often make great play of tradition in their attempts to market consumer goods—the *sadhu* (holy man) driving a motorcycle or 'traditional' rural woman talking on a mobile phone is a stock in trade of advertisements in the country.

• See also ***caste, culture, Hindutva, modern***

U

Unemployment

Unemployment is a social category referring to those above a specified age (often 18) who are not in paid employment or self-employment and are available for work. 'Unemployment' ('*berozgaar*' or '*bekam*' in Hindi) is also a perceptual category, a means through which people may define their relationship not only to the labour market but also to other people, the state, and their own previous and anticipated future activity.

In 2012 the Indian Government announced with some fanfare a reduction in unemployment in the country from 8.3 per cent in 2004/2005 to 6.6 per cent in 2009/2010, drawing on data supplied by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). But there are some notable problems with the NSSO figures on unemployment. The survey tends to record as 'employed' even those who have only temporary work. In practice, very few people in India are wholly unemployed, for the simple reason that there is nothing like an unemployment benefit in India, and usually no logic to remaining jobless. People have to work either on an unpaid basis in the household, in the case of many women, or in low-paid, temporary insecure work in the informal economy. The apparent decline in the unemployment rate is likely to reflect the withdrawal of many people, especially women, from the labour market. It may also reflect a move among those formerly waiting for 'good jobs' to enter fallback employment in the informal economy.

Large sections of the Indian workforce are therefore underemployed, often in the informal economy. They work in temporary, part-time jobs that offer little long-term security and are burdensome, even dangerous. They do not receive state support, such as pensions or sick leave, and they are not protected by employment legislation, for example regarding harassment in the workplace or unfair dismissal. In addition, they rarely obtain training or opportunities for skills development. Where people in this sector are also in education, their qualifications bear little relation to the work they are doing.

Widespread unemployment and underemployment reflect the failure of the Indian economy to create jobs outside agriculture. Economic liberalization since the early 1990s has not created large numbers of jobs in manufacturing and services, and has often led to a decline in the rate of growth in positions in government employment. India, it has been said by many commentators, has been characterized by 'jobless growth'. According to data presented by the National Commission on Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector, the numbers of protected 'formal sector' jobs actually declined slightly, from 33.7 million to 33.4 million, between 1999/2000 and 2004/2005. The much-discussed growth of the software industry and data processing does little to ameliorate this problem. It has been calculated that the IT sector creates roughly 1 million jobs a year, but India has a working

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Village

The common understanding in English of a village is of 'a collection of dwelling-houses or other buildings, larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town, or having a simpler organization and administration than the latter' (*OED*). The word has its equivalents in Indian languages. In colonial India, however, the word acquired a particular meaning because of the significance of the village in administration, and especially in regard to the collection of land revenue (land tax). As the colonial civil servant B. H. Baden-Powell wrote in his *Short Account of the Land Revenue and its Administration in British India* (1894), 'needless to say that the term is used in a special sense different from that which it bears with reference to modern English agricultural life'. He went on: 'The village is an aggregate of cultivated holdings with, or without some waste area belonging to it, or attached to it, and usually it has a central site for the dwelling-houses congregated together . . . The village moreover often boasts a grove, or at least a tree under which the local assemblies will take place [suggesting the existence of local self-government]; there is also some kind of public office where the village patwari [accountant or record keeper, responsible to the ruler] keeps his books.'

Colonial administrators saw the village, therefore, as an economic and political unit with a good deal of social integrity and political autonomy: 'The village communities are little republics', one said, famously. There was disagreement amongst them, however, as to whether the existence in India of village communities should be welcomed, as the foundation of social order, or whether they should be seen rather as obstacles to economic growth and progress. Growth and progress would be advanced by the strengthening of individual property rights, but this would be at the expense of what were thought of as 'ancient village institutions' that were supposed to emphasize collective ownership and common property. The idea of 'the village' thus played an important part in the colonial imaginary.

It did, as well, in that of the Indian nationalists, and for none more so than for Gandhi who saw in the village the social foundations of the morality that he believed distinguished India from Western civilization. For him, independent India should be made up essentially of reconstructed villages, where people would use simple technologies, producing largely for their own use and not for profit, and govern themselves to a great extent through their panchayats (local councils). Independent India did not take this road, of course, but the influence of Gandhi's ideas is reflected in the protection still given by the state to 'cottage' (handicraft) industries—such as handloom weaving—and in the system of local government known as panchayati raj.

Successive governments have continued to devise projects around the idea of the 'village community', as in the Community Development Programme of the 1950s, or in more recent efforts in 'participatory development'. Throughout, in both the colonial and postcolonial periods, there has run a tension between the idea of the village as a fairly autonomous community of people, presupposing a fair degree of equality among them, and the empirical reality of village societies that are often characterized by high levels of inequality, notably in land ownership, and by hierarchical social relations given by caste. Studies of villages, as more or less discrete social arenas, were the stock-in-trade of anthropologists of India in the later twentieth century. They showed that members of one particular caste community usually dominated village societies; they owned much of the land, controlled most of the labour, and often exercised political power. These 'dominant castes', as they are called, have been able to manipulate development schemes to their own advantage, though they are also quite commonly divided by rivalries between particular individuals who have formed factions within the village. Village-level collective action and community development are constrained by these fissiparous tendencies.

Latterly, however, it appears that the village is no longer so important as a unit in Indian society, as both members of the locally dominant castes—the principal landowners—and labourers have come increasingly to take up opportunities, or have been forced to find alternative means of livelihood, outside their villages and often outside the rural economy altogether.

The 'village' remains a significant unit as far as administration is concerned, even though land revenue no longer makes up more than a tiny share of all government taxation. What is understood to be 'the village' may be a 'revenue village' in which there are several quite distinct 'collections of dwelling-houses', and revenue villages differ significantly in size. The units that are taken for village panchayats may differ in a similar way. 'The village' may also be divided spatially between the habitations of upper castes, and those of lower castes and untouchables—and there are different words in some Indian languages that denote these differences.

• See also ***community, Gandhi, panchayat, peasant***

Violence

The OED defines violence as 'behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something'. One of the most important forms of violence, in this broad sense, is the destruction of natural habitats, pollution, and the release of damaging gases into the atmosphere in India. Cruelty to animals is another area where violence is very common indeed but which—with the possible exception of controversies sparked by efforts to eliminate urban stray dogs—has not garnered much public attention.

Violence in contemporary India could be crudely divided into forms that are more 'private' in nature—hidden and individualized—and 'public', in the sense of being collectively practised and experienced. Much of the private violence that occurs is directed against