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CHAPTER 1

SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIETY

I

INTRODUCTION

Let us begin with some suggestions that are often made to young students like you. One advice often made is, "Study hard and you will do well in life." The second advice as often made is, "If you do this subject or set of subjects you will have a better chance of getting a good job in the future". The third could be, "As a boy this does not seem a correct choice of subject" or "As a girl, do you think your choice of subjects is a practical one?" The fourth, "Your family needs you to get a job soon so why choose a profession that will take a very long time" or "You will join your family business so why do you wish to do this subject?"

Let us examine the suggestions. Do you think the first advice contradicts the other three? For the first advice suggests that if you work very hard, you will do very well and get a good job. The onus rests upon the individual. The second advice suggests that apart from your individual effort, there is a job

market that decides which subject choice may increase or decrease your chances in the job market. The third and fourth advice complicate the matter even more. It is not just our personal effort or just the job market that makes a difference — our gender and family or social background also matter.

Individual efforts matter a great deal but do not necessarily define outcomes. As we saw there are other social factors that play an important role in the final outcome. Here we have only mentioned the 'job market', the 'socioeconomic background' and 'gender'. Can you think of other factors? We could well ask, "Who decides what is a 'good job'?" Do all societies have similar notions of what is a "good job?" Is money the criteria? Or is it respect or social recognition or individual satisfaction that decides the worth of a job? Do culture and social norms have any role to play?

The individual student must study hard to do well. But how well h/she does is structured by a whole set of societal factors. The job market is defined by the needs of the economy.



The needs of the economy are again determined by the economic and political policies pursued by the government. The chances of the individual student are affected both by these broader political and economic measures as well as by the social background of her/his family. This gives us a preliminary sense of how sociology studies human society as an interconnected whole. And how society and the individual interact with each other. The problem of choosing subjects in the senior secondary school is a source of personal worry for the individual student. That this is a broader public issue, affecting students as a collective entity is self evident. One of the tasks of sociology is to unravel the connection between a personal problem and a public issue. This is the first theme of this chapter.

We have already seen that a 'good job' means different things to different societies. The social esteem that a particular kind of job has or does not have for an individual depends on the culture of his/her 'relevant society'. What do we mean by 'relevant society'? Does it mean the 'society' the individual belongs to? Which society does the individual belong to? Is it the neighbourhood? Is it the community? Is it the caste or tribe? Is it the professional circle of the parents? Is it the nation? Second, this chapter therefore looks at how the individual in modern times belongs to more than one society. And how societies are unequal.

Third, this chapter introduces sociology as a systematic study of society, distinct from philosophical and religious reflections, as well as our everyday common sense observation about society. Fourth, this distinct way of studying society can be better understood if we look back historically at the intellectual ideas and material contexts within which sociology was born and later grew. These ideas and material developments were mainly western but with global consequences. Fifth, we look at this global aspect and the manner in which sociology emerged in India. It is important to remember that just as each of us have a biography, so does a discipline. Understanding the history of a discipline helps understand the discipline. Finally the scope of sociology and its relationship to other disciplines is discussed.

II

THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION: THE PERSONAL PROBLEM AND THE PUBLIC ISSUE

We began with a set of suggestions that drew our attention to how the individual and society are dialectically linked. This is a point that sociologists over several generations have been concerned with. C. Wright Mills rests his vision of the sociological imagination precisely in the unravelling of how the personal and public are related.



**Activity 1**

Read the text from Mills carefully. Then examine the visual and report below. Do you notice how the visual is of a poor and homeless couple? The sociological imagination helps to understand and explain homelessness as a public issue. Can you identify what could be the causes for homelessness? Different groups in your class can collect information on possible causes for example, employment possibilities, rural to urban migration, etc. Discuss these. Do you notice how the state considers homelessness as a public issue that requires concrete measures to be taken, for instance, the Indira Awas Yojana?

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and promise... Perhaps the most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination works is between 'the personal troubles of the milieu' and 'the public issues of social structure'... Troubles occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others; they have to do with his self and with those limited areas of social life of which he is directly and personally aware... Issues have to do with matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of his inner life. The facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and the failure of individual men and women. When a society is industrialised, a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise or fall, a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both... (Mills 1959).

**A homeless couple**

The Indira Awas Yojana, operationalised from 1999-2000 is a major scheme by the government's Ministry of Rural Development (MORD) and Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) to construct houses free of cost for the poor and the homeless. Can you think of other issues that show the connection between personal problems and public issues?





III

PLURALITIES AND INEQUALITIES AMONG SOCIETIES

In the contemporary world we belong, in a sense, to more than one 'society'. When amidst foreigners reference to 'our society' may mean 'Indian society', but when amongst fellow Indians we may use the term 'our society' to denote a linguistic or ethnic community, a religious or caste or tribal society.

This diversity makes deciding which 'society' we are talking about difficult. But perhaps this difficulty of mapping society is one not confined to sociologists alone as the comment below will show.

While reflecting on what to focus on in his films, the great Indian film maker Satyajit Ray wondered:

What should you put in your films? What can you leave out? Would you leave the city behind and go to the village where cows graze in the endless fields and the shepherd plays the flute? You can make a film here that would be pure and fresh and have the delicate rhythm of a boatman's song.

Or would you rather go back in time-way back to the Epics, where the gods and demons took sides in the great battle where brothers killed brothers...

Or would you rather stay where you are, right in the present, in the heart of this monstrous, teeming, bewildering city, and try to orchestrate its dizzying contrasts of sight and sound and milieu?

This question of what to focus in society is indeed central to sociology. We can take Satyajit Ray's comments further and wonder whether his depiction of the village is romantic. It would be interesting to contrast this with a sociologist's account of the Dalit in the village below.

The first time I saw him, he was sitting on the dusty road in front of one of the small thatched-roofed tea shops in the village with his glass and saucer placed conspicuously beside him—a silent signal to the shopkeeper that an Untouchable wanted to buy some tea. Muli was a gaunt forty-year-old with betel-blackened teeth who wore his long hair swept back (Freeman 1978).

A quote from Amartya Sen perhaps illustrates well how inequality is central to differences among societies.

Some Indians are rich; most are not. Some are very well educated; others are illiterate. Some lead easy lives of luxury; others toil hard for little reward. Some are politically powerful; others cannot influence anything. Some have great opportunities for advancement in life: others lack them altogether. Some are treated with respect by the police; others are treated like dirt. These are different kinds of inequality, and each of them requires serious attention (Sen 2005: 210-11).





Hunger kills the world

- Every hour 8000 die from malnutrition
- 1 billion people go hungry
- Hunger kills more children under 5 than AIDS, malaria and measles combined
- Hunger is responsible for 100 million deaths every year
- Hunger kills more people than AIDS, malaria and measles combined
- Hunger kills more people than AIDS, malaria and measles combined



Bust that fat...

India is ranked amongst the top ten obesity countries in the world. And what's startling is that Delhiites like to gorge on food that leads to weight related problems.

**Discuss the visuals****What kind of pluralities and inequalities do they show?**

**Activity 2**

The Economic Survey of the Government of India suggests that access to sanitation facilities is just 28 per cent. Find out about other indicators of social inequality, for instance education, health, employment etc.

IV**INTRODUCING SOCIOLOGY**

You have already been acquainted with the sociological imagination and the central concern of sociology to study society as an interconnected whole. Our discussion on the individual's choices and the job market showed how the economic, political, familial, cultural, educational institutions are interconnected. And how the individual is both constrained by it and yet can change it to an extent. The next few chapters will elaborate on different institutions as well as on culture. It will also focus on some key terms and concepts in sociology that will enable you to understand society. For sociology is the study of human social life, groups and societies. Its subject matter is our own behaviour as social beings.

Sociology is not the first subject to do so. People have always observed and reflected upon societies and groups in which they live. This is evident in the writings of philosophers, religious teachers, and legislators of all civilisations and epochs. This human trait to think about our lives and about society is by no means confined to philosophers and social thinkers. All of us do have ideas about our own

everyday life and also about others' lives, about our own 'society' and also about others' 'society'. These are our everyday notions, our common sense in terms of which we live our lives. However the observations and ideas that sociology as a discipline makes about 'society' is different from both that of philosophical reflections and common sense.

Observations of philosophical and religious thinkers are often about what is moral or immoral in human behaviour, about the desirable way of living and about a good society. Sociology too concerns itself with norms and values. But its focus is not on norms and values as they ought to be, as goals that people should pursue. Its concern is with the way they function in actual societies. (In Chapter 3, you will see how sociology of religion is different from a theological study). Empirical study of societies is an important part of what sociologists do. This however does not mean that sociology is not concerned with values. It only means that when a sociologist studies a society, the sociologist is willing to observe and collect findings, even if they are not to her/his personal liking.

Peter Berger makes an unusual but effective comparison to make the point.





In any political or military conflict it is of advantage to capture the information used by the intelligence organs of the opposing side. But this is so only because good intelligence consists of information free of bias. If a spy does his/her reporting in terms of the ideology and ambitions of his/her superiors, his/her reports are useless not only to the enemy, if the latter should capture them, but also to the spy's own side... The sociologist is a spy in very much the same way. His/her job is to report as accurately as h/she can about a certain terrain (Berger 1963:16-17).

Does this mean that the sociologist has no social responsibility to ask about the goals of his/her study or the work to which the sociological findings will be applied. H/she has such a responsibility, just like any other citizen of society. But this asking is not sociological asking. This is like the biologist whose biological knowledge can be employed to heal or kill. This does not mean the biologist is free of responsibility as to which use s/he serves. But this is not a biological question.

Sociology has from its beginnings understood itself as a science. Unlike commonsensical observations or philosophical reflections or theological commentaries, sociology is bound by scientific canons of procedure. It means that the statements that the sociologist arrives at must be arrived at through the observations of certain rules of

evidence that allow others to check on or to repeat to develop his/her findings further. There has been considerable debate within sociology about the differences between natural science and human science, between quantitative and qualitative research. We need not enter this here. But what is relevant here is that sociology in its observation and analysis has to follow certain rules that can be checked upon by others. In the next section, we compare sociological knowledge to common sense knowledge which will once again emphasise the role of methods, procedures and rules in the manner in which sociology conducts its observation of society. Chapter 5 of this book will provide you with a sense of what sociologists do and how they go about studying society. An elaboration of the differences between sociology and common sense knowledge will help towards a clearer idea of the sociological approach and method.

V

SOCIOLOGY AND COMMON SENSE KNOWLEDGE

We have seen how sociological knowledge is different from theological and philosophical observations. Likewise sociology is different from common sense observations. The common sense explanations are generally based on what may be called 'naturalistic' and/or individualistic explanation. A naturalistic explanation for behaviour rests on the assumption that one can really identify 'natural' reasons for behaviour.





Activity 3

An example of poverty has been given below and we also touched upon it in our discussion on the homeless. Think of other issues and how they could be explained in a naturalistic and sociological way.

Sociology thus breaks away from both common sense observations and ideas as well as from philosophical thought. It does not always or even generally lead to spectacular results. But meaningful and unsuspected connections can be reached only by sifting through masses of connections. Great advances in sociological know-

ledge have been made, generally incrementally and only rarely by a dramatic breakthrough.

Sociology has a body of concepts, methods and data, no matter how loosely coordinated. This cannot be substituted by common sense. Common sense is unreflective since it does not question its own origins. Or in other words it does not ask itself: "Why do I hold this view?" The sociologist must be ready to ask of any of our beliefs, about ourselves — no matter how cherished — "is this really so?" Both the systematic and questioning approach of sociology is derived from a broader tradition of scientific investigation. This emphasis on

<i>Explanation of</i>	<i>Naturalistic</i>	<i>Sociological</i>
Poverty	People are poor because they are afraid of work, come from 'problem families', are unable to budget properly, suffer from low intelligence and shiftlessness.	Contemporary poverty is caused by the structure of inequality in class society and is experienced by those who suffer from chronic irregularity of work and low wages (Jayaram 1987:3).

Unsuspected Connections?

In many societies, including in many parts of India, the line of descent and inheritance passes from father to son. This is understood as a patrilineal system. Keeping in mind that women tend not to get property rights, the Government of India in the aftermath of the Kargil War decided that financial compensation for the death of Indian soldiers should go to their widows so that they were provided for.

The government had certainly not anticipated the unintended consequence of this decision. It led to many forced marriages of the widows with their brother-in-law (husband's brother or *dewar*). In some cases the brother-in-law (then husband) was a young child and the sister-in-law (then wife) a young woman. This was to ensure that the compensation remained with the deceased man's patrilineal family. Can you think of other such unintended consequences of a social action or a state measure?





scientific procedures can be understood only if we go back in time. And understand the context or social situation within which the sociological perspective emerged as sociology was greatly influenced by the great developments in modern science. Let us have a very brief look at what intellectual ideas went into the making of sociology.

VI

THE INTELLECTUAL IDEAS THAT WENT INTO THE MAKING OF SOCIOLOGY

Influenced by scientific theories of natural evolution and findings about pre-modern societies made by early travellers, colonial administrators, sociologists and social anthropologists sought to categorise societies into types and to distinguish stages in social development. These features reappear in the 19th century in works of early sociologists, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx and Herbert Spencer. Efforts were therefore made to classify different types of societies on that basis, for instance:

- Types of pre-modern societies such as hunters and gatherers, pastoral and agrarian, agrarian and non-industrial civilisations.
- Types of modern societies such as the industrialised societies.

Such an evolutionary vision assumed that the west was necessarily the most advanced and civilised. Non-western societies were often seen as barbaric and less

developed. The Indian colonial experience has to be seen in this light. Indian sociology reflects this tension which “go far back to the history of British colonialism and the intellectual and ideological response to it...” (Singh 2004:19). Perhaps because of this backdrop, Indian sociology has been particularly thoughtful and reflexive of its practice (Chaudhuri 2003). You will be engaging with Indian sociological thought, its concerns and practice in greater detail in the book, *Understanding Society* (NCERT, 2006).

Darwin’s ideas about organic evolution were a dominant influence on early sociological thought. Society was often compared with living organisms and efforts were made to trace its growth through stages comparable to those of organic life. This way of looking at society as a system of parts, each part playing a given function influenced the study of social institutions like the family or the school and structures such as stratification. We mention this here because the intellectual ideas that went into the making of sociology have a direct bearing on how sociology studies empirical reality.

The Enlightenment, an European intellectual movement of the late 17th and 18th centuries, emphasised reason and individualism. There was also great advancement of scientific knowledge and a growing conviction that the methods of the natural sciences should and could be extended to the study of human affairs. For example poverty, so





far seen as a ‘natural phenomena’, began to be seen as a ‘social problem’ caused by human ignorance or exploitation. Poverty therefore could be studied and redressed. One way of studying this was through the social survey that was based on the belief that human phenomena can be classified and measured. You will be discussing social survey in chapter 5.

Thinkers of the early modern era were convinced that progress in knowledge promised the solution to all social ills. For example, Auguste Comte, the French scholar (1789–1857) considered to be the founder of sociology, believed that sociology would contribute to the welfare of humanity.

VII

THE MATERIAL ISSUES THAT WENT INTO THE MAKING OF SOCIOLOGY

The Industrial Revolution was based upon a new, dynamic form of economic activity—capitalism. This system of capitalism became the driving force behind the growth of industrial manufacturing. Capitalism involved new attitudes and institutions. Entrepreneurs engaged in the sustained, systematic pursuit of profit. The markets acted as the key instrument of productive life. And goods, services and labour became commodities whose use was determined by rational calculation.

The new economy was completely different from what it replaced. England was the centre of the Industrial Revolution. In order to understand

how far reaching the change industrialisation brought about was, we take a quick look at what life in pre-industrial England was like. Before industrialisation, agriculture and textiles were the chief occupations of the British people. Most people lived in villages. Like in our own Indian villages there were the peasants and landlords, the blacksmith and leather worker, the weaver and the potter, the shepherd and the brewer. Society was small. It was hierarchical, i.e. the status and class positions of different people were clearly defined. Like all traditional societies it was also characterised by close interaction. With industrialisation each of these features changed.

One of the most fundamental aspects of the new order was the degradation of labour, the wrenching of work from the protective contexts of guild, village, and family. Both the radical and conservative thinker was appalled at the decline of the status of the common labourer, not to mention the skilled craftsman.

Urban centres expanded and grew. It was not that there were no cities earlier. But their character prior to industrialisation was different. The industrial cities gave birth to a completely new kind of urban world. It was marked by the soot and grime of factories, by overcrowded slums of the new industrial working class, bad sanitation and general squalor. It was also marked by new kinds of social interactions.

The Hindi film song on the next page captures both the material as well





From working class neighbourhoods to slum localities



as the experiential aspects of city life.
From the film *C.I.D.* 1956

*Aye dil hai mushkil jeena yahan
Zara hat ke, zara bach ke, yeh
hai Bombay meri jaan
Kahin building kahin traame,
kahin motor kahin mill
Milta hai yahan sab kuchh ik milta
nahin dil
Insaan ka nahin kahin naam-o-
nishaan
Kahin satta, kahin patta kahin chori
kahin res
Kahin daaka, kahin phaaka kahin
thokar kahin thes
Bekaaro ke hain kai kaam yahan
Beghar ko aawara yahan kehte has
has
Khud kaate gale sabke kahe isko
business
Ik cheez ke hain kai naam yahan
Geeta:(Bura duniya woh hai kehta
aisa bhola tu na ban
Jo hai karta woh hai bharta hai
yahan ka yeh chalan*

PARAPHRASE: Dear heart, life is hard here, you must watch where you're going if you want to save yourself, this is Bombay my dear! You'll find buildings, you'll find trams, you'll find motors, you'll find mills, you'll find everything here except a human heart, there's no trace of humanity here. So much of what is done here is meaningless, it's either power, or it's money, or it's theft, or it's cheating. The rich mock the homeless as vagabonds, but when they cut each other's throats themselves, it's called business! The same action is given various names in this place.

Activity 4

Note how quickly Britain, the seat of the Industrial Revolution became an urban from a predominantly rural society. Was this process identical in India?

1810: 20 per cent of the population lived in towns and cities.

1910: 80 per cent of the population lived in towns and cities.

Significantly the impact of the same process was different in India, Urban centres did grow. But with the entry of British manufactured goods, more people moved into agriculture.

The mass of Indian handicraftsmen ruined as a result of the influx of manufactured machine-made goods of British industries were not absorbed in any extensively developed indigenous industries. The ruined mass of these handicraftsmen, in the main, took to agriculture for subsistence (Desai 1975:70).

The factory and its mechanical division of labour were often seen as a deliberate attempt to destroy the peasant, the artisan, as well as family and local community. The factory was perceived as an archetype of an economic regimentation hitherto known only in barracks and prisons. For some like Marx the factory was oppressive. Yet potentially liberating. Here workers learnt both collective





functioning as well as concerted efforts for better conditions.

Another indicator of the emergence of modern societies was the new significance of clock-time as a basis of social organisation. A crucial aspect of this was the way in which, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the tempo of agricultural and manufacturing labour increasingly came to be set by the clock and calendar in a way very different from pre-modern forms of work. Prior to the development of industrial capitalism, work-rhythms were set by factors such as the period of daylight, the break between tasks and the constraints of deadlines or other social duties. Factory production implied the synchronisation of labour — it began punctually, had a steady pace and took place for set hours and on particular days of the week. In addition, the clock injected a new urgency to work. For both employer and employee ‘time is now money: it is not passed but spent.’

Activity 5

Find out how work is organised in a traditional village, a factory and a call centre.

Activity 6

Find out how industrial capitalism changed Indian lives in villages and cities.

VIII

WHY SHOULD WE STUDY THE BEGINNING AND GROWTH OF SOCIOLOGY IN EUROPE?

Most of the issues and concerns of sociology also date back to a time when European society was undergoing tumultuous changes in the 18th and 19th centuries with the advent of capitalism and industrialisation. Many of the issues that were raised then, for example, urbanisation or factory production, are pertinent to all modern societies, even though their specific features may vary. Indeed, Indian society with its colonial past and incredible diversity is distinct. The sociology of India reflects this.

If this be so, why focus on Europe of that time? Why is it relevant to start there? The answer is relatively simple. For our past, as Indians is closely linked to the history of British capitalism and colonialism. Capitalism in the west entailed a world-wide expansion. The passages in the box on next page represent but two strands in the manner that western capitalism impacted the world.

R.K. Laxman’s travelogue of Mauritius brings home the presence of this colonial and global past.

Here Africans and Chinese, Biharis and Dutch, Persians and Tamils, Arabs, French and English all rub merrily with one another... A Tamil, for instance, bears a deceptively south Indian face and a name to go with it to boot; Radha Krishna





Capitalism and its global but uneven transformation of societies

Between the 17th and 19th centuries an estimated 24 million Africans were enslaved. 11 million of them survived the journey to the Americas in one of a number of great movements of population that feature in modern history. They were plucked from their existing homes and cultures, transported around the world in appalling conditions, and put to work in the service of capitalism. Enslavement is a graphic example of how people were caught up in the development of modernity against their will. The institution of slavery declined in the 1800s. But for us in India it was in the 1800s that indentured labour was taken in ships by the British for running their cotton and sugar plantations in distant lands such as Surinam in South America or in the West Indies or the Fiji Islands. V.S. Naipaul the great English writer who won the Nobel prize is a descendant of one of these thousands who were taken to lands they had never seen and who died without being able to return.

Govindan is indeed from Madras. I speak to him in Tamil. He surprises me by responding in a frightfully mangled English with a heavy French accent. Mr Govindan has no knowledge of Tamil and his tongue has ceased curling to produce Tamil sounds centuries ago (Laxman 2003) !

IX

THE GROWTH OF SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

Colonialism was an essential part of modern capitalism and industrialisation. The writings of Western sociologists on capitalism and other aspects of modern society are therefore relevant for understanding social change in India. Yet as we saw with reference to urbanisation, colonialism implied that the impact of industrialisation in India was not necessarily the same as in the west. Karl Marx's comments on the impact of the East India Company bring out the contrast.

India, the great workshop of cotton manufacture for the world, since immemorial times, now became inundated with English twists and cotton stuffs. After its own produce had been excluded from England, or only admitted on the most cruel terms, British manufactures were poured into it at a small and merely nominal duty, to the ruin of the native cotton fabrics once so celebrated (Marx 1853 cited in Desai 1975).

Sociology in India also had to deal with western writings and ideas about Indian society that were not always correct. These ideas were expressed both in the accounts of colonial officials as well western scholars. For many of them Indian society was a contrast to western society. We take just one example here, the way the Indian village was understood and portrayed as unchanging.





In keeping with contemporary-Victorian-evolutionary ideas, western writers saw in the Indian village a remnant or survival from what was called "the infancy of society". They saw in nineteenth-century India the past of the European society.

Yet another evidence of the colonial heritage of countries like India is the distinction often made between sociology and social anthropology. A standard western textbook definition of sociology is "the study of human groups and societies, giving particular emphasis to the analysis of the industrialised world" (Giddens 2001: 699). A standard western definition of social anthropology would be the study of simple societies of non-western and therefore "other" cultures. In India the story is quite different. M.N. Srinivas maps the trajectory:

In a country such as India, with its size and diversity, regional, linguistic, religious, sectarian, ethnic (including caste), and between rural and urban areas, there are a myriad 'others'... In a culture and society such as India's, 'the other' can be encountered literally next door... (Srinivas 1966: 205).

Furthermore social anthropology in India moved gradually from a pre-occupation with the study of 'primitive people' to the study of peasants, ethnic groups, social classes, aspects and features of ancient civilisations, and modern industrial societies. No rigid divide exists between sociology and social anthropology in India, a

characteristic feature of the two subjects in many western countries. Perhaps the very diversity of the modern and traditional, of the village and the metropolitan in India accounts for this.

X

THE SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCE DISCIPLINES

The scope of sociological study is extremely wide. It can focus its analysis of interactions between individuals such as that of a shopkeeper with a customer, between teachers and students, between two friends or family members. It can likewise focus on national issues such as unemployment or caste conflict or the effect of state policies on forest rights of the tribal population or rural indebtedness. Or examine global social processes such as: the impact of new flexible labour regulations on the working class; or that of the electronic media on the young; or the entry of foreign universities on the education system of the country. What defines the discipline of sociology is therefore not just what it studies (i.e. family or trade unions or villages) but how it studies a chosen field.

Sociology is one of a group of social sciences, which also includes anthropology, economics, political science and history. The divisions among the various social sciences are not clearcut, and all share a certain range of common interests, concepts





**Discuss how you think history, sociology, political science, economics
will study fashion/clothes, market places and city streets**





and methods. It is therefore very important to understand that the distinctions of the disciplines are to some extent arbitrary and should not be seen in a straitjacket fashion. To differentiate the social sciences would be to exaggerate the differences and gloss over the similarities. Furthermore feminist theories have also shown the greater need of interdisciplinary approach. For instance how would a political scientist or economist study gender roles and their implications for politics or the economy without a sociology of the family or gender division of labour.

Sociology and Economics

Economics is the study of production and distribution of goods and services. The classical economic approach dealt almost exclusively with the inter-relations of pure economic variables: the relations of price, demand and supply; money flows; output and input ratios, and the like. The focus of traditional economics has been on a narrow understanding of 'economic activity', namely the allocation of scarce goods and services within a society. Economists who are influenced by a political economy approach seek to understand economic activity in a broader framework of ownership of and relationship to means of production. The objective of the dominant trend in economic analysis was however to formulate precise laws of economic behaviour.

The sociological approach looks at economic behaviour in a broader

Activity 7

- Do you think advertisements actually influence people's consumption patterns?
- Do you think the idea of what defines 'good life' is only economically defined?
- Do you think 'spending' and 'saving' habits are culturally formed?

context of social norms, values, practices and interests. The corporate sector managers are aware of this. The large investment in the advertisement industry is directly linked to the need to reshape lifestyles and consumption patterns. Trends within economics such as feminist economics seek to broaden the focus, drawing in gender as a central organising principle of society. For instance they would look at how work in the home is linked to productivity outside.

The defined scope of economics has helped in facilitating its development as a highly focused, coherent discipline. Sociologists often envy the economists for the precision of their terminology and the exactness of their measures. And the ability to translate the results of their theoretical work into practical suggestions having major implications for public policy. Yet economists' predictive abilities often suffer precisely because of their neglect of individual behaviour, cultural norms and institutional resistance which sociologists study.





Pierre Bourdieu wrote in 1998.

A true economic science would look at all the costs of the economy—not only at the costs that corporations are concerned with, but also at crimes, suicides, and so on.

We need to put forward an economics of happiness, which would take note of all the profits, individual and collective, material and symbolic, associated with activity (such as security), and also the material and symbolic costs associated with inactivity or precarious employment (for example consumption of medicines: France holds the world record for the use of tranquilisers), (cited in Swedberg 2003).

Sociology unlike economics usually does not provide technical solutions. But it encourages a questioning and critical perspective. This helps questioning of basic assumptions. And thereby facilitates a discussion of not just the technical means towards a given goal, but also about the social desirability of a goal itself. Recent trends have seen a resurgence of economic sociology perhaps because of both this wider and critical perspective of sociology.

Sociology provides clearer or more adequate understanding of a social situation than existed before. This can be either on the level of factual knowledge, or through gaining an improved grasp of why something is happening (in other words, by means of theoretical understanding).

Sociology and Political Science

As in the case of economics, there is an increased interaction of methods and approaches between sociology and political science. Conventional political science was focused primarily on two elements: political theory and government administration. Neither branch involves extensive contact with political behaviour. The theory part usually focuses on the ideas about government from Plato to Marx while courses on administration generally deal with the formal structure of government rather than its actual operation.

Sociology is devoted to the study of all aspects of society, whereas conventional political science restricted itself mainly to the study of power as embodied in formal organisation. Sociology stresses the inter-relationships between sets of institutions including government, whereas political science tends to turn attention towards the processes within the government.

However, sociology long shared similar interests of research with

Activity 8

Find out the kind of studies that were conducted during the last general elections. You will probably find both features of political science and sociology in them. Discuss how disciplines interact and mutually influence each other.





political science. Sociologists like Max Weber worked in what can be termed as political sociology. The focus of political sociology has been increasingly on the actual study of political behaviour. Even in the recent Indian elections one has seen the extensive study of political patterns of voting. Studies have also been conducted in membership of political organisations, process of decision-making in organisations, sociological reasons for support of political parties, the role of gender in politics, etc.

Sociology and History

Historians almost as a rule study the past, sociologists are more interested in the contemporary or recent past. Historians earlier were content to delineate the actual events, to establish how things actually happened, while in sociology the focus was to seek to establish causal relationships.

History studies concrete details while the sociologist is more likely to abstract from concrete reality, categorise and generalise. Historians today are equally involved in doing sociological methods and concepts in their analysis.

Conventional history has been about the history of kings and war. The

history of less glamorous or exciting events as changes in land relations or gender relations within the family have traditionally been less studied by historians but formed the core area of the sociologist's interest. Today however history is far more sociological and social history is the stuff of history. It looks at social patterns, gender relations, mores, customs and important institutions other than the acts of rulers, wars and monarchy.

Sociology and Psychology

Psychology is often defined as the science of behaviour. It involves itself primarily with the individual. It is interested in her/his intelligence and learning, motivations and memory, nervous system and reaction time, hopes and fears. Social psychology, which serves as a bridge between psychology and sociology, maintains a primary interest in the individual but concerns itself with the way in which the individual behaves in social groups, collectively with other individuals.

Sociology attempts to understand behaviour as it is organised in society, that is the way in which personality is shaped by different aspects of society. For instance, economic and political system, their family and kinship structure, their culture, norms and values. It is interesting to recall that Durkheim who sought to establish a clear scope and method for sociology in his well-known study of suicide left out individual intentions of those who commit or try to commit suicide in favour of statistics concerning various

Activity 9

Find out how historians have written about the history of art, of cricket, of clothes and fashion, of architecture and housing styles.





social characteristics of these individuals.

Sociology and Social Anthropology

Anthropology in most countries incorporates archaeology, physical anthropology, cultural history, many branches of linguistics and the study of all aspects of life in “simple societies”. Our concern here is with social anthropology and cultural anthropology for it is that which is close to the study of sociology. Sociology is deemed to be the study of modern, complex societies while social anthropology was deemed to be the study of simple societies.

As we saw earlier, each discipline has its own history or biography. Social anthropology developed in the west at a time when it meant that western-trained social anthropologists studied non-European societies often thought of as exotic, barbaric and uncivilised. This unequal relationship

between those who studied and those who were studied as not remarked upon too often earlier. But times have changed and we have the erstwhile ‘natives’ be they Indians or Sudanese, Nagas or Santhals, who now speak and write about their own societies. The anthropologists of the past documented the details of simple societies apparently in a neutral scientific fashion. In practice they were constantly comparing those societies with the model of the western modern societies as a benchmark.

Other changes have also redefined the nature of sociology and social anthropology. Modernity as we saw led to a process whereby the smallest village was impacted by global processes. The most obvious example is colonialism. The most remote village of India under British colonialism saw its land laws and administration change, its revenue extraction alter, its manufacturing industries collapse.



Tea pickers in Assam





Activity 10

- Find out where in India did ancestors of the community of Santhal workers who have been working in the tea plantations in Assam come from.
- When was tea cultivation started in Assam?
- Did the British drink tea before colonialism?

Contemporary global processes have further accentuated this ‘shrinking of the globe’. The assumption of studying a simple society was that it was bounded. We know this is not so today.

The traditional study of simple, non-literate societies by social anthropology had a pervasive influence on the content and the subject matter of the discipline. Social anthropology tended to study society (simple societies) in all their aspects, as wholes. In so far as they specialised, it was on the basis of area as for example the Andaman Islands, the Nuers or Melanesia. Sociologists study complex societies and would therefore often focus on parts of society like the bureaucracy or religion or caste or a process such as social mobility.

Social anthropology was characterised by long field work tradition, living in the community studied and using ethnographic research methods. Sociologists have often relied on survey method and quantitative data using statistics and the questionnaire mode. Chapter 5 will give you a more comprehensive account of these two traditions.

Today the distinction between a simple society and a complex one itself needs major rethinking. India itself is a complex mix of tradition and modernity, of the village and the city, of caste and tribe, of class and community. Villages nestle right in the heart of the capital city of Delhi. Call centres serve European and American clients from different towns of the country.

Indian sociology has been far more eclectic in borrowing from both traditions. Indian sociologists often studied Indian societies that were both part of and not of one's own culture. It could also be dealing with both complex differentiated societies of urban modern India as well as the study of tribes in a holistic fashion.

It had been feared that with the decline of simple societies, social anthropology would lose its specificity and merge with sociology. However there have been fruitful interchanges between the two disciplines and today often methods and techniques are drawn from both. There have been anthropological studies of the state and globalisation, which are very different from the traditional subject matter of social anthropology. On the other hand, sociology too has been using quantitative and qualitative techniques, macro and micro approaches for studying the complexities of modern societies. As mentioned before we will in a sense carry on this discussion in Chapter 5 . For in India, sociology and social anthropology have had a very close relationship.





GLOSSARY

Capitalism : A system of economic enterprise based on market exchange. "Capital" refers to any asset, including money, property and machines, which can be used to produce commodities for sale or invested in a market with the hope of achieving a profit. This system rests on the private ownership of assets and the means of production.

Dialectic : The existence or action of opposing social forces, for instance, social constraint and individual will.

Empirical Investigation : A factual enquiry carried out in any given area of sociological study.

Feminist Theories : A sociological perspective which emphasises the centrality of gender in analysing the social world. There are many strands of feminist theory, but they all share in common the desire to explain gender inequalities in society and to work to overcome them.

Macrosociology : The study of large-scale groups, organisations or social systems.

Microsociology : The study of human behaviour in contexts of face-to-face interaction.

Social Constraint : A term referring to the fact that the groups and societies of which we are a part exert a conditioning influence on our behaviour.

Values : Ideas held by human individual or groups about what is desirable, proper, good or bad. Differing values represent key aspects of variations in human culture.

EXERCISES

1. Why is the study of the origin and growth of sociology important?
2. Discuss the different aspects of the term 'society'. How is it different from your common sense understanding?
3. Discuss how there is greater give and take among disciplines today.
4. Identify any personal problem that you or your friends or relatives are facing. Attempt a sociological understanding.





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CHAPTER 2

TERMS, CONCEPTS AND THEIR USE IN SOCIOLOGY

I

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced us to an idea both about society as well as sociology. We saw that a central task of sociology is to explore the interplay of society and the individual. We also saw that individuals do not float freely in society but are part of collective bodies like the family, tribe, caste, class, clan, nation. In this chapter, we move further to understand the kinds of groups individuals form, the kinds of unequal orders, stratification systems within which, individuals and groups are placed, the way social control operates, the roles that individuals have and play, and the status they occupy.

In other words we start exploring how society itself functions. Is it harmonious or conflict ridden? Are status and roles fixed? How is social control exercised? What kinds of inequalities exist? The question however remains as to why do we need specific

terms and concepts to understand this. Why does sociology need to have a special set of terms when we use terms like status and roles or social control anyway in our everyday life?

For a discipline such as, say, nuclear physics that deals with matters unknown to most people and for which no word exists in common speech, it seems obvious that a discipline must develop a terminology. However, terminology is possibly even more important for sociology, just because its subject matter is familiar and just because words do exist to denote it. We are so well acquainted with the social institutions that surround us that we cannot see them clearly and precisely (Berger 1976:25).

For example we may feel that since we live in families we know all about families. This would be conflating or equating sociological knowledge with common sense knowledge or naturalistic explanation, which we have discussed in Chapter 1.

We also found in the previous chapter how sociology as a discipline





has a biography or history. We saw how certain material and intellectual developments shaped the sociological perspective as well as its concerns. Likewise sociological concepts too have a story to tell. Many of the concepts reflect the concern of social thinkers to understand and map the social changes that the shift from pre-modern to modern entailed. For instance sociologists observed that simple, small scale and traditional societies were more marked by close, often face-to-face interaction. And modern, large scale societies by formal interaction. They therefore distinguished primary from secondary groups, community from society or association. Other concepts like stratification reflect the concern that sociologists had in understanding the structured inequalities between groups in society.

Concepts arise in society. However just as there are different kinds of individuals and groups in society so there are different kinds of concepts and ideas. And sociology itself is marked by different ways of understanding society and looking at dramatic social changes that the modern period brought about.

We have seen how even in the early stage of sociology's emergence there were contrary and contesting understandings of society. If for Karl Marx class and conflict were key concepts to understand society, social solidarity and collective conscience were key terms for Emile Durkheim. In the Post-World War II period sociology was greatly influenced by the structural functionalists who found society

essentially harmonious. They found it useful to compare society to an organism where different parts have a function to play for the maintenance of the whole. Others, in particular the conflict theorists influenced by Marxism saw society as essentially conflict ridden.

Within sociology some tried to understand human behaviour by starting with the individual, i.e. micro interaction. Others began with macro structures such as class, caste, market, state or even community. Concepts such as status and role begin with the individual. Concepts such as social control or stratification begin from a larger context within which individuals are already placed.

The important point is that these classifications and types that we discuss in sociology help us and are the tools through which we can understand reality. They are keys to open locks to understand society. They are entry points in our understanding, not the final answer. But what if the key becomes rusted or bent or does not fit the lock, or fits in with effort? In such situations we need to change or modify the key. In sociology we both use and also constantly interrogate or question the concepts and categories.

Very often there is considerable unease about the coexistence of different kinds of definitions or concepts or even just different views about the same social entity. For example conflict theory versus the functionalist theory. This multiplicity of approaches is particularly acute in sociology. And it





cannot but be otherwise. For society itself is diverse.

Activity 1

Choose any one of the following topics for class discussion :

- democracy is a help or hindrance to development
- gender equality makes for a more harmonious or more divisive society
- punishments or greater discussion are the best way to resolve conflicts.

Think of other topics.

What kind of differences emerged? Do they reflect different visions of what a good society ought to be like? Do they reflect different notions of the human being?

In our discussion on the various terms you will notice how there is divergence of views. And how this very debate and discussion of differences helps us understand society.



II

SOCIAL GROUPS AND SOCIETY

Sociology is the study of human social life. A defining feature of human life is that humans interact, communicate and construct social collectivities. The comparative and historical perspective of sociology brings home two apparently innocuous facts. The first that in every society whether ancient or feudal or modern, Asian or European or African human groups and collectivities exist. The second that the types of groups and collectivities are different in different societies.

Any gathering of people does not necessarily constitute a social group. Aggregates are simply collections of people who are in the same place at the same time, but share no definite connection with one another. Passengers waiting at a railway station or airport or bus stop or a cinema audience are examples of aggregates. Such aggregates are often termed as quasi groups.



What kind of groups are these?





A quasi group is an aggregate or combination, which lacks structure or organisation, and whose members may be unaware, or less aware, of the existence of groupings. Social classes, status groups, age and gender groups, crowds can be seen as examples of quasi groups. As these examples suggest quasi groups may well become social groups in time and in specific circumstances. For example, individuals belonging to a particular social class or caste or community may not be organised as a collective body. They may be yet to be infused with a sense of "we" feeling. But class and caste have over a period of time given rise to political parties. Likewise people of different communities in India have over the long anti-colonial struggle developed an identity as a collectivity and group — a nation with a shared past and a common future. The women's movement brought about the idea of women's groups and organisation. All these examples draw

attention to how social groups emerge, change and get modified.

A social group can be said to have at least the following characteristics :

- (i) persistent interaction to provide continuity;
- (ii) a stable pattern of these interactions;
- (iii) a sense of belonging to identify with other members, i.e. each individual is conscious of the group itself and its own set of rules, rituals and symbols;
- (iv) shared interest;
- (v) acceptance of common norms and values;
- (vi) a definable structure.

Social structure here refers to patterns of regular and repetitive interaction between individuals or groups. A social group thus refers to a collection of continuously interacting persons who share common interest, culture, values and norms within a given society.

Activity 2

Find out a name that is relevant under each heading.

Caste	An anti caste movement	A caste based political party
Class	A class based movement	A class based political party
Women	A women's movement	A women's organisation
Tribe	A tribal movement	A tribe/tribes based political party
Villagers	An environmental movement	An environmental organisation

Discuss whether they were all social groups to start with and if some were not, then at what point can one apply the term social group to them, using the term as sociologically understood.



**Activity 3**

Discuss the age group of teenagers. Is it a quasi group or social group? Were ideas about 'teenage' and 'teenagers' as a special phase in life always there? In traditional societies how was the entry of children into adulthood marked? In contemporary times do marketing strategies and advertisement have anything to do with the strengthening or weakening of this group/quasi group? Identify an advertisement that targets teenagers or pre-teens? Read the section on stratification and discuss how teenage may mean very different life experiences for the poor and rich, for the upper and lower class, for the discriminated and privileged caste.

TYPES OF GROUPS

As you read through this section on groups you will find that different sociologists and social anthropologists have categorised groups into different types. What you will be struck with however is that there is a pattern in the typology. In most cases they contrast the manner in which people form groups in traditional and small scale societies to that of modern and large scale societies. As mentioned earlier, they were struck by the difference between close, intimate, face-to-face interaction in traditional societies and impersonal, detached, distant interaction in modern societies.

However a complete contrast is probably not an accurate description of reality.

Primary and Secondary Social Groups

The groups to which we belong are not all of equal importance to us. Some groups tend to influence many aspects of our lives and bring us into personal association with others. The term primary group is used to refer to a small group of people connected by intimate and face-to-face association and co-operation. The members of primary groups have a sense of belonging. Family, village and groups



Contrast the two types of group





of friends are examples of primary groups.

Secondary groups are relatively large in size, maintain formal and impersonal relationships. The primary groups are person-oriented, whereas the secondary groups are goal oriented. Schools, government offices, hospitals, students' association etc. are examples of secondary groups.

Community and Society or Association

The idea of comparing and contrasting the old traditional and agrarian way of life with the new modern and urban one in terms of their different and contrasting social relationships and lifestyles, dates back to the writings of classical sociologists.

The term 'community' refers to human relationships that are highly personal, intimate and enduring, those where a person's involvement is considerable if not total, as in the family, with real friends or a close-knit group.

'Society' or 'association' refers to everything opposite of 'community', in particular the apparently impersonal, superficial and transitory relationships of modern urban life. Commerce and industry require a more calculating, rational and self-interested approach to one's dealings with others. We make contracts or agreements rather than getting to know one another. You may draw a parallel between the community with the primary group and the association with the secondary group.

Activity 4

Collect a copy of a memorandum of any association that you know of or can find out about for example a Resident Welfare Association, a women's association (Mahila Samiti), a Sports Club. You will find clear information about its goals, objectives, membership and other rules that govern it. Contrast this with a large family gathering.

You may find that many a times that interaction among members of a formal group over time becomes more close and 'just like family and friends.' This brings home the point that concepts are not fixed, frozen entities. They are indeed keys or tools for understanding society and its changes.

In-Groups and Out-Groups

A sense of belonging marks an in-group. This feeling separates 'us' or 'we' from 'them' or 'they'. Children belonging to a particular school may form an 'in-group' as against those who do not belong to the school. Can you think of other such groups?

An out-group on the other hand is one to which the members of an in-group do not belong. The members of an out-group can face hostile reactions from the members of the in-group. Migrants are often considered as an out-group. However, even here the





actual definition of who belongs and who does not, changes with time and social contexts.

The well known sociologist M.N. Srinivas observed while he was carrying out a census in Rampura in 1948 how distinctions were made between recent and later migrants. He writes:

I heard villagers use two expressions which I came to realise were significant: the recent immigrants were almost contemptuously described as *nenne morne' bandavartu* ('came yesterday or the day before;) while old immigrants were described as *arsheyinda bandavaru* ('came long ago') or *khadeem kulagalu* ('old lineages'), (Srinivas 1996:33).

Activity 5

Find out about the experience of immigrants in other countries. Or may be even from different parts of our own country.

You will find that relationships between groups change and modify. People once considered members of an out-group become in-group members. Can you find out about such processes in history?

Reference Group

For any group of people there are always other groups whom they look up to and aspire to be like. The groups whose life styles are emulated are known as reference groups. We do not belong to our reference groups

but we do identify ourselves with that group. Reference groups are important sources of information about culture, life style, aspiration and goal attainments.

In the colonial period many middle class Indians aspired to behave like proper Englishman. In that sense they could be seen as a reference group for the aspiring section. But this process was gendered, i.e. it had different implications for men and women. Often Indian men wanted to dress and dine like the British men but wanted the Indian women to remain 'Indian' in their ways. Or aspire to be a bit like the proper English woman but also not quite like her. Do you still find this valid today?

Peer Groups

This is a kind of primary group, usually formed between individuals who are either of similar age or who are in a common professional group. Peer pressure refers to the social pressure exerted by one's peers on what one ought to do or not.

Activity 6

Do your friends or others of your age group influence you? Are you concerned with their approval or disapproval about the way you dress, behave, the kind of music you like to listen to or the kind of films you prefer? Do you consider it to be social pressure? Discuss.





SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Social stratification refers to the existence of structured inequalities between groups in society, in terms of their access to material or symbolic rewards. Thus stratification can most simply be defined as structural inequalities between different groupings of people. Often social stratification is compared to the geological layering of rock in the earth's surface. Society can be seen as consisting of 'strata' in a hierarchy, with the more favoured at the top and the less privileged near the bottom.

Inequality of power and advantage is central for sociology, because of the crucial place of stratification in the organisation of society. Every aspect of the life of every individual and household is affected by stratification. Opportunities for health, longevity, security, educational success, fulfillment in work and political influence are all unequally distributed in systematic ways.

Historically four basic systems of stratification have existed in human societies: slavery, caste, estate and class. Slavery is an extreme form of inequality in which some individuals are literally owned by others. It has existed sporadically at many times and places, but there are two major examples of a system of slavery; ancient Greece and Rome and the Southern States of the USA in the 18th and 19th centuries. As a formal institution, slavery has gradually been eradicated. But we do continue to have bonded labour, often even of children. Estates characterised feudal Europe. We do not

enter into details about estates here but very briefly touch upon caste and class as systems of social stratification. We shall be dealing in greater detail with class, caste, gender as bases of social stratification in the book, *Understanding Society* (NCERT, 2006).

Caste

In a caste stratification system an individual's position totally depends on the status attributes ascribed by birth rather than on any which are achieved during the course of one's life. This is not to say that in a class society there is no systematic constraint on achievement imposed by status attributes such as race and gender. However, status attributes ascribed by birth in a caste society define an individual's position more completely than they do in class society.

In traditional India different castes formed a hierarchy of social precedence. Each position in the caste structure was defined in terms of its purity or pollution relative to others. The underlying belief was that those who are most pure, the *Brahmin* priestly castes, are superior to all others and the *Panchamas*, sometimes called the 'outcastes' are inferior to all other castes. The traditional system is generally conceptualised in terms of the four fold varna of *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras*. In reality there are innumerable occupation-based caste groups, called *jatis*.

The caste system in India has undergone considerable changes over the years. Endogamy and ritual





avoidance of contact with members of so-called lower castes were considered critical for maintaining purity by the so-called upper castes. Changes brought in by urbanisation inevitably challenged this. Read well known sociologist A.R. Desai's observations below.

Other social consequences of urbanisation in India are commented upon by sociologist A.R. Desai as:

Modern industries brought into being modern cities honey-combed with cosmopolitan hotels, restaurants, theatres, trams, buses, railways. The modest hotels and restaurants catered for the workers and middle classes became crowded in cities with persons belonging to all castes and even creeds... In trains and buses one occasionally rubbed shoulders with members of the depressed classes... should not, however be supposed that caste had vanished (Desai 1975:248).

While change did take place, discrimination was not so easy to do away with, as a first person narrative suggests.

In the mill there may be no open discrimination of the kind that exists in the villages, but experience of private interactions tells another story. Parmar observed...

They will not even drink water from our hands and they sometimes use abusive language when dealing

with us. This is because they feel and believe they are superior. It has been like that for years. No matter how well we dress they are not prepared to accept certain things (Franco et. al. 2004:150).

Even today acute caste discrimination exists. At the same time the working of democracy has affected the caste system. Castes as interest groups have gained strength. We have also seen discriminated castes asserting their democratic rights in society.

Class

There have been many attempts to explain class. We mention here, very briefly just the central ideas of Marx, Weber and that of, functionalism. In the Marxist theory social classes are defined by what relation they have to the means of production. Questions could be asked as to whether groups are owners of means of production such as land or factories? Or whether they are owners of nothing but their own labour? Weber used the term life-chances, which refers to the rewards and advantages afforded by market capacity. Inequality, Weber argued might be based on economic relations. But it could also be based on prestige or on political power.

The functionalist theory of social stratification begins from the general presupposition or belief of functionalism that no society is "classless" or unstratified. The main functional necessity explains the universal presence of social stratification in





requirements faced by a society of placing and motivating individuals in the social structure. Social inequality or stratification is thus an unconsciously evolved device by which societies ensure that the most important positions are deliberately filled by the most qualified persons. Is this true?

In a traditional caste system social hierarchy is fixed, rigid and transmitted across generations in these societies. Modern class system in contrast is open and achievement based. In democratic societies there is nothing to legally stop a person from the most deprived class and caste from reaching the highest position.

Activity 7

Find out more about the life of the late President K. R. Narayanan. Discuss the concept of ascription and achieved status, caste and class in this context.

Such stories of achievement do exist and are sources of immense inspiration. Yet for the most part the structure of the class system persists. Sociological studies of social mobility, even in western societies are far removed from the ideal model of perfect mobility. Sociology has to be sensitive to both the challenges to the caste system as well as the persistence of discrimination. Significantly those, at the lower levels of the system are not just disadvantaged socially but also economically. In rural India, more than half of the Schedule

Tribes population lives below the poverty line. This proportion is only slightly less for the Schedule Castes at about 43 per cent, and lesser still for the Other Backward Classes at about 34 per cent (Deshpande 2003:114).

Status and Role

The two concepts 'status' and 'role' are often seen as twin concepts. A status is simply a position in society or in a group. Every society and every group has many such positions and every individual occupies many such positions.

Status thus refers to the social position with defined rights and duties assigned to these positions. To illustrate, the mother occupies a status, which has many norms of conduct as well as certain responsibilities and prerogatives.

A role is the dynamic or the behavioural aspect of status. Status is occupied, but roles are played. We may say that a status is an institutionalised role. It is a role that has become regularised, standardised and formalised in the society at large or in any of the specific associations of society.

It must be apparent that each individual in a modern, complex society such as ours occupies many different kinds of status during the course of his/her life. You as a school student may be a student to your teacher, a customer to your grocer, a passenger to the bus driver, a brother or sister to your sibling, a patient to the doctor. Needless to say we could keep adding to the list. The smaller and simpler the





society, the fewer the kinds of status that an individual can have.

In a modern society an individual as we saw occupies multiple status which is sociologically termed as status set. Individuals acquire different status at various stages of life. A son becomes a father, father becomes a grandfather and then great grandfather and so on. This is called a status sequence for it refers to the status, which is attained in succession or sequence at the various stages of life.

An ascribed status is a social position, which a person occupies because of birth, or assumes involuntarily. The most common bases for ascribed status are age, caste, race and kinship. Simple and traditional societies are marked by ascribed status. An achieved status on the other hand refers to a social position that a person occupies voluntarily by personal ability, achievements, virtues and choices. The most common bases for achieved status are educational qualifications, income, and professional expertise. Modern societies are characterised by achievements. Its members are accorded prestige on the basis of their achievements. How often you would have heard the phrase "you have to prove yourself". In traditional societies your status was defined and ascribed at birth. However, as discussed above, even in modern achievement based societies, ascribed status matters.

Status and prestige are interconnected terms. Every status is accorded certain rights and values. Values are attached to the social

position, rather than to the person who occupies it or to his/her performance or to his/her actions. The kind of value attached to the status or to the office is called prestige. People can rank status in terms of their high or low prestige. The prestige of a doctor may be high in comparison to a shopkeeper, even if the doctor may earn less. It is important to keep in mind that ideas of what occupation is considered prestigious varies across societies and across periods.

Activity 8

What kinds of jobs are considered prestigious in your society? Compare these with your friends. Discuss the similarities and differences. Try and understand the causes for the same.

People perform their roles according to social expectations, i.e. role taking and role playing. A child learns to behave in accordance with how her behaviour will be seen and judged by others.

Role conflict is the incompatibility among roles corresponding to one or more status. It occurs when contrary expectations arise from two or more roles. A common example is that of the

Activity 9

Find out how a domestic worker or a construction labourer faces role conflict.





middle class working woman who has to juggle her role as mother and wife at home and that of a professional at work.

It is a common place assumption that men do not face role conflict. Sociology being both an empirical and comparative discipline suggests otherwise.

Khasi matriliney generates intense role conflict for men. They are torn between their responsibilities to their natal house on the one hand and to their wife and children on the other. They feel deprived of sufficient authority to command their children's loyalty and lack the freedom to pass on after death, even their self-acquired property to their children...

The strain affects Khasi women, in a way more intensely. A woman can never be fully assured that her husband does not find his sister's house more congenial place than her own house (Nongbri 2003:190).

Role stereotyping is a process of reinforcing some specific role for some member of the society. For example men and women are often socialised in stereotypical roles, as breadwinner and homemaker respectively. Social roles and status are often wrongly seen as fixed and unchanging. It is felt that individuals learn the expectations that surround social positions in their particular culture and perform these roles largely as they have been defined. Through socialisation, individuals internalise social roles and learn how to carry them out. This view, however,

is mistaken. It suggests that individuals simply take on roles, rather than creating or negotiating them. In fact, socialisation is a process in which humans can exercise agency; they are not simply passive subjects waiting to be instructed or programmed. Individuals come to understand and assume social roles through an ongoing process of social interaction. This discussion perhaps will make you reflect upon the relationship between the individual and society, which we had studied in Chapter 1.

Roles and status are not given and fixed. People make efforts to fight against discrimination roles and status for example those based on caste or race or gender. At the same time there are sections in society who oppose such changes. Likewise individual violation of roles are often punished. Society thus functions not just with roles and status but also with social control.

Activity 10

Collect newspaper reports where dominant sections of society seek to impose control and punish those whom they consider to have transgressed or violated socially prescribed roles.

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Social control is one of the most generally used concepts in sociology. It refers to the various means used by a society to bring its recalcitrant or unruly members back into line.





You will recall how sociology has different perspectives and debates about the meaning of concepts. You will also recall how functionalist sociologists understood society as essentially harmonious and conflict theorists saw society as essentially unequal, unjust and exploitative. We also saw how some sociologists focussed more on the individual and society, others on collectivities like classes, races, castes.

For a functionalist perspective social control refers to: (i) the use of force to regulate the behaviour of the individual and groups and also refers to the (ii) enforcing of values and patterns for maintaining order in society. Social control here is directed to restrain deviant behaviour of individuals or

groups on the one hand, and on the other, to mitigate tensions and conflicts among individuals and groups to maintain social order and social cohesion. In this way social control is seen as necessary to stability in society.

Conflict theorists usually would see social control more as a mechanism to impose the social control of dominant social classes on the rest of society. Stability would be seen as the writ of one section over the other. Likewise law would be seen as the formal writ of the powerful and their interests on society.

Social control refers to the social process, techniques and strategies by which the behaviours of individual or a group are regulated. It refers both to the use of force to regulate the behaviour of the individual and groups

The ultimate and, no doubt, the oldest means of social control is physical violence... even in the politely operated societies of modern democracies the ultimate argument is violence. No state can exist without a police force or its equivalent in armed might... In any functioning society violence is used economically and as a last resort, with the mere threat of this ultimate violence sufficing for the day-to-day exercise of social control... Where human beings live or work in compact groups, in which they are personally known and to which they are tied by feelings of personal loyalty (the kind that sociologists call primary groups), very potent and simultaneously very subtle mechanisms of control are constantly brought to bear upon the actual or potent deviant... One aspect of social control that ought to be stressed is the fact that it is frequently based on fraudulent claims... A little boy can exercise considerable control over his peer group by having a big brother who, if need be, can be called upon to beat up any opponents. In the absence of such a brother, however it is possible to invent one. It will then be a question of the public-relations talents of the little boy as to whether he will succeed in translating his invention into actual control (Berger 84-90).

Have you ever seen or heard a young child threaten another with "I will tell my elder brother."

Can you think of other examples?





and also refers to the enforcing of values and patterns for maintaining order in society.

Social control may be informal or formal. When the codified, systematic, and other formal mechanism of control is used, it is known as formal social control. There are agencies and mechanism of formal social control, for example, law and state. In a modern society formal mechanisms and agencies of social control are emphasised.

In every society there is another type of social control that is known as informal social control. It is personal, unofficial and uncodified. They include smiles, making faces, body language frowns, criticism, ridicule, laughter etc. There can be great variations in their use within the same society. In day-to-day life they are quite effective.

However, in some cases informal methods of social control may not be adequate in enforcing conformity or obedience. There are various agencies of informal social control e.g. family, religion, kinship, etc. Have you heard about honour killing? Read the

Activity 11

Can you think of examples drawn from your life how this 'unofficial' social control operates? Have you in class or in your peer group noticed how a child who behaves a bit differently from the rest is treated? Have you witnessed incidents where children are bullied by their peer group to be more like the other children?

newspaper report which is given below and identify the different agencies of social control involved.

A sanction is a mode of reward or punishment that reinforces socially expected forms of behaviour. Social control can be positive or negative. Members of societies can be rewarded for good and expected behaviour. On the other hand, negative sanctions are also used to enforce rules and to restrain deviance.

Deviance refers to modes of action, which do not conform to the norms or

Man kills sister for marrying from outside the caste

... The elder brother of a 19-year-old girl here carried out an apparent 'honour killing' by allegedly beheading her while she was asleep at a hospital ... police said on Monday.

The girl... was undergoing treatment at ... Hospital for stab wounds after her brother... attacked her on December 16 for marrying outside the caste, they said. She and her lover eloped on December 10 and returned to their houses here on December 16 after getting married, which was opposed by her parents, they said.

The *Panchayat* also tried to pressurise the couple but they refused to be swayed.





values held by most of the members of a group or society. What is regarded as 'deviant' is as widely variable as the norms and values that distinguish different cultures and subcultures. Likewise ideas of deviance are challenged and change from one period to another. For example, a woman choosing to become an astronaut may

be considered deviant at one time, and be applauded at another time even in the same society. You are already familiar with how sociology is different from common sense. The specific terms and concepts discussed in this chapter will help you further to move towards a sociological understanding of society.

GLOSSARY

Conflict Theories : A sociological perspective that focuses on the tensions, divisions and competing interests present in human societies. Conflict theorists believe that the scarcity and value of resources in society produces conflict as groups struggle to gain access to and control those resources. Many conflict theorists have been strongly influenced by the writings of Marx.

Functionalism : A theoretical perspective based on the notion that social events can best be explained in terms of the function they perform — that is the contribution they make to the continuity of a society. And on a view of society as a complex system whose various parts work in relationship to each other in a way that needs to be understood.

Identity : The distinctive characteristic of a person's character or the character of a group which relate to who they are and what is meaningful to them. Some of the main sources of identity include gender, nationality or ethnicity, social class.

Means of Production : The means whereby the production of material goods is carried on in a society, including not just technology but the social relations between producers.

Microsociology and Macrosociology : The study of everyday behaviour in situations of face-to-face interaction is usually called microsociology. In microsociology, analysis occurs at the level of individuals or small groups. It differs from macrosociology, which concerns itself with large-scale social systems, like the political system or the economic order. Though they appear to be distinct, they are closely connected.

Natal : It relates to the place or time of one's birth.

Norms : Rules of behaviour which reflect or embody a culture's values, either prescribing a given type of behaviour, or forbidding it. Norms are always





backed by sanctions of one kind or another, varying from informal disapproval to physical punishment or execution.

Sanctions : A mode of reward or punishment that reinforce socially expected forms of behaviour.

EXERCISES

1. Why do we need to use special terms and concepts in sociology?
 2. As a member of society you must be interacting with and in different groups. How do you see these groups from a sociological perspective?
 3. What have you observed about the stratification system existing in your society? How are individual lives affected by stratification?
 4. What is social control? Do you think the modes of social control in different spheres of society are different? Discuss.
 5. Identify the different roles and status that you play and are located in. Do you think roles and status change? Discuss when and how they change.
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CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

I

INTRODUCTION

This book began with a discussion about the interaction of the individual and society. We saw that each of us as individuals, occupies a place or location in society. Each one of us has a status and a role or roles, but these are not simply what we as individuals choose. They are not like roles a film actor may or may not opt to do. There are social institutions that constrain and control, punish and reward. They could be 'macro' social institutions like the state or 'micro' ones like the family. Here in this chapter we are introduced to social institutions, and also to how sociology/social anthropology studies them. This chapter puts forth a very brief idea of some of the central areas where important social institutions are located namely: (i) family, marriage and kinship; (ii) politics; (iii) economics; (iv) religion; and (v) education.

In the broadest sense, an institution is something that works according to rules established or at

least acknowledged by law or by custom. And whose regular and continuous operation cannot be understood without taking those rules into account. Institutions impose constraints on individuals. They also provide him/her with opportunities.

An institution can also be viewed as an end in itself. Indeed people have viewed the family, religion, state or even education as an end in itself.

Activity 1

Think of examples of how people sacrifice for the family, for religion, for the state.

We have already seen that there are conflicting and different understandings of concepts within sociology. We have also been introduced to the functionalist and conflict perspective, and seen how differently they saw the same thing, for instance stratification or social control. Not surprisingly, therefore, there are different forms of understanding of social institutions as well.





A functionalist view understands social institutions as a complex set of social norms, beliefs, values and role relationship that arise in response to the needs of society. Social institutions exist to satisfy social needs. Accordingly we find informal and formal social institutions in societies. Institutions such as family and religion are examples of informal social institutions while law and (formal) education are formal social institutions.

A conflict view holds that all individuals are not placed equally in society. All social institutions whether familial, religious, political, economic, legal or educational will operate in the interest of the dominant sections of society be it class, caste, tribe or gender. The dominant social section not only dominates political and economic institutions but also ensures that the ruling class ideas become the ruling ideas of a society. This is very different from the idea that there are general needs of a society.

As you go about reading this chapter, see whether you can think of examples to show how social institutions constrain and also offer opportunities to individuals. Notice whether they impact different sections of society unequally. For instance, we could ask, "How does the family constrain as well provide opportunities to men and women?" Or "How do political or legal institutions affect the privileged and dispossessed?"

II

FAMILY, MARRIAGE AND KINSHIP

Perhaps no other social entity appears more 'natural' than the family. Often we are prone to assume that all families are like the ones we live in. No other social institution appears more universal and unchanging. Sociology and social anthropology have over many decades conducted field research across cultures to show how the institutions of family, marriage and kinship are important in all societies and yet their character is different in different societies. They have also shown how the family (the private sphere) is linked to the economic, political, cultural, educational (the public) spheres. This may remind you of why there is a need to share and borrow from different disciplines, which we have discussed in Chapter 1.

According to the functionalists the family performs important tasks, which contribute to society's basic needs and helps perpetuate social order. The functionalist perspective argues that modern industrial societies function best if women look after the family and men earn the family livelihood. In India studies however suggest that families need not become nuclear in an industrial pattern of economy (Singh 1993: 83). This is but one example to show how trends based on experiences of one society cannot necessarily be generalised.

The nuclear family is seen as the unit best equipped to handle the demands of industrial society by the





functionalists. In such a family one adult can work outside the home while the second adult cares for the home and children. In practical terms, this specialisation of roles within the nuclear family involves the husband adopting the 'instrumental' role as breadwinner, and the wife assuming the 'affective', emotional role in domestic settings (Giddens 2001). This vision is questionable not just because it is gender unjust but because empirical studies across cultures and history show that it is untrue. Indeed, as you will see in the discussion on work and economy how in contemporary industries like the garment export, women form a large part of the labour force. Such a separation also suggests that men are necessarily the heads of households. This is not necessarily true as the box which is given below shows.

Variation in Family Forms

A central debate in India has been about the shift from nuclear family to joint families. We have already seen how sociology questions common sense impressions. The fact is that nuclear

families have always existed in India particularly among the deprived castes and classes.

The sociologist A.M. Shah remarks that in post-independent India the joint family has steadily increased. The contributing factor is the increasing life expectancy in India according to him. It has increased from 32.5 - 55.4 years for men and from 31.7 - 55.7 years for women during the period 1941 - 50 to 1981 - 85. Consequently, the proportion of aged people (60 years and above) in the total population has increased. "We have to ask" writes Shah — "in what kind of household do these elderly people live? I submit, most of them live in joint household" (Shah; 1998).

This again is a broad generalisation. But in the spirit of the sociological perspective, it cautions us against blindly believing a common sense impression that the joint family is fast eroding. And alerts us to the need for careful comparative and empirical studies.

Studies have shown how diverse family forms are found in different

Female headed households

When men migrate to urban areas, women have to plough and manage the agricultural fields. Many a time they become the sole providers of their families. Such households are known as female headed households. Widowhood too might create such familial arrangement. Or it may happen when men get remarried and stop sending remittance to their wives, children and other dependents. In such a situation, women have to ensure the maintenance of the family. Among the Kolams, a tribal community in south-eastern Maharashtra and northern Andhra Pradesh, a female headed household is an accepted norm.



societies. With regard to the rule of residence, some societies are matrilocal in their marriage and family customs while others are patrilocal. In the first case, the newly married couple stays with the woman's parents, whereas in the second case the couple lives with the man's parents. A patriarchal family structure exists where the men exercise authority and dominance, and matriarchy where the women play a major role in decision-making in the family. While matrilineal societies exist, the same cannot be claimed about matriarchal societies.



Families are Linked to other Social Spheres and Families Change

Often in our everyday life we look at the family as distinct and separate from other spheres such as the economic or political. However, as you will see for yourself the family, the household, its structure and norms are closely linked to the rest of society. An interesting example is that of the unintended consequences of the German unification. During the post-unification period in the 1990s Germany witnessed a rapid decline in marriage



Notice how families and residences are different



Work and Home



because the new German state withdrew all the protection and welfare schemes which were provided to the families prior to the unification. With growing sense of economic insecurity people responded by refusing to marry. This can also be understood as a case of unintended consequence (Chapter 1).

Family and kinship are thus subject to change and transformation due to macro economic processes but the direction of change need not always be similar for all countries and regions. Moreover, change does not mean the complete erosion of previous norms and structure. Change and continuity co-exist.

How gendered is the family?

The belief is that the male child will support the parents in the old age and

the female child will leave on marriage results in families investing more in a male child. Despite the biological fact that a female baby has better chances of survival than a male baby the rate of infant mortality among female children is higher in comparison to male children in lower age group in India.

The Institution of Marriage

Historically marriage has been found to exist in a wide variety of forms in

Activity 2

A Telegu expression states: 'Bring-ing up a daughter is like watering a plant in another's courtyard'. Find out other such sayings that are contrary. Discuss how popular sayings reflect the social arrangement of a society,

Sex Ratio in India between 1901-2001

Year	Sex Ratio	Year	Sex Ratio
1901	972	1951	946
1911	964	1961	941
1921	955	1971	930
1931	950	1981	934
1941	945	1991	926
2001			(927)*

* In 2001 the sex ratio of girls in 0-6 group was enumerated as 927

The incidence of female foeticide has led to a sudden decline in the sex ratio. The child sex ratio has declined from 934 per thousand males in 1991 to 927 in 2001. The percentage of decline in the child sex ratio is more alarming. The situation of prosperous states like Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra and western Utter Pradesh is all the more grave. In Punjab the child sex ratio has declined to 793 girls per 1,000 boys. In some of the districts of Punjab and Haryana it has fallen below 700.





different societies. It has also been found to perform differing functions. Indeed, the manner in which marriage partners are arranged reveal an astonishing variety of modes and customs.

Activity 3

Find out about the different ways that different societies go about finding marriage partners.

Forms of Marriage

Marriage has a large variety of forms. These forms can be identified on the basis of the number of partners and rules governing who can marry whom. In terms of the number of partners that can legitimately enter into matrimony, we have two forms of marriage, namely, monogamy and polygamy. Monogamy restricts the individual to one spouse at a time. Under this system, at any given time a man can have only one wife and a woman can have only one husband. Even where polygamy is permitted, in actual practice, monogamy is more widely prevalent.

In many societies, individuals are permitted to marry again, often on the death of the first spouse or after divorce. But they cannot have more than one spouse at one and the same time. Such a monogamous marriage is termed serial monogamy. Remarriages on the death of a wife have been a norm for men for the most part. But as all of you are aware that the

right for upper caste Hindu widows was denied and that the campaign for widow remarriage was a major issue in the 19th century reform movements. What you are probably less aware is that today in modern India nearly 10 per cent of all women and 55 per cent of women over fifty years are widows (Chen 2000:353).

Polygamy denotes marriage to more than one mate at one time and takes the form of either: Polygyny (one husband with two or more wives) or Polyandry (one wife with two or more husbands). Usually where economic conditions are harsh, polyandry may be one response of society, since in such situations a single male cannot adequately support a wife and children. Also, extreme poverty conditions pressurise a group to limit its population.

The Matter of Arranging Marriages: Rules and Prescriptions

In some societies, the decisions regarding mate selection are made by parents/relatives; in some other societies individuals are relatively free to choose their own mates.

Rules of Endogamy and Exogamy

In some societies these restrictions are subtle, while in some others, individuals who can or cannot be married, are more explicitly and specifically defined. Forms of marriage based on rules governing eligibility/ineligibility of mates is classified as endogamy and exogamy.





Endogamy requires an individual to marry within a culturally defined group of which he or she is already a member, as for example, caste. Exogamy, the reverse of endogamy, requires the individual to marry outside of his/her own group. Endogamy and exogamy are in reference to certain kinship units, such as, clan, caste and racial, ethnic or religious groupings. In India, village exogamy is practised in certain parts of north India. Village exogamy ensured that daughters were married into families from villages far away from home. This arrangement ensured smooth transition and adjustment of the bride into the affinal home without interference of her kinsmen. The geographical distance plus the unequal relationship in the patrilineal system ensured that married daughters did not get to see their parents too often. Thus parting from natal home was a sad occasion and is the theme of folk songs, which depict the pain of departure.

*Father, we are like flocks of bird
We shall fly away; Our flight will be
long,
We know not to which,
Region we will go.
Father, my palanquin cannot
Pass through your palace,
(because the door is too small)
Daughter, I shall remove a brick
(to enlarge the passage for your
palanquin),
You must go to your home.*

(Chanana 1993: WS 26)

*Rock-a-bye-baby, combs in your
pretty hair;
The bridegroom will come soon and
take you away
The drums beat loudly, the shehnai
is playing softly
A stranger's son has come to fetch me
Come my playmates, come with our
toys
Let us play, for I shall never play
again
When I go off to the strangers' house.*

(Dube 2001: 94)

Activity 4

Collect different wedding songs and discuss how they reflect the social dynamics of marriages and of gender relations.

Activity 5

Have you ever seen matrimonial advertisements? Divide your class into groups and look at different newspapers, magazines and the internet. Discuss your findings. Do you think endogamy is still the prevalent norm? How does it help you to understand choice in marriage? More importantly, what kind of changes in society does it reflect?

Defining Some Basic Concepts, Particularly those of Family, Kinship and Marriage

A family is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections,





the adult members of which assume responsibility for caring for children. Kinship ties are connections between individuals, established either through marriage or through the lines of descent that connect blood relatives (mothers, fathers, siblings, offspring, etc.) Marriage can be defined as a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals. When two people marry, they become *kin* to one another. The marriage bond also, however, connects together a wider range of people. Parents, brothers, sisters and other blood relatives become relatives of the partner through marriage. The family of birth is called family of orientation and the family in which a person is married is called the family of procreation. The kin who are related through "blood" are called consanguinal kin while the kin who are related through marriage are called affines. As we move on to the next section on work and economic institutions, you will notice how the family and economic life are closely interconnected.

III**WORK AND ECONOMIC LIFE****What is Work?**

As children and young students we imagine what kind of 'work' we will do when we grow up. 'Work' here quite clearly refers to paid employment. This is the most widely understood sense of 'work' in modern times.

This in fact is an oversimplified view. Many types of work do not conform to the idea of paid employment. Much of the work done in the informal economy, for example, is not recorded in any direct way in the official employment statistics. The term informal economy refers to transactions outside the sphere of regular employment, sometimes involving the exchange of cash for services provided, but also often involving the direct exchange of goods or services.

We can define work, whether paid or unpaid, as the carrying out of tasks requiring the expenditure of mental and

There was no occupation, which Tiny's Granny had not tried at some stage of her life. From the time she was old enough to hold her own cup she had started working at odd jobs in people's houses in return for her two meals a day and cast-off clothes. Exactly what the words 'odd jobs' mean, only those know who have been kept at them at an age when they ought to have been laughing and playing with other children. Anything from the uninteresting duty of shaking the baby's rattle to massaging the master's head comes under the category of 'odd jobs' (Chugtai 2004:125).

Find out more about the various kinds of 'work' done from your own observation or literature or even films. Discuss.





Kind of Works

physical effort, which has as its objective the production of goods and services that cater to human needs.

Modern Forms of Work and Division of Labour

In pre-modern forms of society most people worked in the field or cared for the livestock. In the industrially developed society only a tiny proportion of the population works in

Activity 6

Find out the proportion of Indians who are in rural based occupations. Make a list of these occupations.

agriculture, and farming itself has become industrialised — it is carried on largely by means of machines rather





than by human hand. In a country like India, the larger share of the population continues to be rural and agricultural or involved in other rural based occupations.

There are other trends in India too, for instance an expansion of the service sector.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the economic system of modern societies is the existence of a highly complex division of labour. Work has been divided into an enormous number of different occupations in which people specialise. In traditional societies, non-agricultural work entailed the mastery of a craft. Craft skills were learned through a lengthy period of apprenticeship, and the worker normally carried out all aspects of the production process from beginning to end.

Activity 7

Find out whether there has been a shift to the service sector in India in recent times. Which are these sectors?

Modern society also witnesses a shift in the location of work. Before industrialisation, most work took place at home and was completed collectively by all the members of the household. Advances in industrial technology, such as machinery operating on electricity and coal, contributed to the separation of work and home. Factories owned by capitalist entrepreneurs became the focal point of industrial development.

Activity 8

Have you seen a master weaver at work? Find out how long one piece of shawl may take to make?

People seeking jobs in factories were trained to perform a specialised task and receive a wage for this work. Managers supervised the work, for their task was to enhance worker productivity and discipline.

One of the main features of modern societies is an enormous expansion of economic interdependence. We are all dependent on an immense number of other workers-stretching right across the world- for the products and services that sustain our lives. With few exceptions, the vast majority of people in modern societies do not produce the food they eat, the houses they live in or the material goods they consume.

Activity 9

Make a list of the food that you eat, the materials that were used to make the houses you live in, the clothes you wear. Find out how and who made them.

Transformation of Work

Industrial processes were broken down into simple operations that could be precisely timed, organised and monitored. Mass production demands mass markets. One of the most significant innovations was the





**Discuss the two forms of production in the two sets of visuals
Cloth production in a factory**





Threshing of paddy in a village



construction of a moving assembly line. Modern industrial production needed expensive equipment and continuous monitoring of employees through monitoring or surveillance systems.

Over the last decades there has been a shift to what is often called 'flexible production' and 'decentralisation of work'. It is argued that in this period of globalisation, it is the growing competition between firms and countries that makes it essential for firms to organise production suiting the changing market conditions. To illustrate how this new system operates and what the implications may be for the workers, read the quote from a study of the garment industry in Bangalore.

The industry is essentially part of a long supply chain, and the freedom of manufacturers is to that extent extremely limited. There are, in fact more than a hundred operations between the designer and the final consumer. In this chain, only 15 are in the hands of the manufacturer. Any serious agitation for a rise in wages would lead manufacturers to shift their operations to other localities, beyond the reach of unionists... whether it is the payment of the existing minimum wage, or its substantial revision upwards, what is important is to enlist the support of the retailer in order to create the necessary pressure upon the government and local agencies for a higher wage structure and its effective implementation. Thus the

vision here is that of the creation of an international opinion forum (Roy Choudhury 2005 :2254).

Read the above given report carefully. Notice how the new organisation of production and a body of customers outside the country have altered the economics and the politics of production.

IV

POLITICS

Political institutions are concerned with the distribution of power in society. Two concepts, which are critical to the understanding of political institutions, are power and authority. Power is the ability of individuals or groups to carry out their will even when opposed by others. It implies that those who hold power do so at the cost of others. There is a fixed amount of power in a society and if some wield power others do not. In other words, an individual or group does not hold power in isolation, they hold it in relation to others.

This notion of power is fairly inclusive and extends from family elders assigning domestic duties to their children to principals enforcing discipline in school; from the General Manager of a factory distributing work among the executives to political leaders regulating programmes of their parties. The principal has power to maintain discipline in school. The president of a political party possesses power to expel a member from the party. In each case, an individual or group has power to the extent to which others abide by their will. In this sense, political activities or politics is concerned with 'power'.





But how is this 'power' applied to achieve its aim? Why do people comply with others' commands? Answers to these questions could be found with reference to a related concept of 'authority'. Power is exercised through authority. Authority is that form of power, which is accepted as legitimate, that is, as right and just. It is institutionalised because it is based on legitimacy. People in general accept the power of those in authority as they consider their control to be fair and justified. Often ideologies exist that help this process of legitimization.

Stateless Societies

Empirical studies of stateless societies by social anthropologists over sixty years ago demonstrated how order is maintained without a modern governmental apparatus. There was instead the balanced opposition between parts; cross-cutting alliances, based on kinship, marriage and residence; rites and ceremonies involving the participation of friends and foes.

As we all know, the modern state has a fixed structure and formal procedures. Yet are not some of the informal mechanisms mentioned above as features of stateless societies present also in state societies?

The Concept of the State

A state exists where there is a political apparatus of government (institutions like a parliament or congress, plus civil service officials) ruling over a given territory. Government authority is backed by a legal system and by the

capacity to use military force to implement its policies. The functionalist perspective sees the state as representing the interests of all sections of society. The conflict perspective sees the state as representing the dominant sections of society.

Modern states are very different from traditional states. These states are defined by sovereignty, citizenship and, most often, ideas of nationalism. Sovereignty refers to the undisputed political rule of a state over a given territorial area.

The sovereign state was not at first one in which citizenship carried with it rights of political participation. These were achieved largely through struggles, which limited the power of monarchs, or actively overthrew them. The French Revolution and our own Indian independence struggle are two instances of such movements.

Citizenship rights include civil, political and social rights. Civil rights involve the freedom of individuals to live where they choose; freedom of speech and religion; the right to own property; and the right to equal justice before the law. Political rights include the right to participate in elections and to stand for public office. In most countries governments were reluctant to admit the principle of universal franchise. In the early years not only women, but a large section of the male population was excluded as holding a certain amount of property was an eligibility criterion. Women had to wait longer for the vote.

The third type of citizenship rights are social rights. These concern the



**Activity 10**

Find out when women got voting rights in different countries. Why do you think that despite the right to vote and the right to stand for public office, women are so inadequately represented? Will power in its wider sense be a useful concept to understand this under-representation in the Parliament and other bodies? Does the existing division of labour within families and households impact women's participation in political life? Find out why there is a demand for 33 per cent reservation for women in the Parliament?

prerogative of every individual to enjoy a certain minimum standard of economic welfare and security. They include such rights as health benefits, unemployment allowance, setting of minimum level of wages. The broadening of social or welfare rights led to the welfare state, which was established in Western societies since the Second World War. States of the erstwhile socialist countries had far-reaching provision in this sector. In most developing countries, this was virtually non-existent. All over the world today these social rights are being attacked as liabilities on the state and hindrances to economic growth.

Nationalism can be defined as a set of symbols and beliefs providing the sense of being part of a single political

community. Thus, individuals feel a sense of pride and belonging, in being 'British', 'Indian', 'Indonesian' or 'French'. Probably people have always felt some kind of identity with social groups of one form or another—for example, their family, clan or religious community. Nationalism, however, only made its appearance with the development of the modern state. Contemporary world is marked both by a rapid expansion of the global market as well as intense nationalist feelings and conflicts.

Sociology has been interested in the broader study of power, not just with the formal apparatus of government. It has been interested in the distribution of power between parties, between classes, between castes, and between

Activity 11

Collect information about different states doing away with social rights. Find out what explanation is given for this. Discuss and see whether you can see the relationship between the economic, political and social spheres.

Activity 12

Collect information of events that show the growth of global interconnectedness as well as instances of divisions along ethnic, religious, national conflicts. Discuss how politics and economics may have a part to play in them.





communities based on race, language and religion. Its focus is not just on what may be called specifically political association, such as state legislatures, town councils and political parties but also associations such as schools, banks and religious institutions whose aims are not primarily political. The scope of sociology has been wide. Its range has extended from the study of international movements (such as women or environmental) to village factions.

V

RELIGION

Religion has been a subject of study and reflection for a very long time. In Chapter 1, we have seen how sociological findings about society are different from religious reflections. The sociological study of religion is different from a religious or theological study of religion in many ways. One, it conducts empirical studies of how religions actually function in society and its relationship to other institutions. Two, it uses a comparative method. Three, it investigates religious beliefs, practices and institutions in relation to other aspects of society and culture.

The empirical method means that the sociologist does not have a judgemental approach to religious phenomena. The comparative method is important because in a sense it brings all societies on level with each other. It helps to study without bias and prejudice. The sociological perspective means that religious life can be made intelligible only by relating

it to domestic life, economic life and political life.

Religion exists in all known societies, although religious beliefs and practices vary from culture to culture. Characteristics that all religions seem to share are:

- set of symbols, invoking feelings of reverence or awe;
- rituals or ceremonies;
- a community of believers.

The rituals associated with religion are very diverse. Ritual acts may include praying, chanting, singing, eating certain kinds of food (or refraining from doing so), fasting on certain days, and so on. Since ritual acts are oriented towards religious symbols, they are usually seen as quite distinct from the habits and procedures of ordinary life. Lighting a candle or *diya* to honour the divine differs completely in its significance from doing so simply to light a room. Religious rituals are often carried out by an individual in his/her personal everyday life. But all religions also involve ceremonials practised collectively by believers. Regular ceremonials normally occur in special places — churches, mosques, temples, shrines.

Religion is about the sacred realm. Think of what members of different religions do before entering a sacred realm. For example covering one's head, or not covering one's head, taking off shoes, or wearing particular kind of clothes, etc. What is common to them all is the feeling of awe, recognition and respect for a sacred places or situations.





Sociologists of religion, following Emile Durkheim, are interested in understanding this sacred realm which every society distinguishes from the profane. In most cases, the sacred includes an element of the supernatural. Often the sacred quality of a tree or a temple comes with the belief that it is sacred precisely because there is some supernatural force behind it. However, it is important to keep in mind that some religions like early Buddhism and Confucianism had no conception of the supernatural, but did allow sufficient reverence for things and persons which they considered sacred.

Studying religion sociologically lets us ask questions about the relationship of religion with other social institutions. Religion has had a very close relationship with power and politics. For instance periodically in history there have been religious movements for social change, like various anti-caste movements or movements against gender discrimination. Religion is not just a matter of the private belief of an individual but it also has a public character. And it is this public character of religion, which has an important bearing on other institutions of society.

We have seen how sociology looks at power in a wide sense. It is therefore of sociological interest to look at the relationship between the political and religious sphere. Classical sociologists believed that as societies modernised, religion would become less influential over the various spheres of life. The concept secularisation describes this process. Contemporary events suggest a persisting role of religion various

aspects of society. Why do you think this is so?

A pioneering work by Max Weber (1864-1920) demonstrates how sociology looks at religion in its relationship to other aspects of social and economic behaviour. Weber argues that Calvinism (a branch of Protestant Christianity) exerted an important influence on the emergence and growth of capitalism as a mode of economic organisation. The Calvinists believed that the world was created for the glory of God, meaning that any work in this world had to be done for His glory, making even mundane works acts of worship. More importantly, however, the Calvinists also believed in the concept of predestination, which meant that whether one will go to heaven or hell was pre-ordained. Since there was no way of knowing whether one has been assigned heaven or hell, people sought to look for signs of God's will in this world, in their own occupations. Thus if a person in whatever profession, was consistent and successful in his or her work, it was interpreted as a sign of God's happiness. The money earned was not to be used for worldly consumption; rather the ethics of Calvinism was to live frugally. This meant that investment became something like a holy creed. At the heart of capitalism is the concept of investment, which is about investing capital to make more goods, which create more profit, which in turn creates more capital. Thus Weber was able to argue that religion, in this case Calvinism, does have an influence on economic development.





Religion cannot be studied as a separate entity. Social forces always and invariably influence religious institutions. Political debates, economic situations and gender norms will always influence religious behaviour. Conversely, religious norms influence and sometimes even determine social understanding. Women constitute half of the world's population. Sociologically therefore it becomes important to ask what relationship this vast segment of human population has with religion. Religion is an important part of society and is inextricably tied to other parts. The task of sociologists is to unravel these various interconnections. In traditional societies, religion usually plays a central part in social life. Religious symbols and rituals are often integrated with the material and artistic culture of society. Read the extract which is given below in the box to get a sense of how sociology studies religion.

VI

EDUCATION

Education is a life long process, involving both formal and informal institutions of learning. Here we are however confining ourselves only to school education. We are all aware how important getting admission into a school is. We also know, for many of us, school is a step towards higher education and finally employment. For some of us it may mean acquiring some necessary social skills. What is common in all cases is that there is a felt need for education.

Sociology understands this need as a process of transmission/communication of group heritage, common to all societies. There is a qualitative distinction between simple societies and complex, modern societies. In the case of the former there was no need for formal schooling. Children learnt

Many extraneous factors have affected the traditional lives of the religious specialists. The most important of these are the growth of new employment and educational opportunities in Nasik... after Independence, the way of life of the priests has been changing fast. Now the sons and daughters are sent to school, and are trained for jobs other than traditional ones... Like all places of pilgrimage, Nasik also gave rise to supplementary centres around religious activities. It was a normal routine for a pilgrim to take home the sacred water of the Godavari in a copper pot. The coppersmiths provided these wares. The pilgrims also bought wares, which they took home to be distributed as gifts among their relatives and friends. For long Nasik was known for its proficient craftsmen in brass, copper and silver... Since the demand for their wares is intermittent and uncertain, not all the adult males can be supported by this occupation... Many craftsmen have entered industry and business-both small and large scale (Acharya 1974: 399-401).





customs and the broader way of life by participating in activities with their adults. In complex societies, we saw there is an increasing economic division of labour, separation of work from home, need for specialised learning and skill attainment, rise of state systems, nations and complex set of symbols and ideas. How do you get educated informally in such a context? How would parents or other adults informally communicate all that has to be known to the next generation? Education in such a social context has to be formal and explicit.

Furthermore modern complex societies in contrast to simple societies rest on abstract universalistic values. This is what distinguishes it from a simple society that depends on particularistic values, based on family, kin, tribe, caste or religion. Schools in modern societies are designed to promote uniformity, standardised aspirations and universalistic values. There are many ways of doing this. For example one can speak of 'uniform dress for school children'. Can you think of other features that promote standardisation?



For Emile Durkheim, no society can survive without a 'common base-a certain number of ideas, sentiments and practices which education must inculcate in all children indiscriminately, to whatever social category they belong' (Durkheim 1956: 69). Education should prepare the child for a special occupation, and enable the child to internalise the core values of society.

The functionalist sociologist thus speaks in terms of general social needs and social norms. For the functionalists, education maintains and renews the social structure, transmits and develops culture. The educational system is an important mechanism for the selection and allocation of the individuals in their future roles in the society. It is also regarded as the ground for proving one's ability and hence selective agency for different status according to their abilities. Recall our discussion on the functionalist understanding of roles and stratification in Chapter 2.

For the sociologists who perceive society as unequally differentiated, education functions as a main



Discuss the visuals





stratifying agent. And at the same time the inequality of educational opportunity is also a product of social stratification. In other words we go to different kinds of schools depending on our socio-economic background. And because we go to some kind of schools, we acquire different kind of privileges and finally opportunities.

For instance some argue that schooling 'intensifies the existing divide between the elite and the masses.' Children going to privileged schools learn to be confident while children deprived of that may feel the opposite (Pathak 2002:151). However, there are many more children who simply cannot attend school or drop out. For instance a study reports :

You are seeing some children in the school now. If you come during the cultivation season you may see almost zero attendance from the SC and ST children. They all take some household responsibilities while the parents are out to work. And the girl children of these communities seldom attend school as they do various kinds of work both domestic and income generating. A 10 year old girl picks dry cow dung to sell for example (Pratichi 2002:60).

The above report indicates how gender and caste discrimination impinges upon the chances of education. Recall how we began this book in Chapter 1 about a child's



Discuss the visual

chances for a good job being shaped by a host of social factors. Your understanding of the way social institutions function should help you analyse the process better now.

Activity 13

A study of a kindergarten suggested that children learn that:

- ✓ 'work activities are more important than play activities'.
- ✓ 'work includes any and all teacher-directed activities.'
- ✓ 'work is compulsory and free time activities are called play' (Apple 1979:102).

What do you think? Discuss.





GLOSSARY

Citizen : A member of a political community, having both rights and duties associated with that membership.

Division of Labour : The specialisation of work tasks, by means of which different occupations are combined within a production system. All societies have at least some rudimentary form of division of labour. With the development of industrialism, however, the division of labour becomes vastly more complex than in any prior type of production system. In the modern world, the division of labour is international in scope.

Gender : Social expectations about behaviour regarded as appropriate for the members of each sex. Gender is seen as a basic organising principle of society.

Empirical Investigation : Factual enquiry carried out in any given area of sociological study.

Endogamy : When marriage is within a specific caste, class or tribal group.

Exogamy : When marriage occurs outside a certain group of relations.

Ideology : Shared ideas or beliefs, which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups. Ideologies are found in all societies in which there are systematic and engrained inequalities between groups. The concept of ideology connects closely with that of power, since ideological systems serve to legitimise the differential power which groups hold.

Legitimacy : The belief that a particular political order is just and valid.

Monogamy : When marriage involves one husband and one wife alone.

Polygamy : When marriage involves more than one mate at one time.

Polyandry : When more than one man is married to a woman.

Polygyny : When more than one woman is married to a man.

Service Industries : Industries concerned with the production of services rather than manufactured goods, such as the travel industry.

State Society : A society which possesses a formal apparatus of government.

Stateless Society : A society which lacks formal institutions of government.

Social Mobility : Movement from one status or occupation to another.

Sovereignty : The undisputed political rule of a state over a given territorial area.





EXERCISES

1. Note what are the marriage rules that are followed in your society. Compare your observations with that made by other students in the class. Discuss.
2. Find out how membership, residence pattern and even the mode of interaction changes in the family with broader economic, political and cultural changes, for instance migration.
3. Write an essay on 'work'. Focus on both the range of occupations, which exist and how they change.
4. Discuss the kind of rights that exist in your society. How do they affect your life?
5. How does sociology study religion?
6. Write an essay on the school as a social institution. Draw from both your reading as well as your personal observations.
7. Discuss how these social institutions interact with each other. You can start the discussion from yourself as a senior school student. And move on to how you are shaped by different social institutions. Are you entirely controlled or can you also resist and redefine social institutions?

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CHAPTER 4

CULTURE AND SOCIALIZATION

I

INTRODUCTION

'Culture', like 'society', is a term used frequently and sometimes vaguely. This chapter is meant to help us define it more precisely and to appreciate its different aspects. In everyday conversation, culture is confined to the arts, or alludes to the way of life of certain classes or even countries. Sociologists and anthropologists study the social contexts within which culture exists. They take culture apart to try and understand the relations between its various aspects.

Just like you need a map to navigate over unknown space or territory, you need culture to conduct or behave yourself in society. Culture is the common understanding, which is learnt and developed through social interaction with others in society. A common understanding within a group demarcates it from others and gives it an identity. But cultures are never finished products. They are always changing and evolving. Elements are

Activity 1

How do you greet another person in your 'culture'? Do you greet different kinds of persons (friends, older relatives, the other gender, people from other groups) differently? Discuss any awkward experience you may have had when you did not know how you should greet a person? Is that because you did not share a common 'culture'? But next time round you will know what to do. Your cultural knowledge thereby expands and rearranges itself.

constantly being added, deleted, expanded, shrunk and rearranged. This makes cultures dynamic as functioning units.

The capacity of individuals to develop a common understanding with others and to draw the same meanings from signs and symbols is what distinguishes humans from other animals. Creating meaning is a social virtue as we learn it in the company of





others in families, groups and communities. We learn the use of tools and techniques as well as the non-material signs and symbols through interaction with family members, friends and colleagues in different social settings. Much of this knowledge is systematically described and conveyed either orally or through books.

For example, notice the interaction below. Notice how words and facial expressions convey meaning in a conversation.

Commuter asks autodriver: “Indiranagar?” The verb that conveys the question — “Bartheera?” or “Will you come?” — is implied in the arch of the eyebrow. Driver jerks his head in the direction of the back seat if the answer is “Yes”. If it is “No” (which is more likely the case as every true blue Bangalorean knows) he might just drive away or grimace as if he has heard a bad word or shake his head with a smile that seems to suggest a “Sorry”, all depending on the mood of the moment.

This learning prepares us for carrying out our roles and responsibilities in society. You have already dealt with status and roles. What we learn in the family is primary socialisation, while that which happens in school and other institutions are secondary socialisation. We shall discuss this in greater detail later in this chapter.

II

DIVERSE SETTINGS, DIFFERENT CULTURES

Humans live in a variety of natural settings like in the mountains and plains, in forests and cleared lands, in deserts and river valleys, in islands and main lands. They also inhabit different

social densities like in villages, towns and cities. In different environments, people adapt different strategies to cope with the natural and social conditions. This leads to the emergence of diverse ways of life or cultures.

Disparities in coping mechanisms were evident during the devastating tsunami of 26 December 2004, which affected some parts of the Tamil Nadu and Kerala coast as well as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India. People on the mainland and islands are integrated into a relatively modern way of life. The

fisherfolk and the service personnel in the islands were caught unawares and suffered large scale devastation and much loss of life. On the other hand, the ‘primitive’ tribal communities in the islands like the Onges, Jarawas, Great Andamanese or Shompens who had no access to modern science and technology, foresaw the calamity based on their experiential knowledge and saved themselves by moving on to higher ground. This shows that having access to modern science and technology does not make modern cultures superior to the tribal cultures of the islands. Hence, cultures cannot be ranked but can be judged adequate or inadequate in terms of their ability to cope with the strains imposed by nature.





Discuss how natural settings affect culture

**Activity 2**

Find out from at least one region other than your own how the natural environment affects food habits, patterns of dwelling, clothing and the ways in which God or gods are worshipped.

Defining Culture

Often the term ‘culture’ is used to refer to the acquiring of refined taste in classical music, dance forms, painting. This refined taste was thought to distinguish people from the ‘uncultured’ masses, even concerning something we would today see as individual, like the preference for coffee over tea!

By contrast, the sociologist looks at culture not as something that distinguishes individuals, but as a way of life in which all members of society

Activity 3

Identify equivalents in Indian languages for the word culture. What associations do these carry?

participate. Every social organisation develops a culture of its own. One early anthropological definition of culture comes from the British scholar Edward Tylor: “Culture or civilisation taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and

habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor 1871 I:1).



Discuss how the visual capture a way of life

Two generations later, the founder of the “functional school” of anthropology, Bronislaw Malinowski of Poland (1884-1942) wrote: “Culture comprises inherited artifacts, goods, technical process, ideas, habits and values” (Malinowski 1931: 621-46).

Clifford Geertz suggested that we look at human actions in the same way as we look at words in a book, and see them as conveying a message. “... Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs...”. The search is not for a causal explanation, but for an interpretative one, that is in search for meaning (Geertz 1973: 5). Likewise Leslie White had placed a comparable emphasis on culture as a means of adding meaning to objective reality, using the example of people regarding water from a particular source as holy.





- Do you notice anything in Malinowski's definition that is missing in Tylor's?

Apart from his mention of art, all the things listed by Tylor are non-material. This is not because Tylor himself never looked at material culture. He was in fact a museum curator, and most of his anthropological writing was based on the examination of artifacts and tools from societies across the world, which he had never visited. We can now see his definition of culture as an attempt to take into account its intangible and abstract dimensions, so as to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the societies he was studying. Malinowski happened to be stranded on an island in the Western Pacific during the First World War, and discovered thereby the value of remaining for an extended period with the society one was studying. This led to the establishment of the tradition of "field work" you will read about it in Chapter 5.

The multiple definitions of culture in anthropological studies led Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (anthropologists from the United States) to publish a comprehensive survey entitled *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* in 1952. A sample of the various definitions is presented below.

- Try comparing these definitions to see which of these or which combination of these you find most satisfactory.

You may first find yourself noticing words which recur—'way', 'learn' and 'behaviour'. However, if you then look at how each is used, you may be struck by the shifts in emphasis. The first phrase refers to mental ways but the second to the total way of life. Definitions (d), (e) and (f) lay stress on culture as what is shared and passed on among a group and down the generations. The last two phrases are the first to refer to culture as a means of directing behaviour.

Culture is...

(a)	a way of thinking, feeling, believing.
(b)	the total way of life of a people.
(c)	an abstraction from behaviour.
(d)	learned behaviour.
(e)	a storehouse of pooled learning.
(f)	the social legacy the individual acquires from his group.
(g)	a set of standardised orientations to recurrent problems.
(h)	a mechanism for the normative regulation of behaviour.





Make a list of phrases you have heard containing the word ‘culture’. Ask your friends and family what they mean by culture? What criteria do they use to distinguish among cultures.

Activity 4

Compare these definitions to see which of these (or combination of these) you find most satisfactory. You could do this by listing familiar uses of the word ‘culture’ (the culture of eighteenth century Lucknow, the culture of hospitality or the much used term ‘Western culture’...) Which of the definitions best capture the impressions conveyed by each?

Dimensions of Culture

Three dimensions of culture have been distinguished :

- (i) Cognitive: This refers to how we learn to process what we hear or see, so as to give it meaning (identifying the ring of a cell-phone as ours, recognising the cartoon of a politician).
- (ii) Normative: This refers to rules of conduct (not opening other people’s letters, performing rituals at death).
- (iii) Material: This includes any activity made possible by means of materials. Materials also include tools or machines. Examples include internet ‘chatting’, using rice-flour paste to design kolam on floors.

It may have occurred to you that our understanding of material culture, especially art, is incomplete without knowledge acquired from the cognitive and normative areas. It is true that our developing understanding of social process would draw upon all these areas. But we might find that in a community where few have acquired the cognitive skill of literacy, it in fact becomes the norm for private letters to be read out by a third party. But as we see below, to focus on each of these areas separately provides many important insights.

Cognitive Aspects of Culture

The cognitive aspects of one’s own culture are harder to recognise than its material aspects (which are tangible or visible or audible) and its normative aspects (which are explicitly stated). Cognition refers to understanding, how we make sense of all the information coming to us from our environment. In literate societies ideas are transcribed in books and documents and preserved in libraries, institutions or archives. But in non-literate societies legend or lore is committed to memory and transmitted orally. There are specialist practitioners of oral tradition who are trained to remember and narrate during ritual or festive occasions.

Let us think about how writing may affect the production and consumption of art. In his influential book, *Orality and Literacy* Walter Ong cites a study of 1971 that states that only 78 of the approximately 3,000





existing languages possess a literature. Ong suggests that material that is not written down has certain specific characteristics. There is a lot of repetition of words, to make it simpler to remember. The audience of an oral performance is likely to be more receptive and involved than would be readers of a written text from an unfamiliar culture. Texts become more elaborate when they are written.

In societies like ours historically literacy has been made available only to the more privileged. Sociological studies are often concerned with investigating how literacy can be made relevant to the lives of people whose families have never gone to school. This can lead to unexpected responses, like a vegetable-seller who asked why he needed to know the alphabet when he could mentally calculate what his customers owed him?

The contemporary world allows us to rely far more on written, audio and visual records. Yet students of Indian classical music are still discouraged from writing down what they learn rather than carrying it in their memory. We still do not know enough about the impact of the electronic media, of multiple channels, of instant accessing and surfing. Do you think these new forms impact our attention span and cognitive culture?

Normative Aspects of Culture

The normative dimension consists of folkways, mores, customs, conventions and laws. These are values or rules that guide social behaviour in

different contexts. We most often follow social norms because we are used to doing it, as a result of socialisation. All social norms are accompanied by sanctions that promote conformity. We have already discussed social control in Chapter 2.

While norms are implicit rules, laws are explicit rules. Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist has reminded us that when we try to understand another culture's norms, we must remember that there are certain implicit understandings. For example, if a person wants to show gratitude for something s/he has been given, s/he should not offer a return-gift too quickly, or it seems like an attempt to get rid of a debt, not a friendly gesture.

A law is a formal sanction defined by government as a rule or principle that its citizens must follow. Laws are explicit. They are applicable to the whole society. And a violation of the law attracts penalties and punishment. If in your home children are not allowed to stay outdoors after sundown, that is a norm. It is specific to your family and may not be applicable to all families. However, if you are caught stealing a gold necklace from someone else's home, you have violated the universally accepted law of private property and can be sent to jail after trial as punishment.

Laws, which derive from the authority of the State are the most formal definitions of acceptable behaviour. While different schools may establish different norms for students,





laws would apply to all those accepting the authority of the State. Unlike laws, norms can vary according to status. Dominant sections of society apply dominant norms. Often these norms are discriminating. For example norms that did not allow dalits from drinking water from the same vessel or even source. Or women from moving freely in the public sphere.

Material Aspects of Culture

The material aspect refers to tools, technologies, machines, buildings and modes of transportation, as well as instruments of production and communication. In urban areas the widespread use of mobile phones, music systems, cars and buses, ATMs (automated teller machines), refrigerators and computers in everyday life indicates the dependence on technology. Even in rural areas the use of transistor radios or electric motor pumps for lifting water from below the surface for irrigation demonstrate the adoption of technological devices for increasing production.

In sum there are two principal dimensions of culture: material and non-material. While the cognitive and normative aspects are non-material, the material dimension is crucial to increase production and enhance the quality of life. For integrated functioning of a culture the material and non-material dimensions must work together. But when the material or technological dimensions change rapidly, the non-material aspects can lag behind in terms of values and

norms. This can give rise to a situation of culture lag when the non-material dimensions are unable to match the advances of technology.

Culture and Identity

Identities are not inherited but fashioned both by the individual and the group through their relationship with others. For the individual the social roles that s/he plays imparts identity. Every person in modern society plays multiple roles. For instance within the family s/he may be a parent or a child but for each of the specific roles there are particular responsibilities and powers.

It is not sufficient to enact roles. They also have to be recognised and acknowledged. This can often be done through the recognition of the particular language that is used among role players. Students in schools have their own way of referring to their teachers, other students, class performances. By creating this language which also serves as a code, they create their own world of meanings and significances. Similarly, women are also known to create their own language and through it their own private space beyond the control of men especially when they congregate at the pond to bathe in rural areas or across washing lines on rooftops in urban areas.

In a culture there can be many subcultures, like that of the elite and working class youth. Sub-cultures are marked by style, taste and association. Particular sub-cultures are identifiable





by their speech, dress codes, preference for particular kind of music or the manner in which they interact with their group members.

Sub-cultural groups can also function as cohesive units which imparts an identity to all group members. Within such groups there can be leaders and followers but group members are bound by the purpose of the group and work together to achieve their objectives. For instance young members of a neighbourhood can form a club to engage themselves in sports and other constructive activities. Such activities create a positive image of the members in the locality and this gives the members not only a positive self-image but also inspires them to perform better in their activities. The orientation of their identity as a group undergoes a transformation. The group is able to differentiate itself from other groups and thereby create its own identity through the acceptance and recognition of the neighbourhood.

Activity 5

Are you aware of any sub-cultural group in your locality? How are you able to identify them?

Ethnocentrism

It is only when cultures come into contact with one another that the question of ethnocentrism arises. Ethnocentrism is the application of one's own cultural values in evaluating the behaviour and beliefs of people from other cultures. This means that the

cultural values projected as the standard or norm are considered superior to that of the beliefs and values of other cultures. We have seen in Chapter 1 and in Chapter 3 (particularly in the discussion on religion) how sociology is an empirical and not a normative discipline.

Underlying ethnocentric comparisons is a sense of cultural superiority clearly demonstrated in colonial situations. Thomas Babington Macaulay's famous Minute on Education (1835) to the East India Company in India exemplifies ethnocentrism when he says, 'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, morals and intellect' (quoted in Mukherji 1948/1979: 87), (emphasis added).

Ethnocentrism is the opposite of cosmopolitanism, which values other cultures for their difference. A cosmopolitan outlook does not seek to evaluate the values and beliefs of other people according to one's own. It celebrates and accommodates different cultural propensities within its fold and promotes cultural exchange and borrowings to enrich one's own culture. The English language has emerged as a leading vehicle of international communication through its constant inclusion of foreign words into its vocabulary. Again the popularity of Hindi film music can be attributed to its borrowings from western pop music as well as from different traditions of





Indian folk and semi-classical forms like the *bhangra* and *ghazal*.

A modern society is appreciative of cultural difference and does not close its doors to cultural influences from abroad. But such influences are always incorporated in a distinctive way, which can combine with elements of indigenous culture. The English language despite its foreign inclusions does not become a separate language, nor does Hindi film music lose its character through borrowings. The absorption of diverse styles, forms, sounds and artifacts provides an identity to a cosmopolitan culture. In a global world where modern means of communication are shrinking distances between cultures, a cosmopolitan outlook allows diverse influences to enrich one's own culture.

Cultural Change

Cultural change is the way in which societies change their patterns of culture. The impetus for change can be internal or external. In regard to internal causes, for instance, new methods of farming or agriculture can boost agricultural production, which can transform the nature of food consumption and quality of life of an agrarian community. On the other hand external intervention in the form of conquest or colonisation can also effect deep seated changes in the cultural practices and behaviour of a society.

Cultural change can occur through changes in the natural environment, contact with other cultures or processes of adaptation. Changes in the natural environment or ecology can

Notice the words in the box. Have you heard or used these words in your conversations?

Hinglish' may soon conquer the world

Some of the Hinglish words in vogue include airdash (travel by air), *chaddis* (underpants), *chai* (Indian tea), crore (10 million), dacoit (thief), *desi* (local), *dicky* (boot), *gora* (white person), *jungli* (uncouth), lakh (100,000), *lampat* (thug), optical (spectacles), *prepone* (bring forward), *stepney* (spare tyre) and would-be (fiancé or fiancée). Hinglish contains many words and phrases that Britons or Americans may not easily understand, according to a report... Some are archaic, relics of the Raj, such as 'pukka'. Others are newly coined, such as 'time-pass', meaning an activity that helps kill time. India's success in attracting business has recently produced a new verb. Those whose jobs are outsourced to India are said to have been 'Bangalored'.





drastically alter the way of life of a people. When forest dwelling communities are deprived of access to the forest and its produce either because of legal restrictions or due to its decimation, it can have disastrous effects on the dwellers and their way of life. Tribal communities in North East India as well as in middle India have been the worst affected by the loss of forest resources.

Along with evolutionary change there can also be revolutionary change. When a culture is transformed rapidly and its values and meaning systems undergo a radical change then revolutionary change takes place. Revolutionary change can be initiated through political intervention, technological innovation or ecological transformation. The French Revolution (1789) transformed French society by destroying the *estate system* of ranking, abolishing the monarchy, and inculcating the values of liberty, equality and fraternity among its citizens. When a different understanding comes to prevail, culture change occurs. Recent years have seen an amazing expansion of the media, both electronic and print. Do you think the media has brought about an evolutionary or revolutionary change? We are familiar with the various dimensions of culture now. To return to the point we started with in Chapter 1 about the interplay between the individual and society, we now move on to the concept of socialisation.

III

SOCIALIZATION

I believe that a complete life is inclusive of everything around us: plants, cattle, guests, feasts, festivals, quarrels, friendship, companionship, discrimination, scorn. All these and more were present in one single place, my home. Although life sometimes appeared complicated then, I now understand how consummate it was. It is thanks to such a childhood, perhaps, that if I get just a glimpse of someone's suffering, I feel I can comprehend the whole of it (Vaidehi 1945).

At the time of birth, the human infant knows nothing about what we call society or social behaviour. Yet as the child grows up, s/he keeps learning not just about the physical world. But about what it means to be a good or bad girl/boy. S/he knows what kind of behaviour will be applauded and, what kind will be disapproved. Socialisation can be defined as the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which s/he is born. Indeed without socialisation an individual would not behave like a human being. Many of you will be familiar with the story of the 'Wolf-children of Midnapore'. Two small girls were reportedly found in a wolf den in Bengal in 1920. They walked on all four like animals, preferred a diet of raw meat, howled like wolves and lacked any form of speech. Interestingly





such incidents have been reported from other parts of the world too.

We have so far been talking about socialisation and the new-born infant. But the birth of a child also alters the lives of those who are responsible for its upbringing. They too undergo new learning experiences. Becoming grandparents and parenting involves a whole set of activities and experiences. Older people still remain parents when they become grandparents, of course, thus forging another set of relationships connecting different generations with each other. Likewise the life of a young child changes with the birth of a sibling. Socialisation is a life long process even though the most critical process happens in the early years, the stage of primary socialisation. Secondary socialisation as we saw extends over the entire life of a person.

While socialisation has an important impact on individuals it is not a kind of 'cultural programming', in which the child absorbs passively the influences with which he or she comes into contact. Even the most recent newborn can assert her/his will. S/he will cry when hungry. And keep crying until those responsible for the infant's care respond. You may have seen how normal, everyday schedules of the family get completely reorganised with the birth of a child.

You have already been introduced to the concepts of status/role, of social control, of groups and social stratification. You are also acquainted with what culture, norms and values are. All these concepts will help us understand

how the process of socialisation takes place. A child, in the first instance is a member of a family. But s/he is also a member of a larger kin-group (*biradari*, *khaandaan*, a clan etc.) consisting of brothers, sisters and other relatives of the parents. The family into which s/he is born may be a nuclear or extended family. It is also a member of a larger society such as a tribe or sub-caste, a clan or a *biradri*, a religious and linguistic group. Membership of these groups and institutions imposes certain behavioural norms and values on each member. Corresponding to these memberships there are roles that are performed, e.g. that of a son, a daughter, a grandchild or a student. These are multiple roles, which are performed simultaneously. The process of learning the norms, attitudes, values or behavioural patterns of these groups begins early in life and continues throughout one's life.

The norms and values may differ within a society in different families belonging to different castes, regions or social classes or religious groups according to whether one lives in a village or a city or one belongs to a tribe and if to a tribe, to which tribe. Indeed the very language that one speaks depends on the region one comes from. Whether the language is closer to a spoken dialect or to a standardised written form depends on the family and the socio-economic and cultural profile of the family.

Agencies of Socialisation

The child is socialised by several agencies and institutions in which





s/he participates, viz. family, school, peer group, the neighbourhood, the occupational group and by social class/caste, by region, by religion.

Family

Since family systems vary widely, the infants' experiences are by no means standard across cultures. While many of you may be living in what is termed a nuclear family with your parents and siblings, others may be living with extended family members. In the first case parents may be key socialising agents but in the others, grandparents, an uncle, a cousin may be more significant.

Families have varying 'locations' within the overall institutions of a society. In most traditional societies, the family into which a person is born largely determines the individual's social position for the rest of his or her life. Even when social position is not inherited at birth in this way the region and social class of the family into which an individual is born affect patterns of socialisation quite sharply. Children pick up ways of behaviour characteristic of their parents or others in their neighbourhood or community.

Of course, few if any children simply take over in an unquestioning way the outlook of their parents. This

Activity 6

Suggest ways in which the child of a domestic worker would feel herself different from the child whose family her mother works for. Also, what are the things they might share or exchange?

To start with the obvious, one would have more money spent on clothes, the other might wear more bangles...

They might have watched the same serials, heard the same film songs... they might pick up different kinds of slang from each other...

Now you are left to follow up the difficult areas, like the sense of security within the family, the neighbourhood and on the street...

Activity 7

The presence or absence of which of the items below do you think would affect you most as an individual?

(possessions) television set/music system ...

(space) a room of your own...

(time) having to balance school with household or other work...

(opportunities) travel, music classes...

(people around you)





is especially true in the contemporary world, in which change is so pervasive. Moreover, the very existence of a diversity of socialising agencies leads to many differences between the outlooks of children, adolescents and the parental generation. Can you identify any instance where you felt that what you learnt from the family was at variance from your peer group or maybe media or even school?

Peer Groups

Another socialising agency is the peer group. Peer groups are friendship groups of children of a similar age. In some cultures, particularly small traditional societies, peer groups are formalised as age-grades. Even without formal age-grades, children over four or five usually spend a great deal of time in the company of friends of the same age. The word 'peer' means 'equal', and friendly relations established between young children do tend to be reasonably egalitarian. A forceful or physically strong child may to some extent try to dominate others. Yet there is a greater amount of give and take compared to the dependence inherent in the family situation. Because of their power, parents are able (in varying degrees) to enforce codes of conduct upon their children. In peer groups, by contrast, a child discovers a different kind of interaction, within which rules of behaviour can be tested out and explored.

Peer relationships often remain important throughout a person's life. Informal groups of people of similar

Activity 8

Reflect on your own experience. Compare your interaction with friends to that of your parents and other elders. What is different? Does the earlier discussion on roles and status help you understand the difference?

ages at work, and in other contexts, are usually of enduring importance in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviour.

Schools

Schooling is a formal process: there is a definite curriculum of subjects studied. Yet schools are agencies of socialisation in more subtle respects too. Alongside the formal curriculum there is what some sociologists have called a hidden curriculum conditioning children's learning. There are schools in both India and South Africa where girls, but rarely boys, are expected to sweep their classroom. In some schools efforts are made to counter this by making boys and girls do those tasks that are normally not expected of them. Can you think of examples that reflect both trends?

Mass Media

The mass media has increasingly become an essential part of our everyday lives. While today the electronic media like the television is expanding, the print media continues





to be of great importance. Even in the early print media in nineteenth century India, ‘conduct-books’ instructing women on how to be better housekeepers and more attentive wives were popular in many languages. The media can make the access to information more democratic. Electronic communication is something that can reach a village not connected by road to other areas and where no literacy centres have been set up.

There has been much research on the influence of television upon children and adults. A study in Britain showed that the time spent by children watching television is the equivalent of almost a hundred school days a year, and that adults are not far behind them. Apart from such quantitative aspects, what emerges from such research is not always conclusive in its implications. The link between on-screen violence and aggressive behaviour among children is still debated.

If one cannot predict how the media influences people, what is certain is the extent of the influence, in terms both of information and of exposure to areas of experience distant from one’s own. There is a sizeable audience for Indian television serials and films in countries like Nigeria, Afghanistan and among émigrés from Tibet. The televised

Activity 9

You might want to explore how people relate to serials set in surroundings unlike their own. Or if children are watching television with their grandparents, are there disagreements about which programmes are worth watching, and if so, what differences in viewpoint emerge? Are these differences gradually modified?

Mahabharat was aired after dubbing in Tashkent, but even without dubbing was watched in London by children who spoke only English!

Other Socialising Agencies

Besides the socialising agencies mentioned, there are other groups, or social contexts, in which individuals spend large parts of their lives. Work is in all cultures an important setting within which socialisation processes operate, although it is only in industrial societies that large numbers of people “go out to work”—that is, go each day to places of work quite separate from the home. In traditional communities many people tilled the land close to where they live, or had

Look at the report and discuss how mass media influences children

The Shaktimaan serial telecast a few years ago had children trying to dive down buildings resulting in fatal accidents. “Learning by imitation is a method followed frequently by people and children are no different,” says clinical psychologist.





workshops in their dwellings (see visuals on page 43).

Socialisation and Individual Freedom

It is perhaps evident that socialisation in normal circumstances can never completely reduce people to conformity. Many factors encourage conflict. There may be conflicts between socialising agencies, between school and home, between home and peer groups. However since the cultural settings in which we are born

and come to maturity so influence our behaviour, it might appear that we are robbed of any individuality or free will. Such a view is fundamentally mistaken. The fact that from birth to death we are involved in interaction with others certainly conditions our personalities, the values we hold, and the behaviour in which we engage. Yet socialisation is also at the origin of our very individuality and freedom. In the course of socialisation each of us develops a sense of self-identity, and the capacity for independent thought and action.

How Gendered is Socialisation?

We boys used the streets for so many different things — as a place to stand around watching, to run around and play, try out the manoeuvrability of our bikes. Not so for girls. As we noticed all the time, for girls the street was simply a means to get straight home from school. And even for this limited use of the street they always went in clusters, perhaps because behind their purposeful demeanour they carried the worst fears of being assaulted (Kumar 1986).

Activity 11

We have completed four chapters. Read the text of the next page carefully and discuss the following themes :

- The relation between individual and society in the girl's rebellion against grown-ups.
- How the normative dimensions of culture are different in town and village?
- The question of ascribed status in that the priest's daughter is permitted to touch.
- Conflict between socialising agencies for example in the text note: "thankful none of her school friends could see her like this". Can you find any other sentence that illustrates this?
- Gendered = combing hair + escort + not playing football
- Punishment = "tight-lipped silence" + conspicuous absence of *pappadams*





An unusual sense of excitement pervaded her visit to the temple this evening. There had been an argument over lunch, between her and the grown-ups, when she had announced her decision to ring the bell in front of the sanctuary.

'If Thangam can ring it, so can I,' she debated hotly.

They protested in shocked voices. 'Thangam is the daughter of the temple priest, she is permitted to touch the bell.'

She responded angrily that Thangam came over to play hide-and-seek every afternoon and behaved no differently from any of them. 'Besides,' she added, goading them deliberately, 'we are equal in the eyes of god.' She was not quite sure whether they had heard this bit, for they had already turned away in disgust. But, after lunch, she caught them whispering about 'that horrid English school she goes to,' which meant that they had heard...

She was sure they had not taken her seriously. That was the trouble with grown-ups: they always presumed that if they told her that she would understand everything when she was older, she would accept their wisdom and authority unquestioningly and not dream of going against them. Oh well, she would show them, this time... Back again at the house, she had to endure the intensely uncomfortable ritual of hairdressing. Her grandmother soothed her hair with what felt like a whole jar of oil, separated each shining strand till it hung limp and straight and lifeless down her back, then tied it up in a tight, skin stretching knot on the top of her head. She was thankful none of her school friends could see her like this....

Why wouldn't they understand how ridiculous she felt, being escorted... She had reminded her mother many times that she walked alone to school everyday when they were back in town... [S]he noticed that the football game had already begun on the courtyard beside the temple of Krishna. She enjoyed watching the players, particularly since her obvious delight in the vigour of the game, and in the raucously voiced comments irritated Kelu Nair profoundly....

She came hurriedly upon the crowded main sanctuary... Before she could regret her decision or go back upon it, she elbowed herself quickly through the circle of women, nearly floundering on the slippery steps. The sight of the big bell above her touched her with a heady excitement. She could distinguish Kelu Nair's frantically whispered threats, but she reached up, rang the bell with one resounding clang and was down the steps before he realised what was happening.

Dimly she was aware of dark looks and subdued murmurs pursuing her as she permitted Kelu Nair to drag her away... She was in dire disgrace. Their tight-lipped silence was infinitely more eloquent than speech, as was the conspicuous absence of her favourite tiny pappadams at dinner...

(From *The Bell*, by Gita Krishnakutty)





GLOSSARY

Cultural Evolutionism : It is a theory of culture, which argues that just like natural species, culture also evolves through variation and natural selection.

Estates System : This was a system in feudal Europe of ranking according to occupation. The three estates were the nobility, clergy and the 'third estate'. The last were chiefly professional and middle class people. Each estate elected its own representatives. Peasants and labourers did not have the vote.

Great Tradition : It comprises of the cultural traits or traditions which are written and widely accepted by the elites of a society who are educated and learned.

Little Tradition : It comprises of the cultural traits or traditions which are oral and operates at the village level.

Self Image : An image of a person as reflected in the eyes of others.

Social Roles : These are rights and responsibilities associated with a person's social position or status.

Socialisation : This is the process by which we learn to become members of society.

Subculture : It marks a group of people within a larger culture who borrow from and often distort, exaggerate or invert the symbols, values and beliefs of the larger culture to distinguish themselves.

EXERCISES

1. How does the understanding of culture in social science differ from the everyday use of the word 'culture'?
 2. How can we demonstrate that the different dimensions of culture comprise a whole?
 3. Compare two cultures with which you are familiar. Is it difficult not to be ethnocentric?
 4. Discuss two different approaches to studying cultural change.
 5. Is cosmopolitanism something you associate with modernity? Observe and give examples of ethnocentrism.
 6. What in your mind is the most effective agent of socialisation for your generation? How do you think it was different before?
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CHAPTER 5

DOING SOCIOLOGY : RESEARCH METHODS

I

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered why a subject like sociology is called a social science? More than any other discipline, sociology deals with things that are already familiar to most people. All of us live in society, and we already know a lot about the subject matter of sociology—social groups, institutions, norms, relationships and so on—through our own experience. It seems fair, then, to ask what makes the sociologist different from other members of society. Why should she or he be called a social scientist?

As with all scientific disciplines, the crucial element here is method, or the procedures through which knowledge is gathered. For in the final analysis, sociologists can claim to be different from lay persons not because of how much they know or what they know, but because of how they acquire their knowledge. This is one reason for the special importance of method in sociology.

As you have seen in the previous chapters, sociology is deeply interested in the lived experience of people. For example, when studying social phenomena like friendship or religion or bargaining in markets, the sociologist wants to know not only what is observable by the bystander, but also the opinions and feelings of the people involved. Sociologists try to adopt the point of view of the people they study, to see the world through their eyes. What does friendship mean to people in different cultures? What does a religious person think he or she is doing when performing a particular ritual? How do shopkeeper and customer interpret each other's words and gestures while bargaining for a better price? The answers to such questions are clearly part of the lived experience of actors involved, and they are of great interest to sociology. This need to understand both the outsider's and the insider's points of view is another reason why method is particularly important in sociology.





II

SOME METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Although it is often used simply as a substitute for (or synonym of) 'method', the word 'methodology' actually refers to the study of method. Methodological issues or questions are thus about the general problems of scientific knowledge-gathering that go beyond any one particular method, technique or procedure. We begin by looking at the ways in which sociologists try to produce knowledge that can claim to be scientific.

Objectivity and Subjectivity in Sociology

In everyday language, the word 'objective' means unbiased, neutral, or based on facts alone. In order to be objective about something, we must ignore our own feelings or attitudes about that thing. On the other hand, the word 'subjective' means something that is based on individual values and preferences. As you will have learnt already, all science is expected to be 'objective', to produce unbiased knowledge based solely on facts. But this is much harder to do in the social sciences than in the natural sciences.

For example, when a geologist studies rocks, or a botanist studies plants, they must be careful not to let their personal biases or preferences affect their work. They must report the facts as they are; they must not (for example) let their liking for a particular scientific theory or theorist influence the results of their research. However, the

geologist and the botanist are not themselves part of the world they study, i.e., the natural world of rocks or of plants. By contrast, social scientists study the world in which they themselves live — the social world of human relations. This creates special problems for objectivity in a social science like sociology.

First of all, there is the obvious problem of bias. Because sociologists are also members of society, they will also have all the normal likes and dislikes that people have. A sociologist studying family relations will herself be a member of a family, and her experiences are likely to influence her. Even when the sociologist has no direct personal experience of the group she or he is studying, there is still the possibility of being affected by the values and prejudices of one's own social context. For example, when studying a caste or religious community other than her own, the sociologist may be influenced by the attitudes about that community prevalent in her own past or present social environment. How do sociologists guard against these dangers?

One method is to rigorously and continuously examine one's own ideas and feelings about the subject of research. More generally, the sociologist tries to take an outsider's perspective on her/his own work — she tries to look at herself and her research through the eyes of others. This technique is called 'self-reflexivity', or sometimes just 'reflexivity'. The sociologist constantly subjects her own





attitudes and opinions to self-examination. She or he tries to consciously adopt the point of view of others, specially those who are the subjects of her research.

One of the practical aspects of reflexivity is the importance of carefully documenting whatever one is doing. Part of the claims to superiority of research methods lies in the documentation of all procedures and the formal citing of all sources of evidence. This ensures that others can retrace the steps we have taken to arrive at a particular conclusion, and see for themselves if we are right. It also helps us to check and re-check our own thinking or line of argument.

But however self-reflexive the sociologist tries to be, there is always the possibility of unconscious bias. To deal with this possibility, sociologists explicitly mention those features of their own social background that might be relevant as a possible source of bias on the topic being researched. This alerts readers to the possibility of bias and allows them to mentally ‘compensate’ for it when reading the research study.

(You could go back to Chapter 1, and re-read the section (pp. 8-9) which talks about the difference between common sense and sociology).

Another problem with objectivity in sociology is the fact that, generally, there are many versions of the ‘truth’ in the social world. Things look different from different vantage points, and so the social world typically involves many competing versions or interpretations of reality. For example, a shopkeeper and a customer may have very different ideas about what is a ‘good’ price, a young person and an aged person may have very different notions of ‘good food’, and so on. There is no simple way of judging which particular interpretation is true or more correct, and often it is unhelpful to think in these terms. In fact, sociology tries not to judge in this way because it is really interested in what people think, and why they think what they think.

A further complication arises from the presence of multiple points of view in the social sciences themselves. Like its sister social sciences, sociology too is a ‘multi-paradigmatic’ science. This

Activity 1

Can you observe yourself as you observe others? Write a short description of yourself as seen from the perspective of: (i) your best friend; (ii) your rival; (iii) your teacher. You must imagine yourself to be these people and think about yourself from their point of view. Remember to describe yourself in the third person — as ‘he’ or ‘she’ rather than ‘I’ or ‘me’. Afterwards, you can share similar descriptions written by your classmates. Discuss each others’ descriptions — how accurate or interesting do you find them? Are there any surprising things in these descriptions?





means that competing and mutually incompatible schools of thought coexist within the discipline (Recall the discussion in Chapter 2 about conflicting theories of society).

All this makes objectivity a very difficult and complicated thing in sociology. In fact, the old notion of objectivity is widely considered to be an outdated perspective. Social scientists no longer believe that the traditional notion of an 'objective, disinterested' social science is attainable; in fact such an ideal can actually be misleading. This does not mean that there is no useful knowledge to be obtained via sociology, or that objectivity is a useless concept. It means that objectivity has to be thought of as the goal of a continuous, ongoing process rather than an already achieved end result.

Multiple Methods and Choice of Methods

Since there are multiple truths and multiple perspectives in sociology, it is hardly surprising that there are also multiple methods. There is no single unique road to sociological truth. Of course, different methods are more or less suited to tackle different types of research questions. Moreover, every method has its own strengths and weaknesses. It is thus futile to argue about the superiority or inferiority of different methods. It is more important to ask if the method chosen is the appropriate one for answering the question that is being asked.

For example, if one is interested in finding out whether most Indian

families are still 'joint families', then a census or survey are the best methods. However, if one wishes to compare the status of women in joint and nuclear families, then interviews, case studies or participant observation may all be appropriate methods.

There are different ways of classifying or categorising the various methods commonly used by sociologists. It is conventional, for example, to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative methods: the former deal in countable or measurable variables (proportions, averages, and the like) while the latter deal with more abstract and hard to measure phenomena like attitudes, emotions and so on. A related distinction is between methods that study observable behaviour and those that study non-observable meanings, values and other interpretational things.

Another way of classifying methods is to distinguish the ones that rely on 'secondary' or already existing data (in the form of documents or other records and artefacts) from those that are designed to produce fresh or 'primary' data. Thus historical methods typically rely on secondary material found in archives, while interviews generate primary data, and so on.

Yet another way of categorisation is to separate 'micro' from 'macro' methods. The former are designed to work in small intimate settings usually with a single researcher; thus the interview and participant observation are thought of as micro methods. Macro methods are those that are able





to tackle large scale research involving large numbers of respondents and investigators. Survey research is the most common example of a 'macro' method, although some historical methods can also tackle macro phenomena.

Whatever the mode of classification, it is important to remember that it is a matter of convention. The dividing line between different kinds of methods need not be very sharp. It is often possible to convert one kind of method into another, or to supplement one with another.

The choice of method is usually dictated by the nature of the research question being addressed, by the preferences of the researcher, and by the constraints of time and/or resources. The recent trend in social science is to advocate the use of multiple methods to bear on the same research problem from different vantage points. This is sometimes referred to as 'triangulation', that is, a process of reiterating or pinpointing something from different directions. In this way, different methods can be used to complement each other to produce a much better result than what might have been possible with each method by itself.

Because the methods most distinctive of sociology are those that are designed to produce 'primary' data, these are the ones stressed here. Even within the category of 'field work' based methods, we shall introduce you to only the most prominent, namely the survey, interview and participant observation.

Participant Observation

Popular in sociology and specially social anthropology, participant observation refers to a particular method by which the sociologist learns about the society, culture and people that he or she is studying (Recall the discussion on sociology and social anthropology from Chapter 1).

This method is different from others in many ways. Unlike other methods of primary data collection like surveys or interviews, field work involves a long period of interaction with the subjects of research. Typically, the sociologist or social anthropologist spends many months — usually about a year or sometimes more — living among the people being studied as one of them. As a non-native 'outsider', the anthropologist is supposed to immerse himself/herself in the culture of the 'natives' — by learning their language and participating intimately in their everyday life — in an effort to acquire all the explicit and implicit knowledge and skills of the 'insider'. Although the sociologist or anthropologist usually has specific areas of interest, the overall goal of 'participant observation' field work is to learn about the 'whole way of life' of a community. Indeed the model is that of the child: sociologists and anthropologists are supposed to learn everything about their adoptive communities in just the holistic way that small children learn about the world.

Participant observation is often called 'field work'. The term originated





in the natural sciences, specially those like botany, zoology, geology etc. In these disciplines, scientists could not only work in the laboratory, they had to go out into 'the field' to learn about their subjects (like rocks, insects or plants).

III

FIELD WORK IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Field work as a rigorous scientific method played a major role in establishing anthropology as a social science. The early anthropologists were amateur enthusiasts interested in exotic primitive cultures. They were 'armchair scholars' who collected and organised information about distant communities (which they had never themselves visited) available from the reports and descriptions written by travellers, missionaries, colonial administrators, soldiers and other 'men on the spot'. For example, James Frazer's famous book, *The Golden Bough*, which inspired many early anthropologists was based entirely on such second hand accounts, as was the work of Emile Durkheim on primitive religion. Towards the end of the 19th and in the first decade of the 20th century many early anthropologists, some of whom were natural scientists by profession, began to carry out systematic surveys and first hand observation of tribal languages, customs, rituals and beliefs. Reliance on second hand accounts began to be thought of as unscholarly, and the good

results obtained from first hand work helped cement this growing prejudice (See Box on next page).

Since the 1920s, participant observation or field work has been considered an integral part of social anthropological training and the principal method through which knowledge is produced. Almost all of the influential scholars in the discipline have done such field work — in fact, many communities or geographical places have become famous in the discipline because of their association with classic instances of field work.

What did the social anthropologist actually do when doing fieldwork? Usually, he or she began by doing a census of the community they were studying. This involved making a detailed list of all the people who lived in a community, including information such as their sex, age group and family. This could be accompanied by an attempt to map the physical layout of the village or settlement, including the location of houses and other socially relevant sites. One of the important techniques anthropologists use, specially in the beginning stages of their field work is to construct a genealogy of the community. This may be based on the information obtained in the census, but extends much further since it involves creating a family tree for individual members, and extending the family tree as far back as possible. For example, the head of a particular household or family would be asked about his relatives — brothers, sisters, cousins — in his or her own generation;





Bronislaw Malinowski and the ‘Invention’ of Field Work

Although he was not the first to use this method — different versions of it had been tried out all over the world by other scholars — Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish anthropologist settled in Britain, is widely believed to have established field work as the distinctive method of social anthropology. In 1914, when the First World War broke out in Europe, Malinowski was visiting Australia, which was a part of the British Empire at that time. Because Poland was annexed by Germany in the war, it was declared an enemy country by Britain, and Malinowski technically became an ‘enemy alien’ because of his Polish nationality. He was, of course, a respected professor at the London School of Economics and was on very good terms with the British and Australian authorities. But since he was technically an enemy alien, the law required that he be “interned” or confined to a specific place.

Malinowski had anyway wanted to visit several places in Australia and the islands of the South Pacific for his anthropological research, so he requested the authorities to allow him to serve his internment in the Trobriand Islands, a British-Australian possession in the South Pacific. This was agreed to — the Australian government even financed his trip and Malinowski spent a year and a half living in the Trobriand Islands. He lived in a tent in the native villages, learnt the local language, and interacted closely with the ‘natives’ in an effort to learn about their culture. He maintained careful and detailed records of his observations and also kept a daily diary. He later wrote books on Trobriand culture based on these field notes and diaries; these books quickly became famous and are considered classics even today.

Even before his Trobriand experience, Malinowski had been converted to the belief that the future of anthropology lay in direct and unmediated interaction between the anthropologist and the native culture. He was convinced that the discipline would not progress beyond the status of an intellectual hobby unless its practitioners engaged themselves in systematic first-hand observation preceded by intensive language learning. This observation had to be done in context — that is, the anthropologist had to live among the native people and observe life as it happened rather than interviewing individual natives summoned to the town or outpost for this purpose. The use of interpreters was also to be avoided — it was only when the anthropologist could interact directly with the natives that a true and authentic account of their culture could be produced.

His influential position at the London School of Economics and the reputation of his work in the Trobriand enabled Malinowski to campaign for the institutionalisation of field work as a mandatory part of the training imparted to students of anthropology. It also helped the discipline to gain acceptance as a rigorous science worthy of scholarly respect.





then about his/her parents' generations — father, mother, their brothers and sisters etc. — then about the grandparents and their brothers, sisters and so on. This would be done for as many generations as the person could remember. The information obtained from one person would be cross-checked by asking other relatives the same questions, and after confirmation, a very detailed family tree could be drawn up. This exercise helped the social anthropologist to understand the kinship system of the community — what kinds of roles different relatives played in a person's life and how these relations were maintained.

A genealogy would help acquaint the anthropologist with the structure of the community and in a practical sense would enable him or her to meet with people and become familiar with the way the community lives. Building on this base, the anthropologist would constantly be learning the language of the community. He or she would also be observing life in the community and making detailed notes in which the significant aspects of community life would be described. Festivals, religious or other collective events, modes of earning a living, family relations, modes of child rearing — these are examples of the kinds of topics that anthropologists would be specially interested in. Learning about these institutions and practices requires the anthropologist to ask endless questions about things that are taken for granted by members of the community. This is the sense in which the anthropologist

would be like a child, always asking why, what and so on. In doing this, the anthropologist usually depends on one or two people for most of the information. Such people are called 'informants' or 'principal informants'; in the early days the term *native informant* was also used. Informants act as the anthropologist's teachers and are crucially important actors in the whole process of anthropological research. Equally important are the detailed field notes that the anthropologist keeps during field work; these notes have to be written up every day without fail, and can be supplemented by, or take the form of, a daily diary.

Activity 2

Some famous instances of field work include the following: Radcliffe-Brown on the Andaman Nicobar islands; Evans Pritchard on the Nuer in the Sudan; Franz Boas on various Native American tribes in the USA; Margaret Mead on Samoa; Clifford Geertz on Bali etc.

Locate these places on a map of the world. What do these places have in common? What would it have been like for an anthropologist to live in these places in a 'strange' culture? What could be some of the difficulties they faced?





IV

FIELD WORK IN SOCIOLOGY

More or less the same techniques are used by sociologists when they do field work. Sociological field work differs not so much in its content — what is done during fieldwork — but in its context — where it is done — and in the distribution of emphasis across different areas or topics of research. Thus, a sociologist would also live among a community and attempt to become an ‘insider’. However, unlike the anthropologist who typically went to a remote tribal community to do field work, sociologists did their field work among all sorts of communities. Moreover, sociological field work did not necessarily involve ‘living in’, although it did involve spending most

of one’s time with the members of the community.

For example, William Foote Whyte, an American sociologist, did his field work among members of a street ‘gang’ in an Italian-American slum in a large city and wrote a famous book *Street Corner Society*. He lived in the area for three and half years ‘hanging out’ — just spending time together — with members of the gang or group, who were mostly poor unemployed youth, the first American-born generation in a community of immigrants. While this example of sociological field work is very close to anthropological field work, there are important differences (See Box). But sociological field work need not only be this kind — it can take different forms, as in the work of Michael Burawoy, for example, another

Field Work in Sociology – Some Difficulties

Compared to the anthropologist who studies a primitive tribe in a remote part of the world, the student of a modern American community faces distinctly different problems. In the first place, he is dealing with a literate people. It is certain that some of these people, and perhaps many of them, will read his research report. If he disguises the name of the district as I have done, many outsiders apparently will not discover where the study was actually located... The people in the district, of course, know it is about them, and even the changed names do not disguise the individuals for them. They remember the researcher and know the people with whom he associated and know enough about the various groups to place the individuals with little chance of error.

In such a situation the researcher carries a heavy responsibility. He would like his book to be of some help to the people of the district; at least, he wants to take steps to minimise the chances of it doing any harm, fully recognising the possibility that certain individuals may suffer through the publication.

— William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society*, p.342





American sociologist who worked for several months as a machinist in a Chicago factory and wrote about the experience of work from the perspective of workers.

In Indian sociology, an important way in which fieldwork methods have been used is in village studies. In the 1950s, many anthropologists and sociologists, both Indian and foreign began working on village life and society. The village acted as the equivalent of the tribal community studied by the earlier anthropologists. It was also a 'bounded community', and was small enough to be studied by a single person — that is, the sociologist could get to know almost everyone in the village, and observe life there. Moreover, anthropology was not very popular with nationalists in colonial India because of its excessive concern with the primitive. Many educated Indians felt that disciplines like anthropology carried a colonial bias because they emphasised the non-

modern aspects of colonised societies rather than their progressive or positive side. So, studying villages and villagers seemed much more acceptable and worthwhile for a sociologist than studying tribes only. Questions were also being asked about the links between early anthropology and colonialism. After all, the classic instances of field work like that of Malinowski, Evans Pritchard and countless others were made possible by the fact that the places and people where field work was done were part of colonial empires ruled by the countries from where the Western anthropologists came.

However, more than the methodological reasons, village studies were important because they provided Indian sociology with a subject that was of great interest in newly independent India. The government was interested in developing rural India. The national movement and specially Mahatma Gandhi had been actively involved in

Activity 3

If you live in a village: Try to describe your village to someone who has never been there. What would be the main features of your life in the village that you would want to emphasise? You must have seen villages as they are shown in films or on television. What do you think of these villages, and how do they differ from yours? Think also of the cities you have seen which are shown in film or on television: would you want to live in them? Give reasons for your answer.

If you live in a town or a city: Try to describe your neighbourhood to someone who has never been there. What would be the main features of your life in the neighbourhood that you would want to emphasise? How does your neighbourhood differ from (or resemble) city neighbourhoods as shown in film or on television? You must have seen villages being shown in film or on television: would you want to live in them? Give reasons for your answer.





what were called ‘village uplift’ programmes. And even urban educated Indians were very interested in village life because most of them retained some family and recent historical links to the villages. Above all, the villages were the places where most Indians lived (and still do). For these reasons village studies became

a very important part of Indian sociology, and field work methods were very well suited for studying village society.

Some Limitations of Participant Observation

You have already seen what participant observation can do — its main strength

Different Styles of Doing Village Studies

Village studies became the main preoccupation of Indian sociology during the 1950s and 1960s. But long before this time, a very well known village study, *Behind Mud Walls*, was written by William and Charlotte Wiser, a missionary couple who lived for five years in a village in Uttar Pradesh. The Wisers’ book emerged as a by-product of their missionary work, although William Wiser was trained as a sociologist and had earlier written an academic book on the *jajmani* system.

The village studies of the 1950s grew out of a very different context and were done in many different ways. The classical social anthropological style was prominent, with the village substituting for the ‘tribe’ or ‘bounded community’. Perhaps the best known example of this kind of field work is reported in M.N. Srinivas’s famous book, *The Remembered Village*. Srinivas spent a year in a village near Mysore that he named Rampura. The title of his book refers to the fact that Srinivas’s field notes were destroyed in a fire, and he had to write about the village from memory.

Another famous village study of the 1950s was S.C. Dube’s *Indian Village*. As a social anthropologist at Osmania University, Dube was part of a multi-disciplinary team — including the departments of agricultural sciences, economics, veterinary sciences and medicine — that studied a village called Shamirpet near Secunderabad. This large collective project was meant not only to study the village but also to develop it. In fact, Shamirpet was meant to be a sort of laboratory where experiments in designing rural development programmes could be carried out.

Yet another style of doing village studies is seen in the *Cornell Village Study Project* of the 1950s. Initiated by Cornell University, the project brought together a group of American social anthropologists, psychologists and linguists to study several villages in the same region of India, namely eastern Uttar Pradesh. This was an ambitious academic project to do multi-disciplinary studies of village society and culture. Some Indian scholars were also involved with this project, which helped train many Americans who later became well known scholars of Indian society.





is that it provides a very rich and detailed picture of life from the perspective of the 'insider'. It is this insider perspective that is the greatest return on the substantial investment of time and effort that field work demands. Most other research methods cannot claim to have a detailed knowledge of the 'field' over a fairly long period of time — they are usually based on a short and quick field visit. Field work allows for the correction of initial impressions, which may often be mistaken or biased. It also permits the researcher to track changes in the subject of interest, and also to see the impact of different situations or contexts. For example, different aspects of social structure or culture may be brought out in a good harvest year and in a bad harvest year; people could behave differently when employed or unemployed, and so on. Because she or he spends a long period in 'full time' engagement with the field, a participant observer can avoid many of the errors or biases that surveys, questionnaires or short term observation are inevitably subject to.

But like all research methods, field work also has some weaknesses — otherwise all social scientists would be using this method alone!

Field work by its very nature involves very long drawn out and intensive research usually by a single scholar working alone. As such, it can only cover a very small part of the world — generally a single village or small community. We can never be sure whether what the anthropologist or sociologist observed during fieldwork

is really very common in the larger community (i.e., in other villages, in the region, or in the country) or whether it is exceptional. This is probably the biggest disadvantage of field work.

Another important limitation of the field work method is that we are never sure whether it is the voice of the anthropologist we are hearing or that of the people being studied. Of course, the aim is to represent the views of the people being studied, but it is always possible that the anthropologist — whether consciously or unconsciously — is selecting what will be written down in his/her notes, and how it will be presented to the readers of his/her books or articles. Because there is no other version available to us except that of the anthropologist, there is always the chance of bias or error. However, this risk is present in most research methods.

More generally, field work methods are criticised because of the one-sided relationship they are based on. The anthropologist/sociologist asks the questions and presents the answers and speaks for 'the people'. To counter this, some scholars have suggested are more 'dialogic' formats — that is, ways of presenting field work results where the respondents and people can be more directly involved. In concrete terms, this involves translating the work of the scholar into the language of the community, and asking their opinion of it, and recording their responses. As the social, economic and political distance or gap between the researcher and the researched becomes less wide, there is greater and greater





chance that the scholar's version will be questioned, qualified, or corrected by the people themselves. This will surely make sociological research more controversial and much more difficult. But in the long run this can only be a good thing because it will help to take social science forward and make it more democratic, thus allowing many more people to participate in producing and critically engaging with 'knowledge'.

Surveys

The survey is probably the best known sociological method, one that is now so much a part of modern public life that it has become commonplace. Today it is used all over the world in all sorts of contexts going well beyond the concerns of sociology alone. In India, too, we have seen the increasing use of surveys for various non-academic purposes, including the prediction of election results, the devising of marketing strategies for selling products, and for eliciting popular opinions on a wide variety of subjects.

As the word itself suggests, a survey is an attempt to provide an overview. It is a comprehensive or wide-ranging perspective on some subject based on information obtained from a carefully chosen representative set of people. Such people are usually referred to as 'respondents' — they respond to the questions asked of them by the researchers. Survey research is usually done by large teams consisting of those who plan and design the study (the researchers) and their associates and assistants (the latter are called

'investigators' or 'research assistants'). The survey questions may be asked and answered in various forms. Often, they are asked orally during personal visits by the investigator, and sometimes through telephone conversations. Responses may also be sought in writing, to 'questionnaires' brought by investigators or sent through the post. Finally, with the increasing presence of computers and telecommunication technology, these days it is also possible for surveys to be conducted electronically. In this format, the respondent receives and responds to questions by email, the Internet, or similar electronic medium.

The survey's main advantage as a social scientific method is that it allows us to generalise results for a large population while actually studying only a small portion of this population. Thus a survey makes it possible to study large populations with a manageable investment of time, effort and money. That is why it is such a popular method in the social sciences and other fields.

The sample survey is able to provide a generalisable result despite being selective by taking advantage of the discoveries of a branch of statistics called sampling theory. The key element enabling this 'shortcut' is the representativeness of the sample. How do we go about selecting a representative sample from a given population? Broadly speaking, the sample selection process depends on two main principles.





The Census and the National Sample Survey Organisation

The population Census of India conducted every ten years is the largest such exercise in the world. (China, the only country with a larger population, does not conduct a regular census.) It involves literally lakhs of investigators and a stupendous amount of logistical organisation not to speak of the huge expenditure incurred by the Government of India. However, in return for this outlay, we get a genuinely comprehensive survey in which every household in India and every one of the more than one billion people living in India get included. Obviously, it is not possible to conduct such a gigantic survey very often; in fact, many developed countries no longer conduct a full census; instead they depend on sample surveys for their population data, because such surveys have been found to be very accurate. In India, the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) conducts sample surveys every year on the levels of poverty and unemployment (and other subjects). Every five years it also conducts a bigger survey involving about 1.2 lakh households covering more than 6 lakh persons all over India. In absolute terms this is considered a large sample, and the NSSO surveys are among the biggest regularly conducted surveys in the world. However, since the total population of India is over 100 crore persons, you can see that the five-yearly survey of the NSSO involves a sample that is only about 0.06 per cent or just over one twentieth of one per cent — of the Indian population! But because it is scientifically selected to be representative of the total population, the NSSO sample is able to estimate population characteristics despite being based on such a tiny proportion.

The first principle is that all the relevant sub-groups in the population should be recognised and represented in the sample. Most large populations are not homogenous — they belong to distinct sub-categories. This is called stratification (Note that this is a statistical notion of stratification which is different from the sociological concept of stratification that you have studied in Chapter 4). For example, when considering the population of India, we must take account of the fact that this population is divided into rural and urban sectors which are very different from each other. When considering the rural population of any

one state, we have to allow for the fact that this population lives in villages of different sizes. In the same way, the population of a single village may be stratified by class, caste, gender, age, religion or other criteria. In short, the notion of stratification tells us that the representativeness of a sample depends on its being able to reflect the characteristics of all the relevant strata in a given population. Which kinds of strata are considered relevant depends on the specific objectives of the research study. For example, when doing research on attitudes towards religion, it would be important to include members of all religions. When





researching attitudes towards trade unions it would be important to consider workers, managers and industrialists, and so on.

The second principle of sample selection is that the actual unit — i.e., person or village or household — should be based purely on chance. This is referred to as randomisation, which itself depends on the concept of probability. You may have come across the idea of probability in mathematics course. Probability refers to the chance (or the odds) of an event happening. For example, when we toss a coin, it can fall with the 'head' side up or the 'tail' side up. With normal coins, the chance — or probability — of heads or tails appearing is exactly the same, that is 50 per cent each. Which of the two events actually happens when you toss the coin — i.e., whether it comes up heads or tails — depends purely on chance and nothing else. Events like this are called random events.

We use the same idea in selecting a sample. We try to ensure that the actual person or household or village chosen to be part of the sample is chosen purely by chance and nothing else. Thus, being chosen in the sample is a matter of luck, like winning a lottery. It is only if this is true that the sample will be a representative sample. If a survey team chooses only villages that are near the main highway in their sample, then the sample is not a random or chance sample but a biased one. Similarly, if we choose mostly middle class households, or households that we know, then the sample is

again likely to be biased. The point is that after the relevant strata in a population are identified, the actual choosing of sample households or respondents should be a matter of pure chance. This can be ensured in various ways. Different techniques are used to achieve this, the common ones being drawing of lots (or lottery), rolling of dice, the use of random number tables specially produced for this purpose, and more recently, random numbers generated by calculators or computers.

To understand how a survey sample is actually selected, let us take a concrete example. Suppose we wish to examine the hypothesis that living in smaller, more intimate communities produces greater intercommunity harmony than living in larger, more impersonal communities. For the sake of simplicity, let us suppose we are interested only in the rural sector of a single state in India. The simplest possible sample selection process would begin with a list of all villages in the state along with their population (Such a list could be obtained from the census data). Then we would decide on the criteria for defining 'small' and 'large' villages. From the original list of villages we now eliminate all the 'medium' villages, i.e., those that are neither small nor big. Now we have a revised list stratified by size of village. Given our research question, we want to give equal weightage to each of the strata, i.e., small and big villages, so we decide to select 10 villages from each. To do this, we number the list of small and big villages, and randomly select





10 numbers from each list by drawing lots. We now have our sample, consisting of 10 big and 10 small villages from the state, and we can proceed to study those villages to see if our initial hypothesis was true or false.

Of course, this is an extremely simple design; actual research studies usually involve more complicated designs with the sample selection process being divided into many stages and incorporating many strata. But the basic principles remain the same — a small sample is carefully selected such that it is able to represent or stand for the entire population. Then the sample is studied and the results obtained for it are generalised to the entire population. The statistical properties of a scientifically selected sample ensure that the characteristics of the sample will closely resemble the characteristics of the population it is drawn from. There may be small differences, but the chance of such deviations occurring can be specified. This is known as the margin of error, or sampling error. It arises not due to any mistakes made by researchers but

because we are using a small sample to stand for a large population. When reporting the results of sample surveys, researchers must specify the size and design of their sample and the margin of error.

The main strength of the survey method is that it is able to provide a broad overview representative of a large population with relatively small outlays of time and money. The bigger the sample the more chance it has of being truly representative; the extreme case here is that of the census, which includes the entire population. In practice, sample sizes may vary from 30-40 to many thousands. (See the box on the National Sample Survey). It is not only the size of the sample that matters; its mode of selection is even more important. Of course, decisions on sample selection can often be based on practical considerations.

In situations where a census is not feasible the survey becomes the only available means of studying the population as a whole. The unique advantage of the survey is that it provides an aggregated picture, that is,

Activity 4

Discuss among yourselves some of the surveys you have come across. These may be election surveys, or other small surveys by newspapers or television channels. When the results of the survey were reported, was the margin of error also mentioned? Were you told about the size of the sample and how it was selected? You must always be suspicious of surveys where these aspects of the research method are not clearly specified, because without them, it is not possible to evaluate the findings. Survey methods are often misused in the popular media: big claims are made on the basis of biased and unrepresentative sample. You could discuss some specific surveys you have come across from this point of view.





Activity 5

How would you go about selecting a representative sample for a survey of all the students in your school if the objective of the survey were to answer the following questions:

- (i) Do students with many brothers and sisters do better or worse in studies compared to those with only one brother or sister (or none)?
- (ii) What is the most popular break-time activity for students in the primary school (Classes I-V), middle school (Classes VI-VIII), secondary school (Classes IX-X) and senior secondary school (Classes XI-XII)?
- (iii) Is a student's favourite subject likely to be the subject taught by the favourite teacher? Is there any difference between boys and girls in this regard?

(Note: Make different sample designs for each of these questions).

Aggregate Statistics: the Alarming Decline in the Sex Ratio

You have read about the sharp fall in the sex ratio in Chapter 3. In recent decades, fewer and fewer girls are being born relative to the number of boys, and the problem has reached worrying levels in states such as Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh.

The (juvenile, or child) sex ratio is expressed as the number of girls per 1,000 boys in the age group of 0-6 years. This ratio has been falling steadily over the decades both for India as a whole and for many states. Here are some of the average juvenile sex ratios for India and selected states as recorded in the Census of 1991 and 2000.

Number of girls per 1,000 boys in the age group of 0-6 years

	1991	2001
India	945	927
Punjab	875	793
Haryana	879	820
Delhi	915	865
Gujarat	928	878
Himachal Pradesh	951	897

The child sex ratio is an aggregate (or macro) variable that only becomes visible when you collate (or put together) statistics for large populations. We cannot tell by looking at individual families that there is such a severe problem. The relative proportion of boys and girls in any individual family could always be compensated by a different proportion in other families we have not looked at. It is only by using methods like a census or large scale survey that the overall ratio for the community as a whole can be calculated and the problem can be identified. Can you think of other social issues that can only be studied by surveys or censuses?





a picture based on a collectivity rather than on single individuals taken separately. Many social problems and issues become visible only at this aggregative level — they cannot be identified at the more micro levels of investigation.

However, like all research methods, the survey also has its disadvantages. Although it offers the possibility of wide coverage, this is at the cost of depth of coverage. It is usually not possible to get in-depth information from respondents as part of a large survey. Because of the large number of respondents, the time spent on each must be limited. Moreover, since the survey questionnaire is being taken around to respondents by a relatively large number of investigators, it becomes difficult to ensure that complicated questions or those requiring detailed prompting will be asked of all respondents in exactly the same way. Differences in the way questions are asked or answers recorded could introduce errors into the survey. That is why the questionnaire for a survey (sometimes called a 'survey instrument') has to be designed very carefully — since it will be handled by persons other than the researchers themselves, there is little chance of corrections or modifications in the course of its use.

Given that there is no long-term relationship between investigator and respondent and hence no familiarity or trust, questions that can be asked in a survey have to be of the kind that can be asked and answered between strangers. Questions of a personal or

sensitive kind cannot be asked, or if asked are likely to be answered 'safely' rather than truthfully. These kinds of problems are sometimes referred to as 'non-sampling errors', that is, errors due not to the sampling process but to faults or shortcomings of the research design or the manner in which it was implemented. Unfortunately, some of these errors are difficult to foresee and guard against, so that it is possible for surveys to go wrong and produce misleading or false estimates of the characteristics of a population. Ultimately, the most important limitation of the survey is that, in order to be successful, they must depend on a tightly structured inflexible questionnaire. Moreover, however well designed the questionnaire might be, its success depends finally on the nature of the interactions between investigators and respondents, and specially on the goodwill and cooperation of the latter.

Interview

An interview is basically a guided conversation between the researcher and the respondent. Although it has few technicalities associated with it, the simplicity of the format can be deceptive because it actually takes a lot of practice and skill to become a good interviewer. The interview occupies the ground between a structured questionnaire of the type used in surveys, and the completely open-ended interactions typical of participant observation methods. Its chief advantage is the extreme





flexibility of the format. Questions can be re-phrased or even stated differently; the order of subjects or questions can be changed according to the progress (or lack of progress) in the conversation; subjects that are producing good material can be extended and built upon others that provoke unfavourable reactions can be cut short or postponed to a later occasion, and all this can be done during the course of the interview itself.

On the other hand, many of the disadvantages of the interview as a research method are also related to its advantages. The very same flexibility can also make the interview vulnerable to changes of mood on the part of the respondent, or to lapses of concentration on the part of the interviewer. It is in this sense an unstable and unpredictable format—it works very well when it works, and fails miserably when it doesn't.

There are different styles of interviewing and opinions and experiences differ as to their relative advantages. Some prefer a very loosely structured format, with only a checklist of topics rather than actual questions; others like to have more structure, with specific questions to be asked of all respondents. How the interview is recorded can also differ according to circumstances and preferences, ranging from actual video or audio recording, detailed note taking during the interview, or relying on memory and writing up the interview

after it is concluded? The introduction of equipment like recorders and so on frequently makes the respondent uneasy and introduces a degree of formality into the conversation. On the other hand, important information can sometimes go unnoticed or not be recorded at all when other less comprehensive methods of record keeping are being employed. Sometimes the physical or social circumstances in which the interview is being conducted determine the mode of recording. The way in which the interview is later written for publication or as part of a research report can also differ widely. Some researchers prefer to edit the transcript and present a 'cleaned up' continuous narrative; others wish to retain the flavour of the original conversation as much as possible and therefore include all the asides and digressions as well.

The interview is often used along with or as a supplement to other methods, specially participant observation and surveys. Long conversations with 'key informants' (the main informant in a participant observation study) can often provide a concentrated account that situates and clarifies the accompanying material. Similarly, intensive interviews can add depth and detail to the findings of a survey. However, as a method, the interview is dependent on personalised access and the degree of rapport or mutual trust between the respondent and the researcher.





GLOSSARY

Census : A comprehensive survey covering every single member of a population.

Genealogy : An extended family tree outlining familial relations across generations.

Non-sampling Error : Errors in survey results due to mistakes in the design or application of methods.

Population : In the statistical sense, the larger body (of persons, villages, households, etc.) from which a sample is drawn.

Probability : The likelihood or odds of an event occurring (in the statistical sense).

Questionnaire : A written list of questions to be asked in a survey or interview.

Randomisation : Ensuring that an event (such as the selection of a particular item in the sample) depends purely on chance and nothing else.

Reflexivity : The researcher's ability to observe and analyse oneself.

Sample : A subset or selection (usually small) drawn from and representing a larger population.

Sampling Error : The unavoidable margin of error in the results of a survey because it is based on information from only a small sample rather than the entire population.

Stratification : According to the the statistical sense, the subdivision of a population into distinct groups based on relevant criteria such as gender, location, religion, age etc.

EXERCISES

1. Why is the question of a scientific method particularly important in sociology?
2. What are some of the reasons why 'objectivity' is more complicated in the social sciences, particularly disciplines like sociology?
3. How do sociologists try to deal with these difficulties and strive for objectivity?
4. What is meant by 'reflexivity' and why is it important in sociology?
5. What are some of the things that ethnographers and sociologists do during participant observation?





6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of participant observation as a method?
 7. What are the basic elements of the survey method? What is chief advantage of this method?
 8. What are some of the criteria involved in selecting a representative sample?
 9. What are some of the weaknesses of the survey method?
 10. Describe the main features of the interview as a research method.
-

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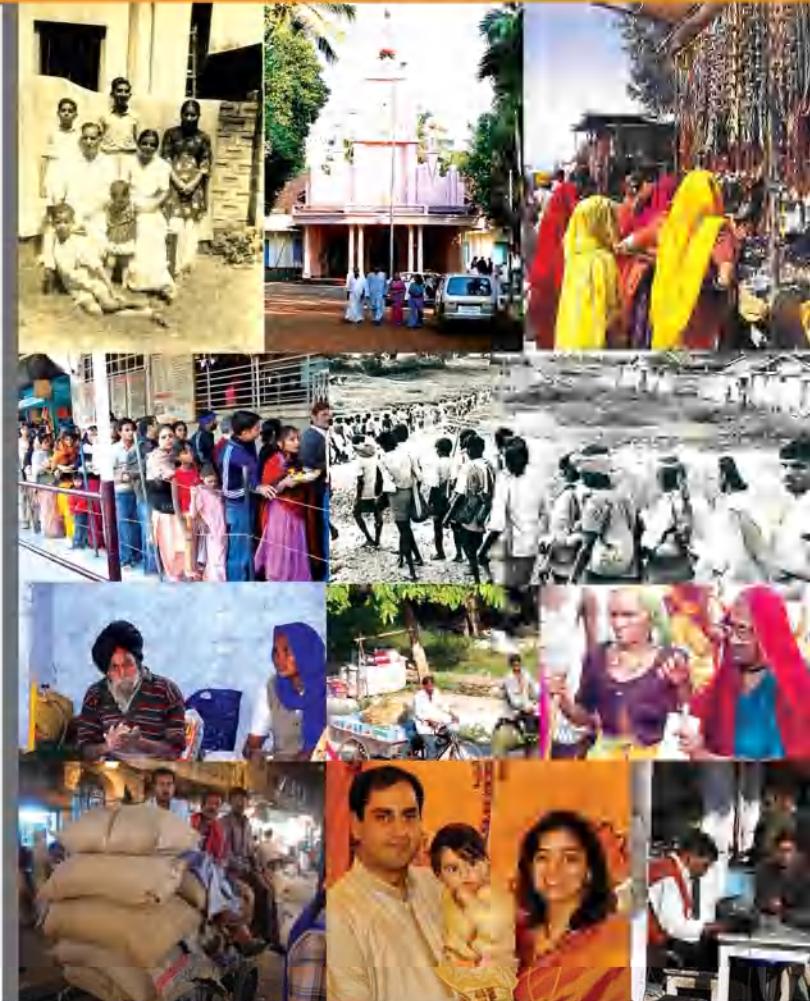


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Chapter 1

Introducing Indian Society



In one important sense, Sociology is unlike any other subject that you may have studied. It is a subject in which no one starts from zero – everyone already knows something about society. Other subjects are learnt because they are taught (at school, at home, or elsewhere); but much of our knowledge about society is acquired without explicit teaching. Because it is such an integral part of the process of growing up, knowledge about society seems to be acquired “naturally” or “automatically”. No child is expected to already know something about History, Geography, Psychology or Economics when they come to school. But even a six year old already knows something about society and social relationships. It is all the more true then, that, as young eighteen year old adults, you know a lot about the society you live in without ever having studied it.

This prior knowledge or familiarity with society is both an advantage and a disadvantage for sociology, the discipline that studies society. The advantage is that students are generally not afraid of Sociology – they feel that it can't be a very hard subject to learn. The disadvantage is that this prior knowledge can be a problem – in order to learn Sociology, we need to “unlearn” what we already know about society. In fact, the initial stage of learning Sociology consists mainly of such unlearning. This is necessary because our prior knowledge about society – our common sense – is acquired from a particular viewpoint. This is the viewpoint of the social group and the social environment that we are socialised into. Our social context shapes our opinions, beliefs and expectations about society and social relations. These beliefs are not necessarily wrong, though they can be. The problem is that they are ‘partial’. The word partial is being used here in two different senses – incomplete (the opposite of whole), and biased (the opposite of impartial). So our ‘unlearnt’ knowledge or common sense usually allows us to see only a part of social reality; moreover, it is liable to be tilted towards the viewpoints and interests of our own social group.

Sociology does not offer a solution to this problem in the form of a perspective that can show us the whole of reality in a completely unbiased way. Indeed sociologists believe that such an ideal vantage point does not exist. We can only see by standing *somewhere*; and every ‘somewhere’ offers only a partial view of the world. What sociology offers is to teach us how to see the world from many vantage points – not just our own, but also that of others unlike ourselves. Each vantage point provides only a partial view, but by comparing what the world looks like from the eyes of different kinds of people we get some sense of what the whole might look like, and what is hidden from view in each specific standpoint.

What may be of even more interest to you is that sociology can show you what you look like to others; it can teach you how to look at yourself ‘from the outside’, so to speak. This is called ‘self-reflexivity’, or sometimes just **reflexivity**. This is the ability to reflect upon yourself, to turn back your gaze (which is usually directed outward) back towards yourself. But this self-inspection must be critical – i.e., it should be quick to criticise and slow to praise oneself.

Introducing Indian Society

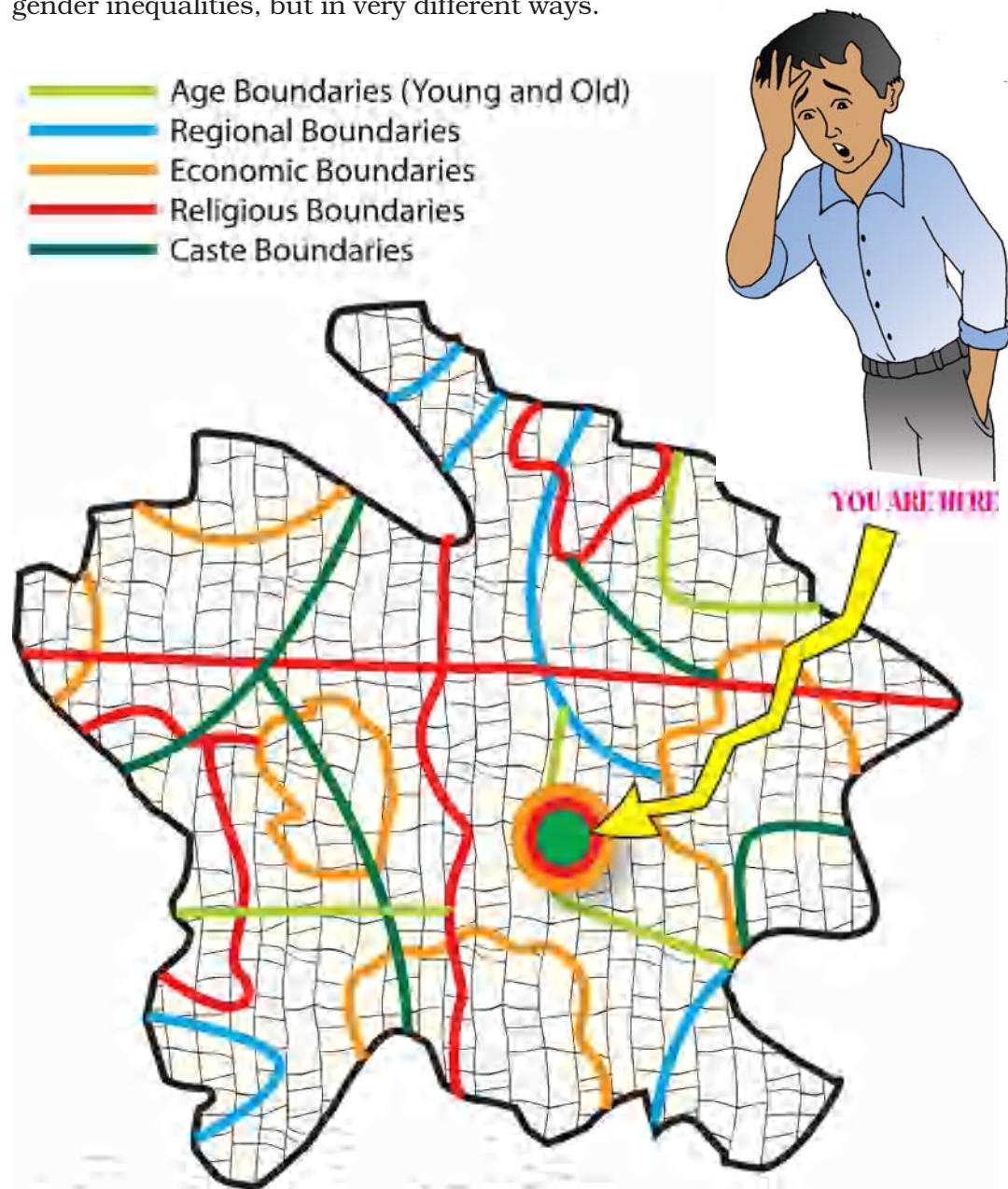
At the simplest level, you could say that understanding Indian society and its structure provides a sort of social map on which you could locate yourself. Like with a geographical map, locating oneself on a social map can be useful in the sense that you know where you are in relation to others in society. For example, suppose you live in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. If you look at a geographical map of India, you know that your state is in the North-eastern corner of India. You also know that your state is small compared to many large states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra or Rajasthan, but that it is larger than many others such as Manipur, Goa, Haryana or Punjab. If you look at a physical features map, it could tell you what kind of terrain Arunachal has (hilly, forested) compared to other states and regions of India, and what natural resources it is rich in, and so on.

A comparable social map would tell you where you are located in society. For example, as a seventeen or eighteen year old, you belong to the social group called “young people”. People your age or younger account for about forty per cent of India’s population. You might belong to a particular regional or linguistic community, such as a Gujarati speaker from Gujarat or a Telugu speaker from Andhra Pradesh. Depending on your parent’s occupation and your family income, you would also be a member of an economic class, such as lower middle class or upper class. You could be a member of a particular religious community, a caste or tribe, or other such social group. Each of these identities would locate you on a social map, and among a web of social relationships. Sociology tells you about what kinds of groups or groupings there are in society, what their relationships are to each other, and what this might mean in terms of your own life.

But sociology can do more than simply help to locate you or others in this simple sense of describing the places of different social groups. As C.Wright Mills, a well-known American sociologist has written, sociology can help you to map the links and connections between “personal troubles” and “social issues”. By personal troubles Mills means the kinds of individual worries, problems or concerns that everyone has. So, for example, you may be unhappy about the way elders in your family treat you or how your brothers, sisters or friends treat you. You may be worried about your future and what sort of job you might get. Other aspects of your individual identity may be sources of pride, tension, confidence or embarrassment in different ways. But all of these are about one person and derive meaning from this personalised perspective. A social issue, on the other hand, is about large groups and not about the individuals who make them up.

Thus, the “generation gap” or friction between older and younger generations is a social phenomenon, common to many societies and many time periods. Unemployment or the effects of a changing occupational structure is also a societal issue, that concerns millions of different kinds of people. It includes, for example, the sudden increase in job prospects for information technology

related professions, as well as the declining demand for agricultural labour. Issues of communalism or the animosity of one religious community towards another, or casteism, which is the exclusion or oppression of some castes by others, are again society-wide problems. Different individuals may be implicated in them in different roles, depending on their social location. Thus, a person from a so-called upper caste who believes in the inferiority of the people born into so-called lower castes is involved in casteism as a perpetrator, while a member of a so-called low caste community is also involved, but as a victim. In the same way, both men and women, as distinct social groups, are affected by gender inequalities, but in very different ways.



One version of such a map is already provided to us in childhood by the process of socialisation, or the ways in which we are taught to make sense of the world around us. This is the common sense map. But as pointed out earlier, this kind of map can be misleading, and it can distort. Once we leave our common sense maps behind, there are no other readymade maps available to us, because we have been socialised into only one, not several or all, social groups. If we want other kinds of maps, we must learn how to draw them. A sociological perspective teaches you how to draw social maps.

1.1 INTRODUCING AN INTRODUCTION...

This entire book is meant to introduce you to Indian society from a sociological rather than common sense point of view. What can be said by way of an introduction to this introduction? Perhaps it would be appropriate at this point to indicate in advance the larger processes that were at work in shaping Indian society, processes that you will encounter in detail in the pages to follow.

Broadly speaking, it was in the colonial period that a specifically Indian consciousness took shape. Colonial rule unified all of India for the first time, and brought in the forces of modernisation and capitalist economic change. By and large, the changes brought about were irreversible – society could never return to the way things were before. The economic, political and administrative unification of India under colonial rule was achieved at great expense. Colonial exploitation and domination scarred Indian society in many ways. But paradoxically, **colonialism** also gave birth to its own enemy – **nationalism**.

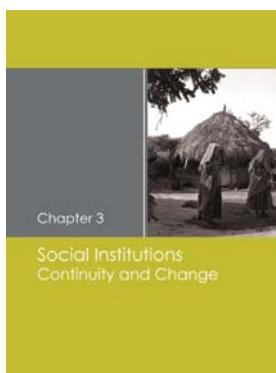
Historically, an Indian nationalism took shape under British colonialism. The shared experience of colonial domination helped unify and energise different sections of the community. The emerging middle classes began, with the aid of western style education, to challenge colonialism on its own ground. Ironically, colonialism and western education also gave the impetus for the rediscovery of tradition. This led to the developments on the cultural and social front which solidified emergent forms of community at the national and regional levels.

Colonialism created new **classes** and **communities** which came to play significant roles in subsequent history. The urban middle classes were the main carriers of nationalism and they led the campaign for freedom. Colonial interventions also crystallised religious and caste based communities. These too became major players. The complex ways in which the subsequent history of contemporary Indian society evolved is something you will encounter in the following chapters.

1.2 A PREVIEW OF THIS BOOK

In this, the first of two textbooks on sociology, you will be introduced to the basic structure of Indian society. (The second textbook will be focussed on the specifics of social change and development in India.)

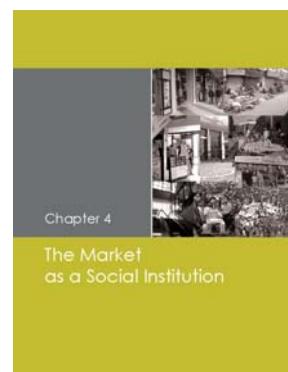
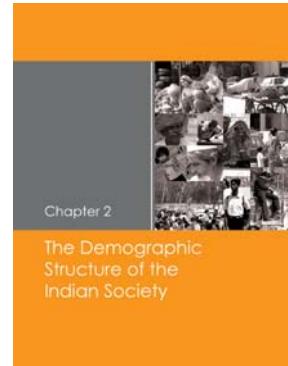
We begin with a discussion of the demographic structure of the Indian population (Chapter 2). As you know, India is currently the second most populous country in the world, and in a few decades is projected to overtake China and become the most populous country in the world. What are the ways in which sociologists and demographers study a population? Which aspects of the population are socially significant, and what has been happening on these fronts in the Indian case? Is our population simply an obstacle to development, or can it also be seen as helping development in some ways? These are some of the questions that this chapter tries to tackle.



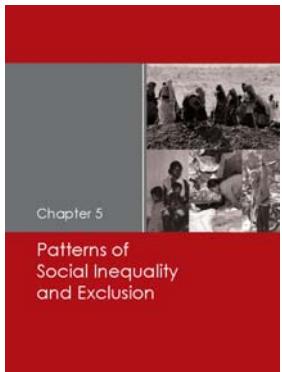
In Chapter 3, we revisit the basic building blocks of Indian society in the form of the institutions of caste, tribe and family. As a unique feature of the Indian subcontinent, caste has always attracted a lot of scholarly attention. How has this institution been changing over the centuries, and what does caste really mean today? What is the context in which the concept of 'tribe' was introduced into India? What sorts of communities are tribes supposed to be, and what is at stake in defining them as such? How do tribal communities define themselves in contemporary India? Finally, the family as an institution has also been subjected to tremendous

pressure in these times of rapid and intense social change. What changes do we see in the diverse forms of the family that exist in India? By addressing questions like these, Chapter 3 builds the base for looking at further aspects of Indian society which would pre-suppose caste, tribe and family.

Chapter 4 explores the socio-cultural dimensions of the market as a powerful institution that has been the vehicle of change throughout world history. Given that the most sweeping and rapid economic changes were brought about first by colonialism and then by developmental policies, this chapter looks at how markets of different kinds have evolved in India, and the chain reactions they set in motion.



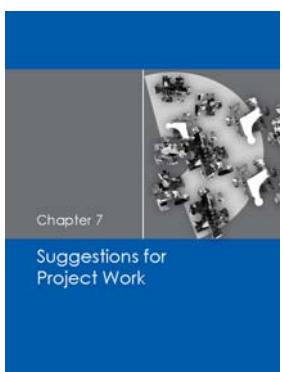
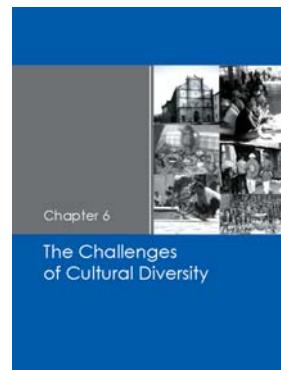
Introducing Indian Society



Among the features of our society that have been the cause of greatest concern are its seemingly unlimited capacity for generating inequality and exclusion. Chapter 5 is devoted to this important subject. Chapter 5 looks at inequality and exclusion in the context of caste, tribe, gender and the 'differently abled'. Notorious as an instrument of division and injustice, the caste system has been the object of concerted attempts by the state and by the oppressed castes to reform or even abolish it. What are the concrete problems and issues that this attempt faced? How successful have movements to resist

caste exclusion been in our recent past? What have been the special problems of tribal movements? In what context are tribal identities reasserting themselves today? Similar questions are dealt with in the context of gender relations, and the 'disabled' or differently abled. To what extent is our society responsive to the needs of the differently abled? How much of an impact has the women's movement had on the social institutions that have oppressed women?

Chapter 6 deals with the difficult challenges posed by the immense diversity of Indian society. This chapter invites us to step outside our normal, comfortable ways of thinking. The familiar cliches and slogans about India being a land of unity in diversity have a hard and complex side to them. Despite all the failures and inadequacies, India has not done too badly on this front. What have been our strengths and our weaknesses? How may young adults face issues like communal conflict, regional or linguistic chauvinism, and casteism without either wishing them away or being overwhelmed by them? Why is it important for our collective future as a nation that every minority in India not feel that it is insecure or at risk?



Finally, in Chapter 7, some suggestions are provided for you and your teachers to think about the practical component of your course. This can be quite interesting and enjoyable, as you will discover.



Notes

Chapter 2

The Demographic Structure of the Indian Society

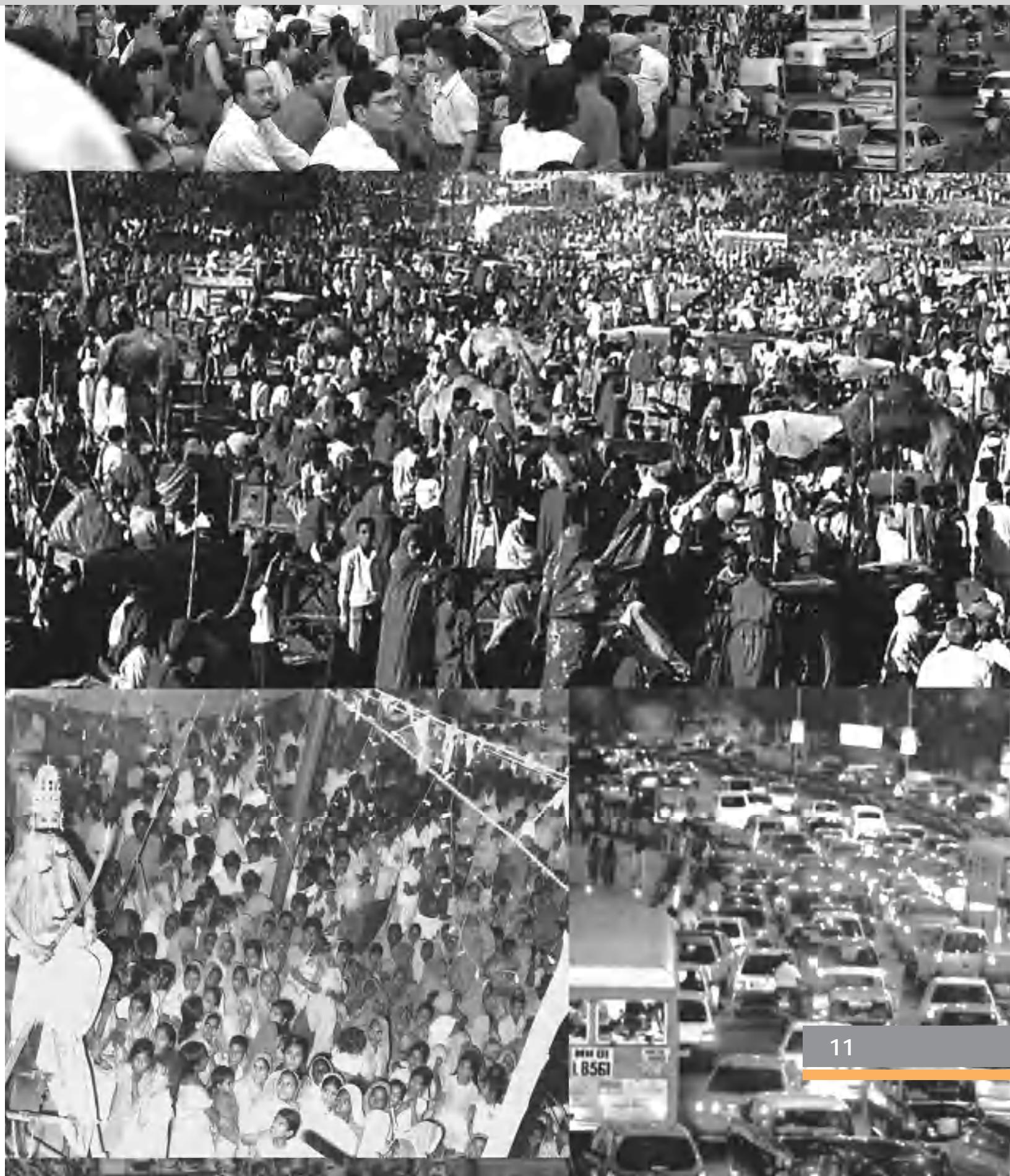


Demography is the systematic study of population. The term is of Greek origin and is composed of the two words, *demos* (people) and *graphein* (describe), implying the description of people. Demography studies the trends and processes associated with population including – changes in population size; patterns of births, deaths, and migration; and the structure and composition of the population, such as the relative proportions of women, men and different age groups. There are different varieties of demography, including formal demography which is a largely quantitative field, and social demography which focuses on the social, economic or political aspects of populations. All demographic studies are based on processes of counting or enumeration – such as the census or the survey – which involve the systematic collection of data on the people residing within a specified territory.

Demography is a field that is of special importance to sociology – in fact, the emergence of sociology and its successful establishment as an academic discipline owed a lot to demography. Two different processes happened to take place at roughly the same time in Europe during the latter half of the eighteenth century – the formation of nation-states as the principal form of political organisation, and the beginnings of the modern science of statistics. The modern state had begun to expand its role and functions. It had, for instance, begun to take an active interest in the development of early forms of public health management, policing and maintenance of law and order, economic policies relating to agriculture and industry, taxation and revenue generation and the governance of cities.

This new and constantly expanding sphere of state activity required the systematic and regular collection of *social statistics* – or quantitative data on various aspects of the population and economy. The practice of the collection of social statistics by the state is in itself much older, but it acquired its modern form towards the end of the eighteenth century. The American census of 1790 was probably the first modern census, and the practice was soon taken up in Europe as well in the early 1800s. In India, censuses began to be conducted by the British Indian government between 1867-72, and regular ten yearly (or decennial) censuses have been conducted since 1881. Independent India continued the practice, and six decennial censuses have been conducted since 1951, the most recent being in 2001. The Indian census is the largest such exercise in the world (since China, which has a slightly larger population, does not conduct regular censuses).

Demographic data are important for the planning and implementation of state policies, specially those for economic development and general public welfare. But when they first emerged, social statistics also provided a strong justification for the new discipline of sociology. Aggregate statistics – or the numerical characteristics that refer to a large collectivity consisting of millions of people – offer a concrete and strong argument for the existence of *social phenomena*. Even though country-level or state-level statistics like the number



of deaths per 1,000 population – or the death rate – are made up by aggregating (or adding up) individual deaths, the death rate itself is a social phenomenon and must be explained at the social level. Emile Durkheim's famous study explaining the variation in suicide rates across different countries was a good example of this. Durkheim argued that the rate of suicide (i.e., number of suicides per 100,000 population) had to be explained by social causes even though each particular instance of suicide may have involved reasons specific to that individual or her/his circumstances.

Sometimes a distinction is made between formal demography and a broader field of population studies. Formal demography is primarily concerned with the measurement and analysis of the components of population change. Its focus is on quantitative analysis for which it has a highly developed mathematical methodology suitable for forecasting population growth and changes in the composition of population. Population studies or social demography, on the other hand, enquires into the wider causes and consequences of population structures and change. Social demographers believe that social processes and structures regulate demographic processes; like sociologists, they seek to trace the social reasons that account for population trends.

2.1 SOME THEORIES AND CONCEPTS IN DEMOGRAPHY

THE MALTHUSIAN THEORY OF POPULATION GROWTH

Among the most famous theories of demography is the one associated with the English political economist Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834). Malthus's theory of population growth – outlined in his *Essay on Population* (1798) – was a rather pessimistic one. He argued that human populations tend to grow at a much faster rate than the rate at which the means of human subsistence (specially food, but also clothing and other agriculture-based products) can grow. Therefore humanity is condemned to live in poverty forever because the growth of agricultural production will always be overtaken by population growth. While population rises in **geometric progression** (i.e., like 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 etc.), agricultural production can only grow in **arithmetic progression** (i.e., like 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 etc.). Because population growth always outstrips growth in production of subsistence resources, the only way to increase prosperity is by controlling the growth of population. Unfortunately, humanity has only a limited ability to voluntarily reduce the growth of its population (through '**preventive checks**' such as postponing marriage or practicing sexual abstinence or celibacy). Malthus believed therefore that '**positive checks**' to population growth – in the form of famines and diseases – were inevitable because they were nature's way of dealing with the imbalance between food supply and increasing population.

Malthus's theory was influential for a long time. But it was also challenged by theorists who claimed that economic growth could outstrip population growth.

"The power of population is so superior to the power of the earth to produce subsistence for man, that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race. The vices of mankind are active and able ministers of depopulation. They are the precursors in the great army of destruction, and often finish the dreadful work themselves. But should they fail in this war of extermination, sickly seasons, epidemics, pestilence, and plague advance in terrific array, and sweep off their thousands and tens of thousands. Should success be still incomplete, gigantic inevitable famine stalks in the rear, and with one mighty blow levels the population with the food of the world."

– Thomas Robert Malthus, *An essay on the principle of population*, 1798.

Box 2.1

Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834)



Malthus studied at Cambridge and trained to become a Christian priest. Later he was appointed Professor of History and Political Economy at the East India Company College at Haileybury near London, which was a training centre for the officers recruited to the Indian Civil Service.

However, the most effective refutation of his theory was provided by the historical experience of European countries. The pattern of population growth began to change in the latter half of nineteenth century, and by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century these changes were quite dramatic. Birth rates had declined, and outbreaks of epidemic diseases were being controlled. Malthus's predictions were proved false because both food production and standards of living continued to rise despite the rapid growth of population.

Malthus was also criticised by liberal and Marxist scholars for asserting that poverty was caused by population growth. The critics argued that problems like poverty and starvation were caused by the unequal distribution of economic resources rather than by population growth. An unjust social system allowed a wealthy and privileged minority to live in luxury while the vast majority of the people were forced to live in poverty.

THE THEORY OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION

Another significant theory in demography is the theory of demographic transition. This suggests that population growth is linked to overall levels of economic development and that every society follows a typical pattern of development-related population growth. There are three basic phases of population growth. The first stage is that of low population growth in a society that is underdeveloped and technologically backward. Growth rates are low because both the death rate and the birth rate are very high, so that the difference between the two (or the net growth rate) is low. The third (and last) stage is also one of low growth in a developed society where both death rate and birth rate have been reduced

ACTIVITY 2.1

Read the section on the previous page and the quotation from Malthus in Box 2.1. One reason why Malthus was proved wrong is the substantial increases in the **productivity of agriculture**. Can you find out how these productivity increases occurred – i.e., what were the factors that made agriculture more productive? What could be some of the other reasons why Malthus was wrong? Discuss with your classmates and make a list with the help of your teacher.

considerably and the difference between them is again small. Between these two stages is a transitional stage of movement from a backward to an advanced stage, and this stage is characterised by very high rates of growth of population.

This ‘population explosion’ happens because death rates are brought down relatively quickly through advanced methods of disease control, public health, and better nutrition. However, it takes longer for society to adjust to change and alter its reproductive behaviour (which was evolved during the period of poverty and high death rates) to suit the new situation of relative prosperity and longer life spans. This kind of transition was effected in Western Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. More or less similar patterns are followed in the less developed countries that are struggling to reduce the birth rate in keeping with the falling mortality rate. In India too, the demographic transition is not yet complete as the mortality rate has been reduced but the birth rate has not been brought down to the same extent.

COMMON CONCEPTS AND INDICATORS

Most demographic concepts are expressed as rates or ratios – they involve two numbers. One of these numbers is the particular statistic that has been calculated for a specific geographical-administrative unit; the other number provides a standard for comparison. For example, the *birth rate* is the total number of live births in a particular area (an entire country, a state, a district or other territorial unit) during a specified period (usually a year) divided by the total population of that area in thousands. In other words, the birth rate is the number of live births per 1000 population. The *death rate* is a similar statistic, expressed as the number of deaths in a given area during a given time per 1000 population. These statistics depend on the reporting of births and deaths by the families in which they occur. In fact, in most countries including India, people are required by law to report births and deaths to the appropriate authorities – the local police station or primary health centre in the case of villages, and the relevant municipal office in the case of towns and cities.

The *rate of natural increase* or the growth rate of population refers to the difference between the birth rate and the death rate. When this difference is zero (or, in practice, very small) then we say that the population has ‘stabilised’, or has reached the ‘replacement level’, which is the rate of growth required for new generations to replace the older ones that are dying out. Sometimes, societies can experience a negative growth rate – that is, their fertility levels are below the replacement rate. This is true of many countries and regions in the world today, such as Japan, Russia, Italy and Eastern Europe. On the other

hand, some societies experience very high growth rates, particularly when they are going through the demographic transition described on the previous page.

The *fertility rate* refers to the number of live births per 1000 women in the child-bearing age group, usually taken to be 15 to 49 years. But like the other rates discussed on the previous page (the birth and death rates) this is a ‘crude’ rate – it is a rough average for an entire population and does not take account of the differences across age-groups. Differences across age groups can sometimes be very significant in affecting the meaning of indicators. That is why demographers also calculate age-specific rates. The *total fertility rate* refers to the total number of live births that a hypothetical woman would have if she lived through the reproductive age group and had the average number of babies in each segment of this age group as determined by the age-specific fertility rates for that area. Another way of expressing this is that the total fertility rate is the ‘the average number of births to a cohort of women up to the end of the reproductive age period (estimated on the basis of the age-specific rates observed during a given period)’ (Visaria and Visaria 2003).

The *infant mortality rate* is the number of deaths of babies before the age of one year per 1000 live births. Likewise, the *maternal mortality rate* is the number of women who die in childbirth per 1000 live births. High rates of infant and maternal mortality are an unambiguous indicator of backwardness and poverty; development is accompanied by sharp falls in these rates as medical facilities and levels of education, awareness and prosperity increase. One concept which is somewhat complicated is that of *life expectancy*. This refers to the estimated number of years that an average person is expected to survive. It is calculated on the basis of data on age-specific death rates in a given area over a period of time.

The *sex ratio* refers to the number of females per 1000 males in a given area at a specified time period. Historically, all over the world it has been found that there are slightly more females than males in most countries. This is despite the fact that slightly more male babies are born than female ones; nature seems to produce roughly 943 to 952 female babies for every 1000 males. If despite this fact the sex ratio is somewhat in favour of females, this seems to be due to two reasons. First, girl babies appear to have an advantage over boy babies in terms of resistance to disease in infancy. At the other end of the life cycle, women have tended to outlive men in most societies, so that there are more older women than men. The combination of these two factors leads to a sex ratio of roughly 1050 females per 1000 males in most contexts. However, it has been found that the sex ratio has been declining in some countries like China, South Korea and specially India. This phenomenon has been linked to prevailing social norms that tend to value males much more than females, which leads to ‘son preference’ and the relative neglect of girl babies.

ACTIVITY 2.2

Try to find out why the birth rate is slow to decline but the death rate can fall relatively fast. What are some of the factors that might influence a family or couple’s decision about how many children to have? Ask older people in your family or neighbourhood about the possible reasons why people in the past tended to have many more children.

The *age structure of the population* refers to the proportion of persons in different age groups relative to the total population. The age structure changes in response to changes in levels of development and the average life expectancy. Initially, poor medical facilities, prevalence of disease and other factors make for a relatively short life span. Moreover, high infant and maternal mortality rates also have an impact on the age structure. With development, quality of life improves and with it the life expectancy also improves. This changes the age structure: relatively smaller proportions of the population are found in the younger age groups and larger proportions in the older age groups. This is also referred to as the aging of the population.

The *dependency ratio* is a measure comparing the portion of a population which is composed of dependents (i.e., elderly people who are too old to work, and children who are too young to work) with the portion that is in the working age group, generally defined as 15 to 64 years. The dependency ratio is equal to the population below 15 or above 64, divided by population in the 15-64 age group; the ratio is usually expressed as a percentage. A rising dependency ratio is a cause for worry in countries that are facing an aging population, since it becomes difficult for a relatively smaller proportion of working-age people to carry the burden of providing for a relatively larger proportion of dependents. On the other hand, a falling dependency ratio can be a source of economic growth and prosperity due to the larger proportion of workers relative to non-workers. This is sometimes referred to as the 'demographic dividend', or benefit flowing from the changing age structure. However, this benefit is temporary because the larger pool of working age people will eventually turn into non-working old people.

2.2 SIZE AND GROWTH OF INDIA'S POPULATION

India is the second most populous country in the world after China, with a total population of 103 crores (or 1.03 billion) according to the Census of 2001. As can be seen from Table 1, the growth rate of India's population has not always been very high. Between 1901-1951 the average annual growth rate did not exceed 1.33%, a modest rate of growth. In fact between 1911 and 1921 there was a negative rate of growth of - 0.03%. This was because of the influenza epidemic during 1918 -19 which killed about 12.5 million persons or 5% of the total population of the country (Visaria and Visaria 2003: 191). The growth rate of population substantially increased after independence from British rule going up to 2.2% during 1961-1981. Since then although the annual growth rate has decreased it remains one of the highest in the developing world. Chart 1 shows the comparative movement of the crude birth and death rates. The impact of the demographic transition phase is clearly seen in the graph where they begin to diverge from each other after the decade of 1921 to 1931.

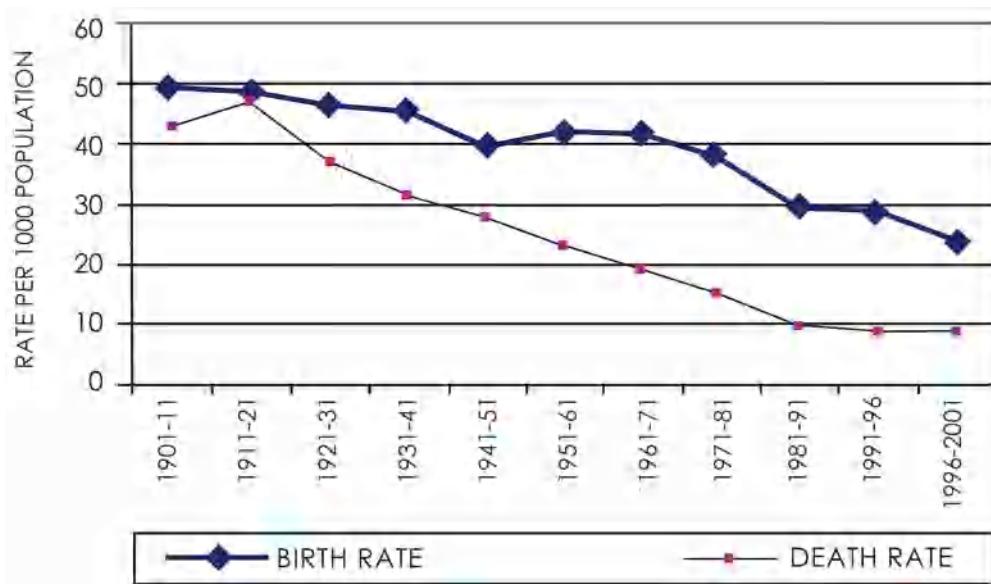
Before 1931, both death rates and birth rates are high, whereas, after this transitional moment the death rates fall sharply but the birth rate only falls slightly.

TABLE 1: THE POPULATION OF INDIA AND ITS GROWTH DURING THE 20TH CENTURY

Year	Total Population (in millions)	Average Annual Growth Rate (%)	Decadal Growth Rate (%)
1901	238	-	-
1911	252	0.56	5.8
1921	251	-0.03	-0.3
1931	279	1.04	11.0
1941	319	1.33	14.2
1951	361	1.25	13.3
1961	439	1.96	21.5
1971	548	2.22	24.8
1981	683	2.20	24.7
1991	846	2.14	23.9
2001	1028	1.93	21.3

Source: Registrar General of India, compiled from various webpages of the Census of India.
See References for details.

CHART 1: BIRTH AND DEATH RATE IN INDIA 1901-2001



Source: National Commission on Population, Government of India.
website: <http://populationcommission.nic.in/facts1.htm#>

The principal reasons for the decline in the death rate after 1921 were increased levels of control over famines and **epidemic** diseases. The latter cause was perhaps the most important. The major epidemic diseases in the past were fevers of various sorts, plague, smallpox and cholera. But the single biggest epidemic was the influenza epidemic of 1918-19, which killed as many as 125 lakh people, or about 5% of the total population of India at that time. (Estimates of deaths vary, and some are much higher. Also known as 'Spanish Flu', the influenza pandemic was a global phenomenon – see the box below. A pandemic is an epidemic that affects a very wide geographical area – see the glossary).

The Global Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19

Box 2.2

Influenza is caused by a virus that attacks mainly the upper respiratory tract – the nose, throat and bronchi and rarely also the lungs. The genetic makeup of influenza viruses allows for both major and minor genetic changes, making them immune to existing vaccines. Three times in the last century, the influenza viruses have undergone major genetic changes, resulting in global pandemics and large tolls in terms of both disease and deaths. The most infamous pandemic was "Spanish Flu" which affected large parts of the world population and is thought to have killed at least 40 million people in 1918-1919. More recently, two other influenza pandemics occurred in 1957 ("Asian influenza") and 1968 ("Hong Kong influenza") and caused significant morbidity and mortality globally.

The global mortality rate from the 1918/1919 Spanish flu pandemic is not known, but is estimated at 2.5 – 5% of the human population, with 20% of the world population suffering from the disease to some extent. Influenza may have killed as many as 25 million in its first 25 weeks; in contrast, AIDS killed 25 million in its first 25 years. Influenza spread across the world, killing more than 25 million in six months; some estimates put the total killed at over twice that number, possibly even 100 million.

In the United States, about 28% of the population suffered, and 500,000 to 675,000 died. In Britain 200,000 died; in France more than 400,000. Entire villages perished in Alaska and southern Africa. In Australia an estimated 10,000 people died and in the Fiji Islands, 14% of the population died during only two weeks, and in Western Samoa 22%. An estimated 17 million died in India, about 5% of India's population at the time. In the British Indian Army, almost 22% of troops who caught the disease died of it.

While World War 1 did not cause the flu, the close quarters and mass movement of troops quickened its spread. It has been speculated that the soldiers' immune systems were weakened by the stresses of combat and chemical attacks, increasing their susceptibility to the disease.

Source: Compiled from Wikipedia, and World Health Organisation; Webpages:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_flu
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs211/en/>

Improvements in medical cures for these diseases, programmes for mass vaccination, and efforts to improve sanitation helped to control epidemics. However, diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and diarrhoea and dysentery continue to kill people even today, although the numbers are nowhere as high as they used to be in the epidemics of the past. Surat witnessed a small epidemic of plague in September 1994, while dengue and chikungunya epidemics have been reported in various parts of the country in 2006.

Famines were also a major and recurring source of increased mortality. Famines were caused by high levels of continuing poverty and malnutrition in an agroclimatic environment that was very vulnerable to variations in rainfall. Lack of adequate means of transportation and communication as well as inadequate efforts on the part of the state were some of the factors responsible for famines. However, as scholars like Amartya Sen and others have shown, famines were not necessarily due to fall in foodgrains production; they were also caused by a 'failure of entitlements', or the inability of people to buy or otherwise obtain food. Substantial improvements in the productivity of Indian agriculture (specially through the expansion of irrigation); improved means of communication; and more vigorous relief and preventive measures by the state have all helped to drastically reduce deaths from famine. Nevertheless, starvation deaths are still reported from some backward regions of the country. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is the latest state initiative to tackle the problem of hunger and starvation in rural areas.

Unlike the death rate, the birth rate has not registered a sharp fall. This is because the birth rate is a socio-cultural phenomenon that is relatively slow to change. By and large, increased levels of prosperity exert a strong downward pull on the birthrate. Once infant mortality rates decline, and there is an overall increase in levels of education and awareness, family size begins to fall. There are very wide variations in the fertility rates across the states of India, as can be seen in Chart 2. Some states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu have managed to bring down their total fertility rates (TFR) to 2.1 and 1.8 respectively. This means that the average woman in Tamil Nadu produces only 2.1 children, which is the 'replacement level' (required to replace herself and her spouse). Kerala's TFR is actually below the replacement level, which means that the population is going to decline in the future. Many other states (like Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Maharashtra) have fairly low TFRs. But there are some states, notably Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, which still have very high TFRs of 4 or more. These few states already accounted for almost 45% of the total population as of 2001, and they will also account for about half (50%) of the additions to the Indian population upto the year 2026. Uttar Pradesh alone is expected to account for a little less than one-quarter (22%) of this increase. Chart 3 shows the relative contribution to population growth from different regional groupings of states.

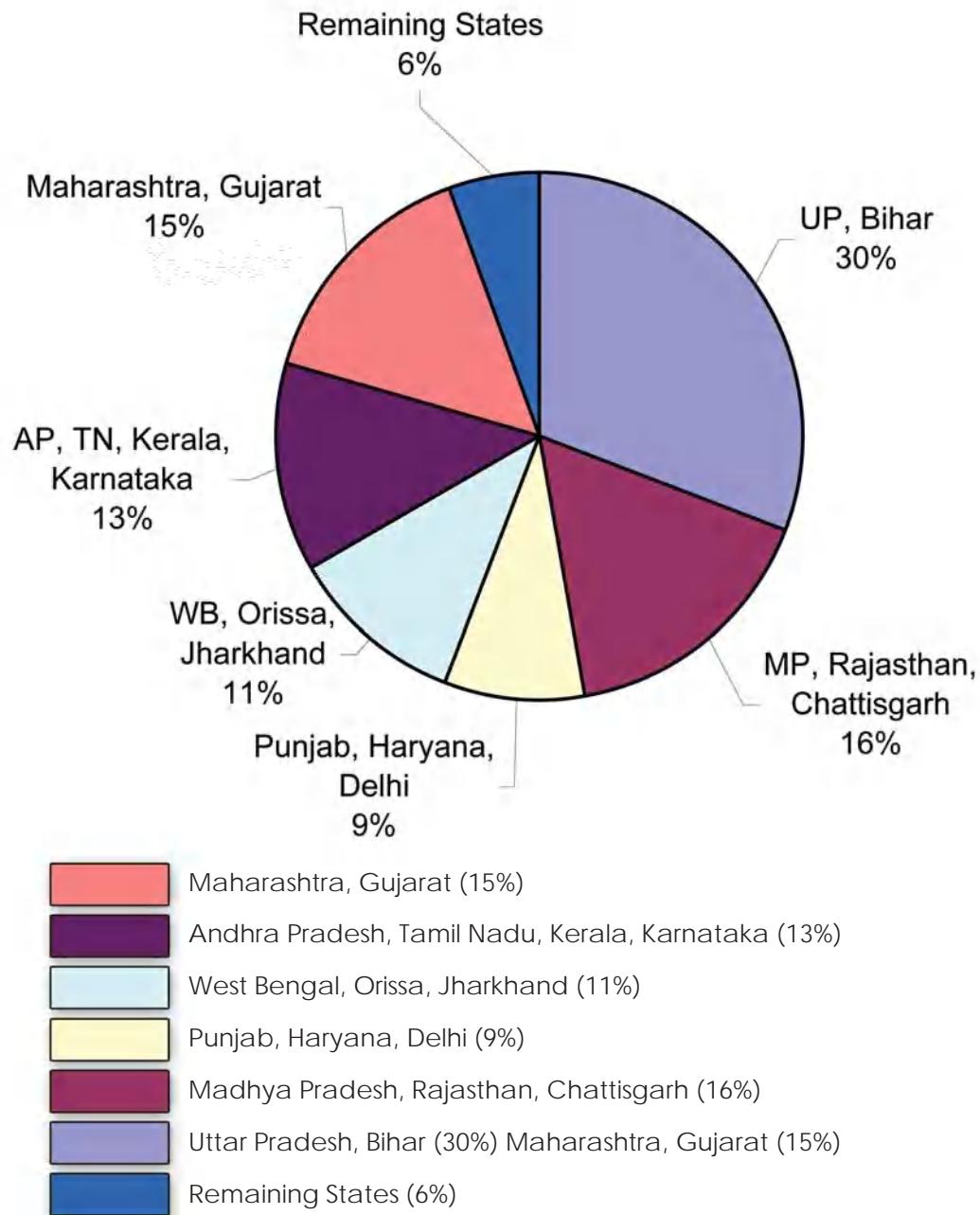
CHART 2: STATE-WISE BIRTH RATES IN INDIA, 2004



Source: Sample Registration System 2004

CHART 3: REGIONAL SHARES OF PROJECTED POPULATION

GROWTH UPTO 2026



Source: Computed from 2001 Census figures and the Report of the Technical Group on Population Projections of the National Commission on Population, 2006.

2.3 AGE STRUCTURE OF THE INDIAN POPULATION

India has a very young population – that is, the majority of Indians tend to be young, and the average age is also less than that for most other countries. Table 2 shows that the share of the under 15 age group in the total population has come down from its highest level of 42% in 1971 to 35% in 2001. The share of the 15-60 age group has increased slightly from 53% to 59%, while the share of the 60+ age group is very small but it has begun to increase (from 5% to 7%) over the same period. But the age composition of the Indian population is expected to change significantly in the next two decades. Most of this change will be at the two ends of the age spectrum – as Table 2 shows, the 0 -14 age group will reduce its share by about 11% (from 34% in 2001 to 23% in 2026) while the 60 plus age group will increase its share by about 5% (from 7% in 2001 to about 12% in 2026.) Chart 4 shows a graphical picture of the ‘population pyramid’ from 1961 to its projected shape in 2016.

TABLE 2: AGE COMPOSITION OF THE POPULATION OF INDIA, 1961-2026

Year	Age Groups			Total
	0-14 Years	15-59 Years	60+ Years	
1961	41	53	6	100
1971	42	53	5	100
1981	40	54	6	100
1991	38	56	7	100
2001	34	59	7	100
2011	29	63	8	100
2026	23	64	12	100

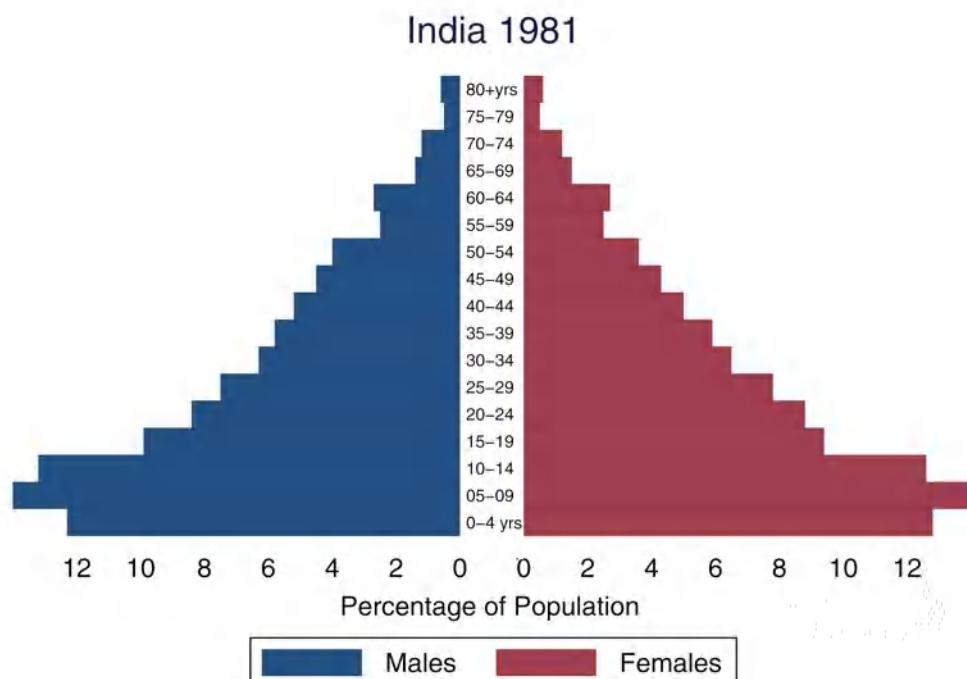
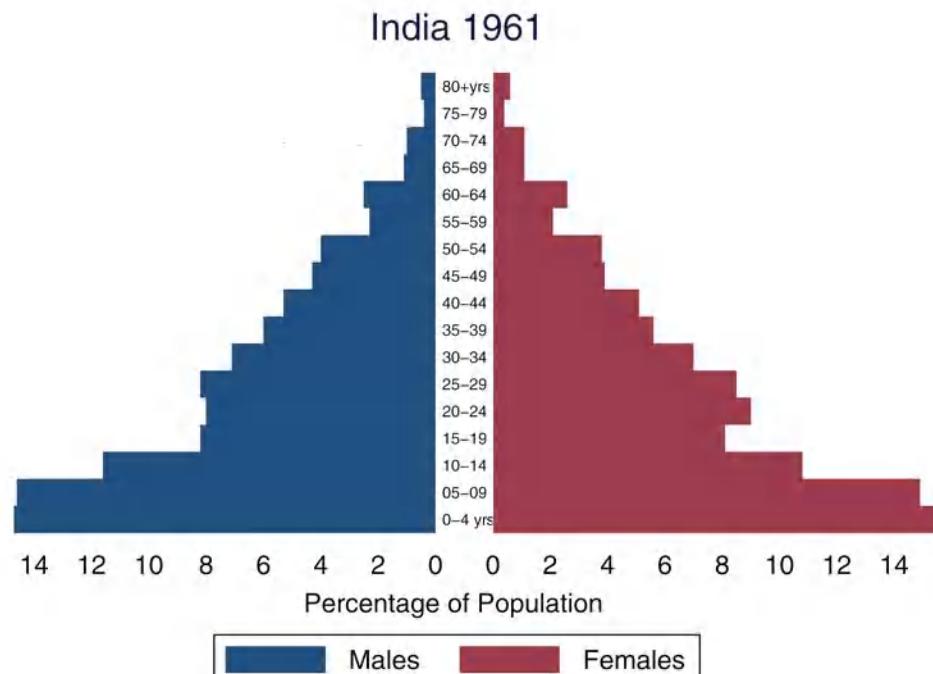
Age Group columns show percentage shares; rows may not add up to 100 because of rounding

Source: Based on data from the Technical Group on Population Projections (1996 and 2006) of the National Commission on Population.

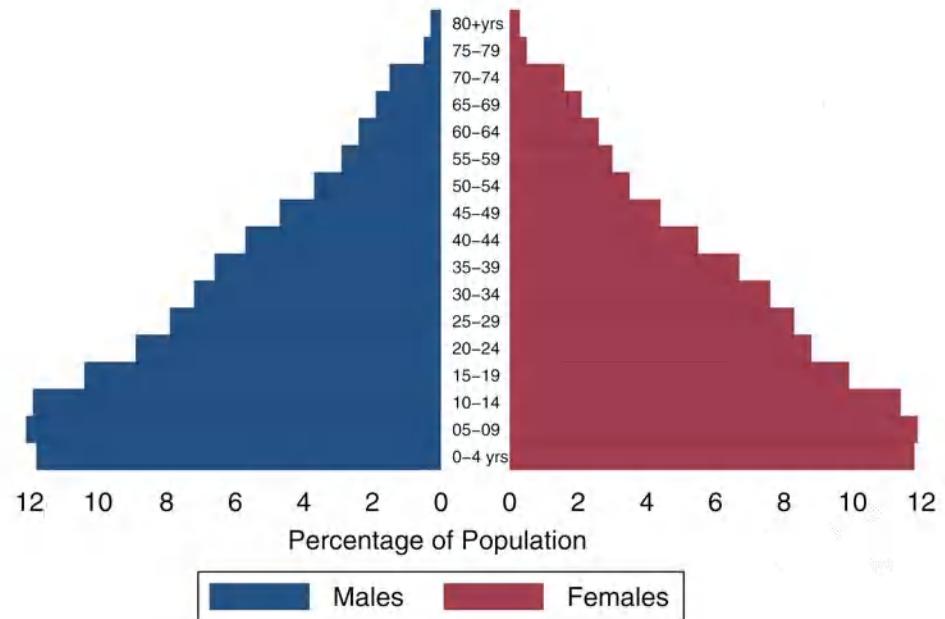
Webpage for 1996 Report: <http://populationcommission.nic.in/facts1.htm>

The Demographic Structure of the Indian Society

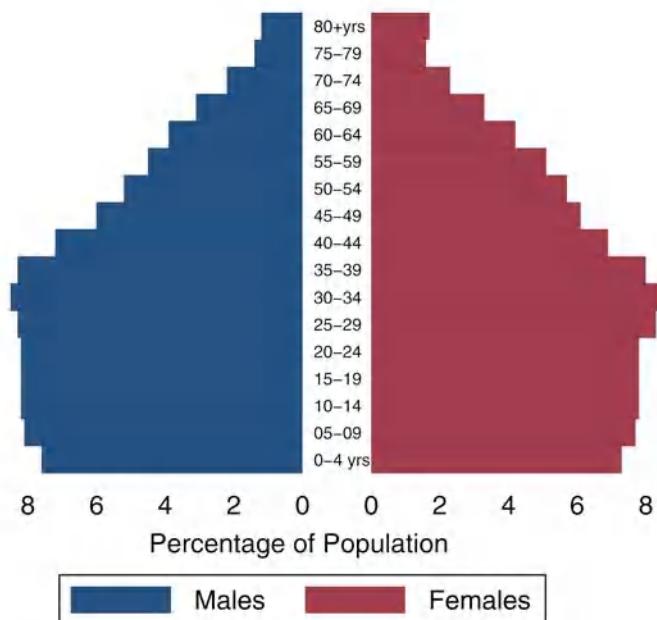
CHART 4: AGE GROUP PYRAMIDS, 1961, 1981, 2001 AND 2026



India 2001



India 2026



EXERCISE FOR CHART 4

The Age Group 'pyramid' shown in Chart 4 provides a much more detailed version of the kind of age grouped data presented in Table 2. Here, data are shown separately for males (on the left side) and females (on the right side) with the relevant five-year age group in the middle. Looking at the horizontal bars (including both males and females in a particular age group) gives you a visual sense of the age structure of the population. The age groups begin from the 0-4 years group at the bottom of the pyramid and go on to the 80 years and above age group at the top. There are four different pyramids for the decennial census years of 1961, 1981, 2001 and the estimates for 2026. The pyramid for 2026 shows the estimated future size of the relevant age groups based on data on the past rates of growth of each age group. Such estimates are also called 'projections'.

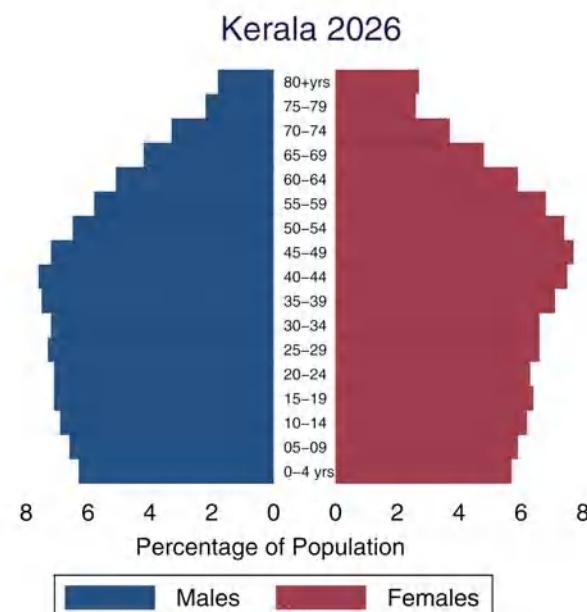
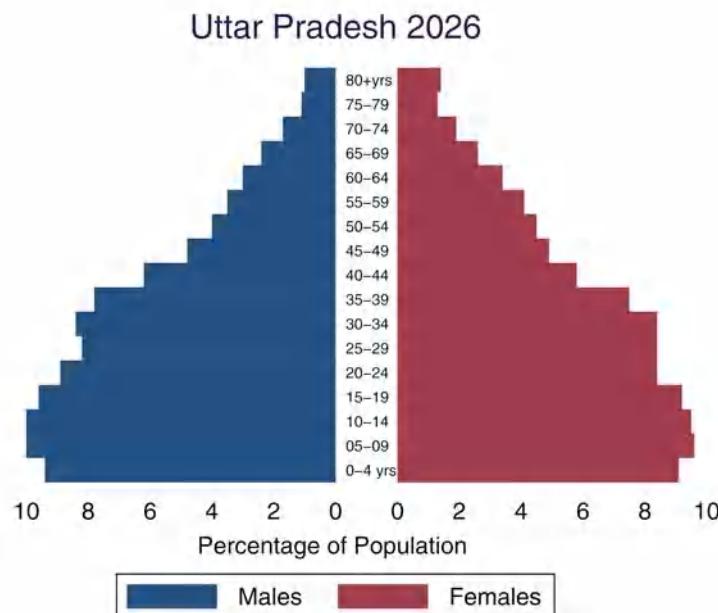
These pyramids show you the effect of a gradual fall in the birth rate and rise in the life expectancy. As more and more people begin to live to an older age, the top of the pyramid grows wider. As relatively fewer new births take place, the bottom of the pyramid grows narrower. But the birth rate is slow to fall, so the bottom doesn't change much between 1961 and 1981. The middle of the pyramid grows wider and wider as its share of the total population increases. This creates a 'bulge' in the middle age groups that is clearly visible in the pyramid for 2026. This is what is referred to as the 'demographic dividend' which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Study this chart carefully. With the help of your teacher, try to trace what happens to the new-born generation of 1961 (the 0-4 age group) as it moves up the pyramid in successive years.

- Where will the 0-4 age group of 1961 be located in the pyramids for the later years?
- Where – in which age group – is the widest part of the pyramid as you move from 1961 to 2026?
- What do you think the shape of the pyramid might be in the year 2051 and 2001?

As with fertility rates, there are wide regional variations in the age structure as well. While a state like Kerala is beginning to acquire an age structure like that of the developed countries, Uttar Pradesh presents a very different picture with high proportions in the younger age groups and relatively low proportions among the aged. India as a whole is somewhere in the middle, because it includes states like Uttar Pradesh as well as states that are more like Kerala. Chart 5 shows the estimated population pyramids for Uttar Pradesh and Kerala in the year 2026. Note the difference in the location of the widest parts of the pyramid for Kerala and Uttar Pradesh.

CHART 5: AGE STRUCTURE PYRAMIDS, KERALA AND UTTAR PRADESH, 2026



Source: Report of the Technical Group on Population Projections (2006) of the National Commission on Population.

The bias towards younger age groups in the age structure is believed to be an advantage for India. Like the East Asian economies in the past decade and like Ireland today, India is supposed to be benefitting from a 'demographic dividend'. This dividend arises from the fact that the current generation of working-age people is a relatively large one, and it has only a relatively small preceding generation of old people to support. But there is nothing automatic about this advantage – it needs to be consciously exploited through appropriate policies as is explained in Box 2.3 below.

Box 2.3

Does the changing age structure offer a 'demographic dividend' for India?

The demographic advantage or 'dividend' to be derived from the age structure of the population is due to the fact that India is (and will remain for some time) one of the youngest countries in the world. A third of India's population was below 15 years of age in 2000. In 2020, the average Indian will be only 29 years old, compared with an average age of 37 in China and the United States, 45 in Western Europe, and 48 in Japan. This implies a large and growing labour force, which can deliver unexpected benefits in terms of growth and prosperity.

The 'demographic dividend' results from an increase in the proportion of workers relative to non-workers in the population. In terms of age, the working population is roughly that between 15 and 64 years of age. This working age group must support itself as well as those outside this age group (i.e., children and elderly people) who are unable to work and are therefore dependents. Changes in the age structure due to the demographic transition lower the 'dependency ratio', or the ratio of non-working age to working-age population, thus creating the potential for generating growth.

But this potential can be converted into actual growth only if the rise in the working age group is accompanied by increasing levels of education and employment. If the new entrants to the labour force are not educated then their productivity remains low. If they remain unemployed, then they are unable to earn at all and become dependents rather than earners. Thus, changing age structure by itself cannot guarantee any benefits unless it is properly utilised through planned development. The real problem is in defining the dependency ratio as the ratio of the non-working age to working-age population, rather than the ratio of non-workers to workers. The difference between the two is determined by the extent of unemployment and underemployment, which keep a part of the labour force out of productive work. This difference explains why some countries are able to exploit the demographic advantage while others are not.

India is indeed facing a window of opportunity created by the demographic dividend. The effect of demographic trends on the dependency ratio defined in terms of age groups is quite visible. The total dependency ratio fell from 79 in 1970 to 64 in 2005. But the process is likely to extend well into this century with the age-based dependency ratio projected to fall to 48 in 2025 because of continued fall in the proportion of children and then rise to 50 by 2050 because of an increase in the proportion of the aged.

ACTIVITY 2.3

What impact do you think the age structure has on inter - generational relationships? For instance, could a high dependency ratio create conditions for greater tension between older and younger generations? Or would it make for closer relationships and stronger bonds between young and old? Discuss this in class and try to come up with a list of possible outcomes and the reasons why they happen.

The problem, however, is employment. Data from the National Sample Survey studies of 1999-2000 and from the 2001 Census of India reveal a sharp fall in the rate of employment generation (creation of new jobs) across both rural and urban areas. This is true for the young as well. The rate of growth of employment in the 15-30 age group, which stood at around 2.4 per cent a year between 1987 and 1994 for both rural and urban men, fell to 0.7 for rural men and 0.3 per cent for urban men during 1994 to 2004. This suggests that the advantage offered by a young labour force is not being exploited.

Strategies exist to exploit the demographic window of opportunity that India has today. But India's recent experience suggests that market forces by themselves do not ensure that such strategies would be implemented. Unless a way forward is found, we may miss out on the potential benefits that the country's changing age structure temporarily offers.

[Source: Adapted from an article by C.P. Chandrasekhar in Frontline Volume 23 - Issue 01, January 14-27, 2006]

2.4 THE DECLINING SEX-RATIO IN INDIA

The sex ratio is an important indicator of gender balance in the population. As mentioned in the section on concepts earlier, historically, the sex ratio has been slightly in favour of females, that is, the number of females per 1000 males has generally been somewhat higher than 1000. However, India has had a declining sex-ratio for more than a century, as is clear from Table 3. From 972 females per 1000 males at the turn of the twentieth century, the sex ratio has declined to 933 at the turn of the twenty-first century. The trends of the last four decades have been particularly worrying – from 941 in 1961 the sex ratio had fallen to an all-time low of 927 in 1991 before posting a modest increase in 2001.

But what has really alarmed demographers, policy makers, social activists and concerned citizens is the drastic fall in the child sex ratio. Age specific sex ratios began to be computed in 1961. As is shown in Table 3, the sex ratio for the 0 - 6 years age group (known as the juvenile or child sex ratio) has generally been substantially higher than the overall sex ratio for all age groups, but it has been falling very sharply. In fact the decade 1991-2001 represents an anomaly in that the overall sex ratio has posted its highest ever increase of 6 points from the all time low of 927 to 933, but the child sex ratio has dropped from 945 to 927, a plunge of 18 points taking it below the overall sex ratio for the first time.

TABLE 3: THE DECLINING SEX-RATIO IN INDIA, 1901-2001

Year	Sex-ratio (all age groups)	Variation over previous decade	Child Sex-ratio (0-6 years)	Variation over previous decade
1901	972	-	-	-
1911	964	-8	-	-
1921	955	-9	-	-
1931	950	-5	-	-
1941	945	-5	-	-
1951	946	+1	-	-
1961	941	-5	976	-
1971	930	-11	964	-12
1981	934	+4	962	-2
1991	927	-7	945	-17
2001	933	+6	927	-18

Note: The sex-ratio is defined as the number of females per 1000 males

Source: Census of India. Note: Data on age specific sex ratios is not available before 1961.

The state-level child sex ratios offer even greater cause for worry. As many as six states and union territories have a child sex ratio of under 900 females per 1000 males. Punjab is the worst off with an incredibly low child sex ratio of 793 (the only state below 800), followed by Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. As Chart 6 shows, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra are all under 925, while Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Orissa are above the national average of 927 but below the 950 mark. Even Kerala, the state with the best overall sex ratio does not do too well at 963, while the highest child sex ratio of 986 is found in Sikkim.

Demographers and sociologists have offered several reasons for the decline in the sex ratio in India. The main health factor that affects women differently from men is childbearing. It is relevant to ask if the fall in the sex ratio may be partly due to the increased risk of death in childbirth that only women face. However, maternal mortality is supposed to decline with development, as levels of nutrition, general education and awareness as well as the availability of medical and communication facilities improves. Indeed, maternal mortality rates have been coming down in India even though they remain high by international standards. So it is difficult to see how maternal mortality could have been responsible for the worsening of the sex ratio over time. Combined with the fact that the decline in the child sex ratios has been much steeper than the overall figure, social scientists believe that the cause has to be sought in the differential treatment of girl babies.

CHART 6: MAP OF CHILD SEX RATIOS ACROSS STATES



Several factors may be held responsible for the decline in the child sex ratio including – severe neglect of girl babies in infancy, leading to higher death rates; sex specific abortions that prevent girl babies from being born; and female infanticide (or the killing of girl babies due to religious or cultural beliefs). Each of these reasons point to a serious social problem, and there is some evidence that all of these have been at work in India. Practices of female infanticide have been known to exist in many regions, while increasing importance is being attached to modern medical techniques by which the sex of the baby can be determined in the very early stages of pregnancy. The availability of the sonogram (an x-ray like diagnostic device based on ultra-sound technology), originally developed to identify genetic or other disorders in the foetus, may be used to identify and selectively abort female foetuses.

The regional pattern of low child sex ratios seems to support this argument. It is striking that the lowest child sex ratios are found in the most prosperous regions of India. Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Gujarat and Maharashtra are among the richest states of India in terms of per capita incomes, and they are also the states with the lowest child sex ratios. So the problem of selective abortions is not due to poverty or ignorance or lack of resources. For example, if practices like dowry mean that parents have to make large dowry payments to marry off their daughters, then prosperous parents would be the ones most able to afford this. However, we find the sex ratio is lowest in the most prosperous regions.

It is also possible (though this issue is still being researched) that as economically prosperous families decide to have fewer children – often only one or two now – they may also wish to choose the sex of their child. This becomes possible with the availability of ultra-sound technology, although the government has passed strict laws banning this practice and imposing heavy fines and imprisonment as punishment. Known as the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, this law has been in force since 1996, and has been further strengthened in 2003. However, in the long run the solution to problems like the bias against girl children depends more on how social attitudes evolve, even though laws and rules can also help.



2.5 LITERACY

Literacy as a prerequisite to education is an instrument of empowerment. The more literate the population the greater the consciousness of career options, as well as participation in the knowledge economy. Further, literacy can lead to health awareness and fuller participation in the cultural and economic well being of the community. Literacy levels have improved considerably after independence, and almost two-thirds of our population is now literate. But improvements in the literacy rate have to struggle to keep up with the rate of growth of the Indian population, which is still quite high. Enormous effort is needed to ensure the literacy of the new generations – which are only just beginning to be smaller in numbers than in the past (remember the discussion on age structure and the population pyramids earlier in this chapter).

Literacy varies considerably across gender, across regions, and across social groups. As can be seen from Table 4, the literacy rate for women is almost 22% less than the literacy rate for men. However, female literacy has been rising faster than male literacy, partly because it started from relatively low levels. Thus, female literacy rose by almost 15% between 1991 and 2001 compared to the rise in male literacy of a little less than 12% in the same period. Literacy rates also vary by social group – historically disadvantaged communities like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have lower rates of literacy, and rates of female literacy within these groups are even lower. Regional variations are still very wide, with states like Kerala approaching universal literacy, while states like Bihar are lagging far behind. The inequalities in the literacy rate are specially important because they tend to reproduce inequality across generations. Illiterate parents are at a severe disadvantage in ensuring that their children are well educated, thus perpetuating existing inequalities.

TABLE 4: LITERACY RATE IN INDIA

(Percentage of population 7 years of age and above)

Year	Persons	Males	Females	Male-Female gap in literacy rate
1951	18.3	27.2	8.9	18.3
1961	28.3	40.4	15.4	25.1
1971	34.5	46.0	22.0	24.0
1981	43.6	56.4	29.8	26.6
1991	52.2	64.1	39.3	24.8
2001	65.4	75.9	54.2	21.7

Source: Bose (2001: 22)

2.6 RURAL-URBAN DIFFERENCES

The vast majority of the population of India has always lived in the rural areas, and that continues to be true. The 2001 Census found that 72% of our population still lives in villages, while 28% is living in cities and towns. However, as Table 5 shows, the urban population has been increasing its share steadily, from about 11% at the beginning of the twentieth century to about 28% at the beginning of the twenty-first century, an increase of about two-and-a-half times. It is not a question of numbers alone; processes of modern development ensure that the economic and social significance of the agrarian-rural way of life declines relative to the significance of the industrial-urban way of life. This has been broadly true all over the world, and it is true in India as well.

TABLE 5: RURAL AND URBAN POPULATION

Year	Population (Millions)		Percentage of Total Population	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1901	213	26	89.2	10.8
1911	226	26	89.7	10.3
1921	223	28	88.8	11.2
1931	246	33	88.0	12.0
1941	275	44	86.1	13.9
1951	299	62	82.7	17.3
1961	360	79	82.0	18.0
1971	439	109	80.1	19.9
1981	524	159	76.7	23.3
1991	629	218	74.3	25.7
2001	743	286	72.2	27.8

Source: India 2006, A Reference Annual

Agriculture used to be by far the largest contributor to the country's total economic production, but today it only contributes about one-fourth of the gross domestic product. While the majority of our people live in the rural areas and make their living out of agriculture, the relative economic value of what they produce has fallen drastically. Moreover, more and more people who live in villages may no longer work in agriculture or even in the village. Rural



people are increasingly engaged in non-farm rural occupations like transport services, business enterprises or craft manufacturing. If they are close enough, then they may travel daily to the nearest urban centre to work while continuing to live in the village.

Mass media and communication channels are now bringing images of urban life styles and patterns of consumption into the rural areas. Consequently, urban norms and standards are becoming well known even in the remote villages, creating new desires and aspirations for consumption. Mass transit and mass communication are bridging the gap between the rural and urban areas. Even in the past, the rural areas were never really beyond the reach of market forces and today they are being more closely integrated into the consumer market. (The social role of markets will be discussed in Chapter 4).

Considered from an urban point of view, the rapid growth in urbanisation shows that the town or city has been acting as a magnet for the rural population. Those who cannot find work (or sufficient work) in the rural areas go to the city in search of work. This flow of rural-to-urban migration has also been accelerated by the continuous decline of common property resources like ponds, forests and grazing lands. These common resources enabled poor people to survive in the villages although they owned little or no land. Now, these resources have been turned into private property, or they are exhausted. (Ponds may run dry or no longer provide enough fish; forests may have been cut down and have vanished...) If people no longer have access to these resources, but on the other hand have to buy many things in the market that they used to get free (like fuel, fodder or supplementary food items), then their hardship increases. This hardship is worsened by the fact that opportunities for earning cash income are limited in the villages.

Sometimes the city may also be preferred for social reasons, specially the relative anonymity it offers. The fact that urban life involves interaction with strangers can be an advantage for different reasons. For the socially oppressed groups like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, this may offer some partial protection from the daily humiliation they may suffer in the village where everyone knows their caste identity. The anonymity of the city also allows the poorer sections of the socially dominant rural groups to engage in low status work that they would not be able to do in the village. All these reasons make the city an attractive destination for the villagers. The swelling cities bear testimony to this flow of population. This is evident from the rapid rate of urbanisation in the post-Independence period.

While urbanisation has been occurring at a rapid pace, it is the biggest cities – the metropolises – that have been growing the fastest. These metros

ACTIVITY 2.4

Do a small survey in your school to find out when (i.e., how many generations ago) the families of your fellow students came to live in a city. Tabulate the results and discuss them in class. What does your survey tell you about rural-urban migrations?

attract migrants from the rural areas as well as from small towns. There are now 5,161 towns and cities in India, where 286 million people live. What is striking, however, is that more than two-thirds of the urban population lives in 27 big cities with million-plus populations. Clearly the larger cities in India are growing at such a rapid rate that the urban infrastructure can hardly keep pace. With the mass media's primary focus on these cities, the public face of India is becoming more and more urban rather than rural. Yet in terms of the political power dynamics in the country, the rural areas remain a decisive force.

2.7 POPULATION POLICY IN INDIA



It will be clear from the discussion in this chapter that population dynamics is an important matter and that it crucially affects the developmental prospects of a nation as well as the health and well being of its people. This is particularly true of developing countries who have to face special challenges in this regard. It is hardly surprising therefore that India has had an official population policy for more than a half century. In fact, India was perhaps the first country to explicitly announce such a policy in 1952.

The population policy took the concrete form of the National Family Planning Programme. The broad objectives of this programme have remained the same – to try to influence the rate and pattern of population growth in socially desirable directions. In the early days, the most important objective was to slow down the rate of population growth through the promotion of various birth control methods, improve public health standards, and increase public awareness about population and health issues. Over the past half-century or so, India has many significant achievements to her credit in the field of population, as summarised in Box 2.4.

The Family Planning Programme suffered a setback during the years of the National Emergency (1975-76). Normal parliamentary and legal procedures were suspended during this time and special laws and ordinances issued directly by the government (without being passed by Parliament) were in force. During this time the government tried to intensify the effort to bring down the growth

India's Demographic Achievement

Half a century after formulating the national family welfare programme, India has:

- reduced crude birth rate from 40.8 (1951) to 24.1 (2004, SRS);
- reduced the infant mortality rate from 146 per 1000 live births (1951) to 58 per 1000 live births (2004, SRS);
- quadrupled the couple protection rate from 10.4 percent (1971) to 44 percent (1999);
- reduced crude death rate from 25 (1951) to 7.5 (2004, SRS);
- added 25 years to life expectancy from 37 years to 62 years;
- achieved nearly universal awareness of the need for and methods of family planning, and
- halved the total fertility rate from 6.0 (1951) to 3.0 (2004, SRS).

Box 2.4

Source: National Commission on Population.

National Socio-Demographic Goals for 2010

Box 2.5

- Address the unmet needs for basic reproductive and child health services, supplies and infrastructure.
- Make school education up to age 14 free and compulsory, and reduce drop outs at primary and secondary school levels to below 20 per cent for both boys and girls.
- Reduce infant mortality rate to below 30 per 1000 live births.
- Reduce maternal mortality ratio to below 100 per 100,000 live births.
- Achieve universal immunisation of children against all vaccine preventable diseases.
- Promote delayed marriage for girls, not earlier than age 18 and preferably after 20 years of age.
- Achieve 80 percent institutional deliveries and 100 per cent deliveries by trained persons.
- Achieve universal access to information/counselling, and services for fertility regulation and contraception with a wide basket of choices.
- Achieve 100 per cent registration of births, deaths, marriage and pregnancy.
- Contain the spread of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), and promote greater integration between the management of reproductive tract infections (RTI) and sexually transmitted infections (STI) and the National AIDS Control Organisation.
- Prevent and control communicable diseases.
- Integrate Indian Systems of Medicine (ISM) in the provision of reproductive and child health services, and in reaching out to households.
- Promote vigorously the small family norm to achieve replacement levels of TFR.
- Bring about convergence in implementation of related social sector programmes so that family welfare becomes a people centred programme.

Source: National Commission on Population.

37



Aren't you proud? We are the world's biggest democracy and soon we will be a still bigger democracy!

rate of population by introducing a coercive programme of mass sterilisation. Here sterilisation refers to medical procedures like vasectomy (for men) and tubectomy (for women) which prevent conception and childbirth. Vast numbers of mostly poor and powerless people were forcibly sterilised and there was massive pressure on lower level government officials (like school teachers or office workers) to bring people for sterilisation in the camps that were organised for this purpose. There was widespread popular opposition to this programme, and the new government elected after the Emergency abandoned it.

The National Family Planning Programme was renamed as the National Family Welfare Programme after the Emergency, and coercive methods were no longer used. The programme now has a broad-based set of socio-demographic objectives. A new set of guidelines were formulated as part of the National Population Policy of the year 2000. These are summarised in Box 2.5 in the form of the policy targets set for the year 2010.

The history of India's National Family Welfare Programme teaches us that while the state can do a lot to try and create the conditions for demographic change, most demographic variables (specially those related to human fertility) are ultimately matters of economic, social and cultural change.



The Demographic Structure of the Indian Society

1. Explain the basic argument of the theory of demographic transition. Why is the transition period associated with a 'population explosion'?
2. Why did Malthus believe that catastrophic events like famines and epidemics that cause mass deaths were inevitable?
3. What is meant by 'birth rate' and 'death rate'? Explain why the birth rate is relatively slow to fall while the death rate declines much faster.
4. Which states in India have reached or are very near the 'replacement levels' of population growth? Which ones still have very high rates of population growth? In your opinion, what could be some of the reasons for these regional differences?
5. What is meant by the 'age structure' of the population? Why is it relevant for economic development and growth?
6. What is meant by the 'sex ratio'? What are some of the implications of a declining sex ratio? Do you feel that parents still prefer to have sons rather than daughters? What, in your opinion, could be some of the reasons for this preference?

Questions

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Notes

Chapter 3

Social Institutions Continuity and Change



Having studied the structure and dynamics of the population of India in Chapter 2, we turn now to the study of social institutions. A population is not just a collection of separate, unrelated individuals, it is a society made up of distinct but interlinked classes and communities of various kinds. These communities are sustained and regulated by social institutions and social relationships. In this chapter we will be looking at three institutions that are central to Indian society, namely caste, tribe and family.

3.1 CASTE AND THE CASTE SYSTEM

Like any Indian, you already know that ‘caste’ is the name of an ancient social institution that has been part of Indian history and culture for thousands of years. But like any Indian living in the twenty-first century, you also know that something called ‘caste’ is definitely a part of Indian society today. To what extent are these two ‘castes’ – the one that is supposed to be part of India’s past, and the one that is part of its present – the same thing? This is the question that we will try to answer in this section.

CASTE IN THE PAST

Caste is an institution uniquely associated with the Indian sub-continent. While social arrangements producing similar effects have existed in other parts of the world, the exact form has not been found elsewhere. Although it is an institution characteristic of Hindu society, caste has spread to the major non-Hindu communities of the Indian sub-continent. This is specially true of Muslims, Christians and Sikhs.

As is well-known, the English word ‘caste’ is actually a borrowing from the Portuguese *casta*, meaning pure breed. The word refers to a broad institutional arrangement that in Indian languages (beginning with the ancient Sanskrit) is referred to by two distinct terms, *varna* and *jati*. *Varna*, literally ‘colour’, is the name given to a four-fold division of society into *brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vaishya* and *shudra*, though this excludes a significant section of the population composed of the ‘outcastes’, foreigners, slaves, conquered peoples and others, sometimes referred to as the *panchamas* or fifth category. *Jati* is a generic term referring to species or kinds of anything, ranging from inanimate objects to plants, animals and human beings. *Jati* is the word most commonly used to refer to the institution of caste in Indian languages, though it is interesting to note that, increasingly, Indian language speakers are beginning to use the English word ‘caste’.

The precise relationship between varna and jati has been the subject of much speculation and debate among scholars. The most common interpretation is to treat varna as a broad all-India aggregative classification, while jati is taken to be a regional or local sub-classification involving a much more complex system consisting of hundreds or even thousands of castes and sub-castes.

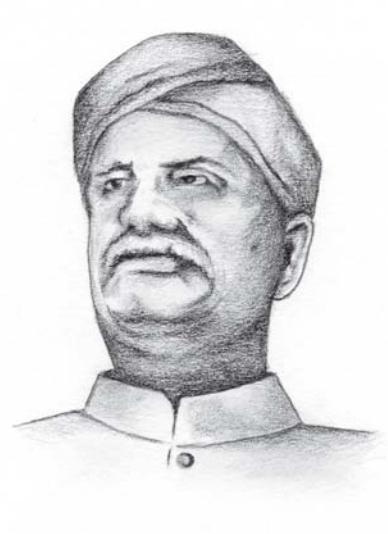
This means that while the four varna classification is common to all of India, the jati hierarchy has more local classifications that vary from region to region.

Opinions also differ on the exact age of the caste system. It is generally agreed, though, that the four varna classification is roughly three thousand years old. However, the 'caste system' stood for different things in different time periods, so that it is misleading to think of the same system continuing for three thousand years. In its earliest phase, in the late Vedic period roughly between 900 — 500 BC, the caste system was really a varna system and consisted of only four major divisions. These divisions were not very elaborate or very rigid, and they were not determined by birth. Movement across the categories seems to have been not only possible but quite common. It is only in the post-Vedic period that caste became the rigid institution that is familiar to us from well known definitions.

The most commonly cited defining features of caste are the following:

1. Caste is determined by birth – a child is “born into” the caste of its parents. Caste is never a matter of choice. One can never change one’s caste, leave it, or choose not to join it, although there are instances where a person may be expelled from their caste.
2. Membership in a caste involves strict rules about marriage. Caste groups are “endogamous”, i.e. marriage is restricted to members of the group.
3. Caste membership also involves rules about food and food-sharing. What kinds of food may or may not be eaten is prescribed and who one may share food with is also specified.
4. Caste involves a system consisting of many castes arranged in a hierarchy of rank and status. In theory, every person has a caste, and every caste has a specified place in the hierarchy of all castes. While the hierarchical position of many castes, particularly in the middle ranks, may vary from region to region, there is always a hierarchy.
5. Castes also involve sub-divisions within themselves, i.e., castes almost always have sub-castes and sometimes sub-castes may also have sub-sub-castes. This is referred to as a segmental organisation.
6. Castes were traditionally linked to occupations. A person born into a caste could only practice the occupation associated with that caste, so that occupations were hereditary, i.e. passed on from generation to

Ayyankali
(1863 - 1914)



Ayyankali, born in Kerala, was a leader of the lower castes and Dalits. With his efforts, Dalits got the freedom to walk on public roads, and Dalit children were allowed to join schools.

Jyotirao Govindrao Phule (1827-1890)



Jyotirao Govindrao Phule denounced the injustice of the caste system and scorned its rules of purity and pollution. In 1873 he founded the Satyashodhak Samaj (Truth Seekers Society), which was devoted to securing human rights and social justice for low-caste people.

generation. On the other hand, a particular occupation could only be pursued by the caste associated with it – members of other castes could not enter the occupation.

These features are the prescribed rules found in ancient scriptural texts. Since these prescriptions were not always practiced, we cannot say to what extent these rules actually determined the empirical reality of caste – its concrete meaning for the people living at that time. As you can see, most of the prescriptions involved prohibitions or restrictions of various sorts. It is also clear from the historical evidence that caste was a very unequal institution – some castes benefitted greatly from the system, while others were condemned to a life of endless labour and subordination. Most important, once caste became rigidly determined by birth, it was in principle impossible for a person to ever change their life circumstances. Whether they deserved it or not, an upper caste person would always have high status, while a lower caste person would always be of low status.

Theoretically, the caste system can be understood as the combination of two sets of principles, one based on difference and separation and the other on wholism and hierarchy. Each caste is supposed to be different from – and is therefore strictly separated from – every other caste. Many of the scriptural rules of caste are thus designed to prevent the mixing of castes – rules ranging from marriage, food sharing and social interaction to occupation. On the other hand, these different and separated castes do not have an individual existence – they can only exist in relation

to a larger whole, the totality of society consisting of all castes. Further, this societal whole or system is a hierarchical rather than egalitarian system. Each individual caste occupies not just a distinct place, but also an ordered rank – a particular position in a ladder-like arrangement going from highest to lowest.

The hierarchical ordering of castes is based on the distinction between ‘purity’ and ‘pollution’. This is a division between something believed to be closer to the sacred (thus connoting ritual purity), and something believed to be distant from or opposed to the sacred, therefore considered ritually polluting. Castes that are considered ritually pure have high status, while those considered less pure or impure have low status. As in all societies, material power (i.e., economic or military power) is closely associated with social status, so that those in power tend to be of high status, and vice versa. Historians believe that those who were defeated in wars were often assigned low caste status.

Finally, castes are not only unequal to each other in ritual terms, they are also supposed to be complementary and non-competing groups. In other words,

each caste has its own place in the system which cannot be taken by any other caste. Since caste is also linked with occupation, the system functions as the social division of labour, except that, in principle, it allows no mobility.

Not surprisingly, our sources of knowledge about the past and specially the ancient past are inadequate. It is difficult to be very certain about what things were like at that time, or the reasons why some institutions and practices came to be established. But even if we knew all this, it still cannot tell us about what should be done today. Just because something happened in the past or is part of our tradition, it is not necessarily right or wrong forever. Every age has to think afresh about such questions and come to its own collective decision about its social institutions.

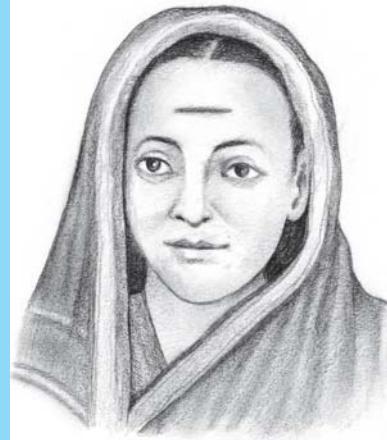
COLONIALISM AND CASTE

Compared to the ancient past, we know a lot more about caste in our recent history. If modern history is taken to begin with the nineteenth century, then Indian Independence in 1947 offers a natural dividing line between the colonial period (roughly 150 years from around 1800 to 1947) and the post-Independence or post-colonial period (the six decades from 1947 to the present day). The present form of caste as a social institution has been shaped very strongly by both the colonial period as well as the rapid changes that have come about in independent India.

Scholars have agreed that all major social institutions and specially the institution of caste underwent major changes during the colonial period. In fact, some scholars argue that what we know today as caste is more a product of colonialism than of ancient Indian tradition. Not all of the changes brought about were intended or deliberate. Initially, the British administrators began by trying to understand the complexities of caste in an effort to learn how to govern the country efficiently. Some of these efforts took the shape of very methodical and intensive surveys and reports on the 'customs and manners' of various tribes and castes all over the country. Many British administrative officials were also amateur ethnologists and took great interest in pursuing such surveys and studies.

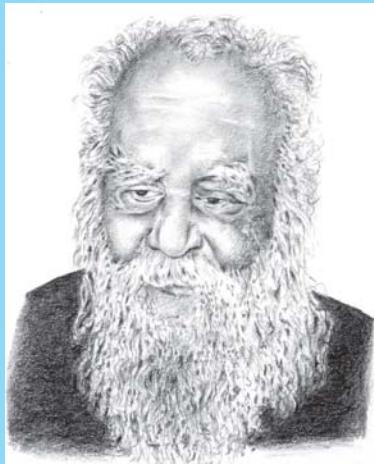
But by far the most important official effort to collect information on caste was through the census. First begun in the 1860s, the census became a regular ten-yearly exercise conducted by the British Indian government from 1881 onwards. The 1901 Census under the direction of Herbert Risley was particularly important as it sought to collect information on the social hierarchy of caste – i.e., the social order of precedence in particular regions, as to the position of

**Savitri Bai Phule
(1831-1897)**



Savitri Bai Phule was the first headmistress of the country's first school for girls in Pune. She devoted her life to educating Shudras and Ati-Shudras. She started a night school for agriculturists and labourers. She died while serving plague patients.

**Periyar (E.V. Ramasami Naickar)
(1879-1973)**



Periyar (E.V. Ramasami Naickar) is known as a rationalist and the leader of the lower caste movement in South India. He aroused people to realise that all men are equal, and that it is the birthright of every individual to enjoy liberty and equality.

each caste in the rank order. This effort had a huge impact on social perceptions of caste and hundreds of petitions were addressed to the Census Commissioner by representatives of different castes claiming a higher position in the social scale and offering historical and scriptural evidence for their claims. Overall, scholars feel that this kind of direct attempt to count caste and to officially record caste status changed the institution itself. Before this kind of intervention, caste identities had been much more fluid and less rigid; once they began to be counted and recorded, caste began to take on a new life.

Other interventions by the colonial state also had an impact on the institution. The land revenue settlements and related arrangements and laws served to give legal recognition to the customary (caste-based) rights of the upper castes. These castes now became land owners in the modern sense rather than feudal classes with claims on the produce of the land, or claims to revenue or tribute of various kinds. Large scale irrigation schemes like the ones in the Punjab were accompanied by efforts to settle populations there, and these also had a caste dimension. At the other end of the scale, towards the end of the colonial period, the administration also took an interest in the welfare of downtrodden castes, referred to as the 'depressed classes' at that time. It was as part of these efforts that the Government of India Act of 1935 was passed which gave legal recognition to the lists or 'schedules' of castes and tribes marked out for special treatment by the state.

This is how the terms 'Scheduled Tribes' and the 'Scheduled Castes' came into being. Castes at the bottom of the hierarchy that suffered severe discrimination, including all the so-called 'untouchable' castes, were included among the Scheduled Castes. (You will read more on untouchability and the struggles against it in Chapter 5 on social exclusion.)

Thus colonialism brought about major changes in the institution of caste. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the institution of caste underwent fundamental changes during the colonial period. Not just India, but the whole world was undergoing rapid change during this period due to the spread of capitalism and modernity.

CASTE IN THE PRESENT

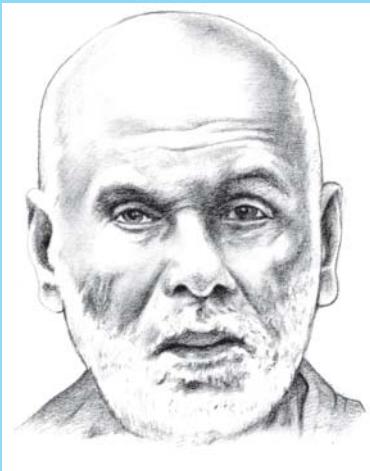
Indian Independence in 1947 marked a big, but ultimately only partial break with the colonial past. Caste considerations had inevitably played a role in the mass mobilisations of the nationalist movement. Efforts to organise the

“depressed classes” and particularly the untouchable castes predated the nationalist movement, having begun in the second half of the nineteenth century. This was an initiative taken from both ends of the caste spectrum – by upper caste progressive reformers as well as by members of the lower castes such as Mahatma Jotiba Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar in western India, Ayyankali, Sri Narayana Guru, Iyotheedass and Periyar (E.V. Ramaswamy Naickar) in the South. Both Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar began organising protests against untouchability from the 1920s onwards. Anti-untouchability programmes became a significant part of the Congress agenda so that, by the time Independence was on the horizon, there was a broad agreement across the spectrum of the nationalist movement to abolish caste distinctions. The dominant view in the nationalist movement was to treat caste as a social evil and as a colonial ploy to divide Indians. But the nationalist leaders, above all, Mahatma Gandhi, were able to simultaneously work for the upliftment of the lowest castes, advocate the abolition of untouchability and other caste restrictions, and, at the same time, reassure the landowning upper castes that their interests, too, would be looked after.

The post-Independence Indian state inherited and reflected these contradictions. On the one hand, the state was committed to the abolition of caste and explicitly wrote this into the Constitution. On the other hand, the state was both unable and unwilling to push through radical reforms which would have undermined the economic basis for caste inequality. At yet another level, the state assumed that if it operated in a caste-blind manner, this would automatically lead to the undermining of caste based privileges and the eventual abolition of the institution. For example, appointments to government jobs took no account of caste, thus leaving the well-educated upper castes and the ill-educated or often illiterate lower castes to compete on “equal” terms. The only exception to this was in the form of reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In other words, in the decades immediately after Independence, the state did not make sufficient effort to deal with the fact that the upper castes and the lower castes were far from equal in economic and educational terms.

The development activity of the state and the growth of private industry also affected caste indirectly through the speeding up and intensification of economic change. Modern industry created all kinds of new jobs for which there were no caste rules. Urbanisation and the conditions of collective living in the cities made it difficult for the caste-segregated patterns of social interaction to survive. At a different level, modern educated Indians attracted to the liberal

**Sri Narayana Guru
(1856-1928)**



Sri Narayana Guru, born in Kerala, preached brotherhood for all and fought against the ill effects of the caste system. He led a quiet but significant social revolution and gave the watchwords ‘One Caste, One Religion, One God for all men’.

ideas of individualism and meritocracy, began to abandon the more extreme caste practices. On the other hand, it was remarkable how resilient caste proved to be. Recruitment to industrial jobs, whether in the textile mills of Mumbai (then Bombay), the jute mills of Kolkata (then Calcutta), or elsewhere, continued to be organised along caste and kinship-based lines. The middle men who recruited labour for factories tended to recruit them from their own caste and region so that particular departments or shop floors were often dominated by specific castes. Prejudice against the untouchables remained quite strong and was not absent from the city, though not as extreme as it could be in the village.

Not surprisingly, it was in the cultural and domestic spheres that caste has proved strongest. Endogamy, or the practice of marrying within the caste, remained largely unaffected by modernisation and change. Even today, most marriages take place within caste boundaries, although there are more intercaste marriages. While some boundaries may have become more flexible or porous, the borders between groups of castes of similar socio-economic status are still heavily patrolled. For example, inter-caste marriages within the upper castes (eg., brahmin, bania, rajput) may be more likely now than before; but marriages between an upper caste and backward or scheduled caste person remain rare even today. Something similar may have occurred with regard to rules of food sharing.

Perhaps, the most eventful and important sphere of change has been that of politics. From its very beginnings in independent India, democratic politics has been deeply conditioned by caste. While its functioning has become more and more complex and hard to predict, it cannot be denied that caste remains central to electoral politics. Since the 1980s we have also seen the emergence of explicitly caste-based political parties. In the early general elections, it seemed as though caste solidarities were decisive in winning elections. But the situation soon got very complicated as parties competed with each other in utilising the same kind of caste calculus.

Sociologists and social anthropologists coined many new concepts to try and understand these processes of change. Perhaps the most common of these are ‘sanskritisation’ and ‘dominant caste’, both contributed by M.N. Srinivas, but discussed extensively and criticised by other scholars.

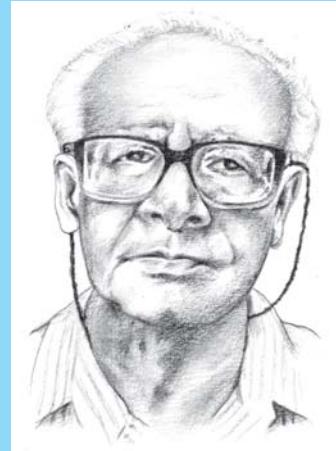
‘Sanskritisation’ refers to a process whereby members of a (usually middle or lower) caste attempt to raise their own social status by adopting the ritual, domestic and social practices of a caste (or castes) of higher status. Although this phenomenon is an old one and predates Independence and perhaps even the colonial period, it has intensified in recent times. The patterns for emulation chosen most often were the brahmin or kshatriya castes; practices included adopting vegetarianism, wearing of sacred thread, performance of specific prayers and religious ceremonies, and so on. Sanskritisation usually accompanies or follows a rise in the economic status of the caste attempting it, though it may also occur independently. Subsequent research has led to many modifications and revisions being suggested for this concept. These include the argument that sanskritisation may be a defiant claiming of previously

prohibited ritual/social privileges (such as the wearing of the sacred thread, which used to invite severe punishment) rather than a flattering imitation of the ‘upper’ castes by the ‘lower’ castes.

‘Dominant caste’ is a term used to refer to those castes which had a large population and were granted landrights by the partial land reforms effected after Independence. The land reforms took away rights from the erstwhile claimants, the upper castes who were ‘absentee landlords’ in the sense that they played no part in the agricultural economy other than claiming their rent. They frequently did not live in the village either, but were based in towns and cities. These land rights now came to be vested in the next layer of claimants, those who were involved in the management of agriculture but were not themselves the cultivators. These intermediate castes in turn depended on the labour of the lower castes including specially the ‘untouchable’ castes for tilling and tending the land. However, once they got land rights, they acquired considerable economic power. Their large numbers also gave them political power in the era of electoral democracy based on universal adult franchise. Thus, these intermediate castes became the ‘dominant’ castes in the country side and played a decisive role in regional politics and the agrarian economy. Examples of such dominant castes include the Yadavs of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the Vokkaligas of Karnataka, the Reddys and Khammas of Andhra Pradesh, the Marathas of Maharashtra, the Jats of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh and the Patidars of Gujarat.

One of the most significant yet paradoxical changes in the caste system in the contemporary period is that it has tended to become ‘invisible’ for the upper caste, urban middle and upper classes. For these groups, who have benefited the most from the developmental policies of the post-colonial era, caste has appeared to decline in significance precisely because it has done its job so well. Their caste status had been crucial in ensuring that these groups had the necessary economic and educational resources to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by rapid development. In particular, the upper caste elite were able to benefit from subsidised public education, specially professional education in science, technology, medicine and management. At the same time, they were also able to take advantage of the expansion of state sector jobs in the early decades after Independence. In this initial period, their lead over the rest of society (in terms of education) ensured that they did not face any serious competition. As their privileged status got consolidated in the second and third generations, these groups began to believe that their advancement

M. N. Srinivas
(1916-1999)



Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas was one of India’s foremost sociologists and social anthropologists. He was known for his works on the caste system and terms such as ‘sanskritisation’ and ‘dominant caste’. His book *The Remembered Village* is one of the best known village studies in Social Anthropology.

had little to do with caste. Certainly for the third generations from these groups their economic and educational capital alone is quite sufficient to ensure that they will continue to get the best in terms of life chances. For this group, it now seems that caste plays no part in their public lives, being limited to the personal sphere of religious practice or marriage and kinship. However, a further complication is introduced by the fact that this is a differentiated group. Although the privileged as a group are overwhelmingly upper caste, not all upper caste people are privileged, some being poor.

For the so called scheduled castes and tribes and the backward castes – the opposite has happened. For them, caste has become all too visible, indeed their caste has tended to eclipse the other dimensions of their identities. Because they have no inherited educational and social capital, and because they must compete with an already entrenched upper caste group, they cannot afford to abandon their caste identity for it is one of the few collective assets they have. Moreover, they continue to suffer from discrimination of various kinds. The policies of reservation and other forms of protective discrimination instituted by the state in response to political pressure serve as their lifelines. But using this lifeline tends to make their caste the all-important and often the only aspect of their identity that the world recognises.

The juxtaposition of these two groups – a seemingly caste-less upper caste group and an apparently caste-defined lower caste group – is one of the central aspects of the institution of caste in the present.

3.2 TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

'Tribe' is a modern term for communities that are very old, being among the oldest inhabitants of the sub-continent. Tribes in India have generally been defined in terms of what they were *not*. Tribes were communities that did not practice a religion with a written text; did not have a state or political form of the normal kind; did not have sharp class divisions; and, most important, they did not have caste and were neither Hindus nor peasants. The term was introduced in the colonial era. The use of a single term for a very disparate set of communities was more a matter of administrative convenience.

CLASSIFICATIONS OF TRIBAL SOCIETIES

In terms of positive characteristics, tribes have been classified according to their 'permanent' and 'acquired' traits. Permanent traits include region, language, physical characteristics and ecological habitat.

PERMANENT TRAITS

The tribal population of India is widely dispersed, but there are also concentrations in certain regions. About 85% of the tribal population lives in

'middle India', a wide band stretching from Gujarat and Rajasthan in the west to West Bengal and Orissa in the east, with Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and parts of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh forming the heart of this region. Of the remaining 15%, over 11% is in the North Eastern states, leaving only a little over 3% living in the rest of India. If we look at the share of tribals in the state population, then the North Eastern states have the highest concentrations, with all states except Assam having concentrations of more than 30%, and some like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland with more than 60% and upto 95% of tribal population. In the rest of the country, however, the tribal population is very small, being less than 12% in all states except Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The ecological habitats covered include hills, forests, rural plains and urban industrial areas.

In terms of language, tribes are categorised into four categories. Two of them, Indo-Aryan and Dravidian, are shared by the rest of the Indian population as well, and tribes account for only about 1% of the former and about 3% of the latter. The other two language groups, the Austric and Tibeto-Burman, are primarily spoken by tribals, who account for all of the first and over 80% of the second group. In physical-racial terms, tribes are classified under the Negrito, Australoid, Mongoloid, Dravidian and Aryan categories. The last two are again shared with the rest of the population of India.

In terms of size, tribes vary a great deal, ranging from about seven million to some Andamanese islanders who may number less than a hundred persons. The biggest tribes are the Gonds, Bhils, Santhals, Oraons, Minas, Bodos and Mundas, all of whom are at least a million strong. The total population of tribes amounts to about 8.2% of the population of India, or about 84 million persons according to the 2001 Census.

ACQUIRED CHARACTERISTICS

Classifications based on acquired traits use two main criteria – mode of livelihood, and extent of incorporation into Hindu society – or a combination of the two.

On the basis of livelihood, tribes can be categorised into fishermen, food gatherers and hunters, shifting cultivators, peasants and plantation and industrial workers. However, the dominant classification both in academic sociology as well as in politics and public affairs is the degree of assimilation into Hindu society. Assimilation can be seen either from the point of view of the tribes, or (as has been most often the case) from the point of view of the dominant Hindu mainstream. From the tribe's point of view, apart from the extent of assimilation, attitude towards Hindu society is also a major criterion, with differentiation between tribes that are positively inclined towards Hinduism and those who resist or oppose it. From the mainstream point of view, tribes may be viewed in terms of the status accorded to them in Hindu society, ranging from the high status given to some, to the generally low status accorded to most.

TRIBE – THE CAREER OF A CONCEPT

During the 1960s scholars debated whether tribes should be seen as one end of a continuum with caste-based (Hindu) peasant society, or whether they were an altogether different kind of community. Those who argued for the continuum saw tribes as not being fundamentally different from caste-peasant society, but merely less stratified (fewer levels of hierarchy) and with a more community-based rather than individual notion of resource ownership. However, opponents argued that tribes were wholly different from castes because they had no notion of purity and pollution which is central to the caste system.



In short, the argument for a tribe-caste distinction was founded on an assumed cultural difference between Hindu castes, with their beliefs in purity and pollution and hierarchical integration, and 'animist' tribals with their more egalitarian and kinship based modes of social organisation.

By the 1970s all the major definitions of tribe were shown to be faulty. It was pointed out that the tribe-peasantry distinction did not hold in terms of any of the commonly advanced criteria: size, isolation, religion, and

means of livelihood. Some Indian "tribes" like Santhal, Gonds, and Bhils are very large and spread over extensive territory. Certain tribes like Munda, Hos and others have long since turned to settled agriculture, and even hunting gathering tribes, like the Birhors of Bihar employ specialised households to make baskets, press oil etc. It has also been pointed out in a number of cases, that in the absence of other alternatives, "castes" (or non-tribals) have turned to hunting and gathering.

The discussion on caste-tribe differences was accompanied by a large body of literature on the mechanisms through which tribes were absorbed into Hindu society, throughout the ages – through Sanskritisation, acceptance into the Shudra fold following conquest by caste Hindus, through acculturation and so on. The whole span of Indian history is often seen as an absorption of different tribal groups into caste Hindu society at varying levels of the hierarchy, as their lands were colonised and the forests cut down. This is seen as either natural, parallel to the process by which all groups are assimilated into Hinduism as sects; or it is seen as exploitative. The early school of anthropologists tended to emphasise the cultural aspects of tribal absorption

into the mainstream, while the later writers have concentrated on the exploitative and political nature of the incorporation.

Some scholars have also argued that there is no coherent basis for treating tribes as “pristine” – i.e., original or pure – societies uncontaminated by civilisation. They propose instead that tribes should really be seen as “secondary” phenomena arising out of the exploitative and colonialist contact between pre-existing states and non-state groups like the tribals. This contact itself creates an ideology of “tribalism” – the tribal groups begin to define themselves as tribals in order to distinguish themselves from the newly encountered others.

Nevertheless, the idea that tribes are like stone age hunting and gathering societies that have remained untouched by time is still common, even though this has not been true for a long time. To begin with, adivasis were not always the oppressed groups they are now – there were several Gond kingdoms in Central India such as that of Garha Mandla, or Chanda. Many of the so-called Rajput kingdoms of central and western India actually emerged through a process of stratification among adivasi communities themselves. adivasis often exercised dominance over the plains people through their capacity to raid them, and through their services as local militias. They also occupied a special trade niche, trading forest produce, salt and elephants. Moreover, the capitalist economy’s drive to exploit forest resources and minerals and to recruit cheap labour has brought tribal societies in contact with mainstream society a long time ago.

MAINSTREAM ATTITUDES TOWARDS TRIBES

Although the early anthropological work of the colonial era had described tribes as isolated cohesive communities, colonialism had already brought irrevocable changes in their world. On the political and economic front, tribal societies were faced with the incursion of money lenders. They were also losing their land to non-tribal immigrant settlers, and their access to forests because of the government policy of reservation of forests and the introduction of mining operations. Unlike other areas, where land rent was the primary source of surplus extraction, in these hilly and forested areas, it was mostly appropriation of natural resources – forests and minerals – which was the main source of income for the colonial government. Following the various rebellions in tribal areas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the colonial government set up ‘excluded’ and ‘partially excluded’ areas, where the entry of non-tribals was prohibited or regulated. In these areas, the British favoured indirect rule through local kings or headmen.

The famous isolation versus integration debate of the 1940s built upon this standard picture of tribal societies as isolated wholes. The isolationist side argued that tribals needed protection from traders, moneylenders and Hindu and Christian missionaries, all of whom were intent on reducing tribals to detribalised landless labour. The integrationists, on the other hand, argued that tribals were merely backward Hindus, and their problems had to be

addressed within the same framework as that of other backward classes. This opposition dominated the Constituent Assembly debates, which were finally settled along the lines of a compromise which advocated welfare schemes that would enable controlled integration. The subsequent schemes for tribal development – five year plans, tribal sub-plans, tribal welfare blocks, special multipurpose area schemes all continue with this mode of thinking. But the basic issue here is that the integration of tribes has neglected their own needs or desires; integration has been on the terms of the mainstream society and for its own benefit. The tribal societies have had their lands, forests taken away and their communities shattered in the name of development.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VERSUS TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT

The imperatives of ‘development’ have governed attitudes towards tribes and shaped the policies of the state. National development, particularly in the Nehruvian era, involved the building of large dams, factories and mines. Because the tribal areas were located in mineral rich and forest covered parts of the country, tribals have paid a disproportionate price for the development of the rest of Indian society. This kind of development has benefited the mainstream at the expense of the tribes. The process of dispossessing tribals of their land has occurred as a necessary byproduct of the exploitation of minerals and the utilisation of favourable sites for setting up hydroelectric power plants, many of which were in tribal areas.

The loss of the forests on which most tribal communities depended has been a major blow. Forests started to be systematically exploited in British times and the trend continued after Independence. The coming of private property in land has also adversely affected tribals, whose community-based forms of collective ownership were placed at a disadvantage in the new system. The most recent such example is the series of dams being built on the Narmada, where most of the costs and benefits seem to flow disproportionately to different communities and regions.

Many tribal concentration regions and states have also been experiencing the problem of heavy in-migration of non-tribals in response to the pressures of development. This threatens to disrupt and overwhelm tribal communities and cultures, besides accelerating the process of exploitation of tribals. The industrial areas of Jharkhand for example have suffered a dilution of the tribal share of population. But the most dramatic cases are probably in the North-East. A state like Tripura had the tribal share of its population halved within a single decade, reducing them to a minority. Similar pressure is being felt by Arunachal Pradesh.

TRIBAL IDENTITY TODAY

today are formed by this interactional process rather than any primordial (original, ancient) characteristics peculiar to tribes. Because the interaction with the mainstream has generally been on terms unfavourable to the tribal communities, many tribal identities today are centred on ideas of resistance and opposition to the overwhelming force of the non-tribal world.

The positive impact of successes – such as the achievement of statehood for Jharkhand and Chattisgarh after a long struggle – is moderated by continuing problems. Many of the states of the North-East, for example, have been living for decades under special laws that limit the civil liberties of citizens. Thus, citizens of states like Manipur or Nagaland don't have the same rights as other citizens of India because their states have been declared as 'disturbed areas'. The vicious circle of armed rebellions provoking state repression which in turn fuels further rebellions has taken a heavy toll on the economy, culture and society of the North-eastern states. In another part of the country, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh are yet to make full use of their new-found statehood, and the political system there is still not autonomous of larger structures in which tribals are powerless.

Another significant development is the gradual emergence of an educated middle class among tribal communities. Most visible in the North-eastern states, this is now a segment beginning to be seen in the rest of the country as well, particularly among members of the larger tribal communities. In conjunction with policies of reservation (about which you will learn more in Chapter 5), education is creating an urbanised professional class. As tribal societies get more differentiated – i.e., develop class and other divisions within themselves – different bases are growing for the assertion of tribal identity.

Two broad sets of issues have been most important in giving rise to tribal movements. These are issues relating to control over vital economic resources like land and specially forests, and issues relating to matters of ethnic-cultural identity. The two can often go together, but with differentiation of tribal society they may also diverge. The reasons why the middle classes within tribal societies may assert their tribal identity may be different from the reasons why poor and uneducated tribals join tribal movements. As with any other community, it is the relationship between these kinds of internal dynamics and external forces that will shape the future.



Box 3.1

Assertions of tribal identity are on the rise. This can be laid at the door of the emergence of a middle class within the tribal society. With the emergence of this class in particular, issues of culture, tradition, livelihood, even control over land and resources, as well as demands for a share in the benefits of the projects of modernity, have become an integral part of the articulation of identity among the tribes. There is, therefore, a new consciousness among tribes now, coming from its middle classes. The middle classes themselves are a consequence of modern education and modern occupations, aided in turn by the reservation policies...

(Source: Virginius Xaxa, 'Culture, Politics and Identity: The Case of the Tribes in India', in John et al 2006)

3.3 FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Each one of us is born into a family, and most of us spend long years within it. Usually we feel very strongly about our family. Sometimes we feel very good about our parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins, whereas at others we don't. On the one hand, we resent their interference, and yet we miss their overbearing ways when we are away from them. The family is a space of great warmth and care. It has also been a site of bitter conflicts, injustice and violence. Female infanticide, violent conflicts between brothers over property and ugly legal disputes are as much part of family and kinship as are stories of compassion, sacrifice and care.

The structure of the family can be studied both as a social institution in itself and also in its relationship to other social institutions of society. In itself a family can be defined as nuclear or extended. It can be male-headed or female-headed. The line of descent can be matrilineal or patrilineal. This internal structure of the family is usually related to other structures of society, namely political, economic, cultural etc. Thus the migration of men from the villages of the Himalayan region can lead to an unusual proportion of women-headed families in the village. Or the work schedules of young parents in the software industry in India may lead to increasing number of grandparents moving in as care-givers to young grandchildren. The composition of the family and its structure thereby changes. And these changes can be understood in relation to other changes in society. The family (the private sphere) is linked to the economic, political, cultural, and educational (the public) spheres.

The family is an integral part of our lives. We take it for granted. We also assume that other people's families must be like our own. (This and other dimensions of the family have been discussed in Chapter 1, of your Class XI textbook, *Introducing Society*) As we saw however, families have different structures and these structures change. Sometimes these changes occur

accidentally, as when a war takes place or people migrate in search of work. Sometimes these changes are purposely brought about, as when young people decide to choose their spouses instead of letting elders decide. Or when same sex love is expressed openly in society.

The present study...deals with a Muslim *biradri* (community) called the Multani Lohars. ... Karkhanedar is a vernacular term used for a person engaged in the business of manufacturing of which he is generally the owner...The karkhanas under study operate in domestic conditions and, therefore, have certain pervasive effects on the life of the karkhanedars who work in them. ...The following case illustrates this.

Mahmood, aged forty years, was living with his two younger brothers, one of whom was married. He had three children and was the head of the complex household. ...All the three brothers were employed in various karkhanas and factories as skilled workers. Mahmood successfully fabricated replica of a motor part the import of which had been banned. This greatly encouraged him to start his own karkhana...Later it was decided that two karkhanas should be set up to manufacture the motor part. One was to be owned by the two elder brothers, and the other by the youngest, provided he set up a separate household. Rasheed set up an independent household, consisting of his wife and unmarried children. Therefore, one complex household, comprising three married brothers, gave birth to a simple household as a result of new entrepreneurial opportunities.

Excerpted from S.M. Akram Rizvi, 'Kinship and Industry among the Muslim Karkhanedars in Delhi', in Imtiaz Ahmad, ed. *Family, Kinship and Marriage among Muslims in India*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1976, pp. 27-48.

Box 3.2

It is evident from the kind of changes that take place that not only are family structures changed, but cultural ideas, norms and values also change. These changes are however not so easy to bring about. Both history and contemporary times suggest that often change in family and marriage norms are resisted violently. The family has many dimensions to it. In India however discussions on the family have often revolved around the nuclear and extended family.

NUCLEAR AND EXTENDED FAMILY

A nuclear family consists of only one set of parents and their children. An extended family (commonly known as the 'joint family') can take different forms, but has more than one couple, and often more than two generations, living together. This could be a set of brothers with their individual families, or an elderly couple with their sons and grandsons and their respective families. The extended family often is seen as symptomatic of India. Yet this is by no means the dominant form now or earlier. It was confined to certain sections and certain regions of the community. Indeed the term 'joint family' itself is not a native category. As I.P. Desai observes, "The expression 'joint family' is not the translation of any Indian word like that. It is interesting to note that the words used for joint family in most of the Indian languages are the equivalents of translations of the English word 'joint family'." (Desai 1964:40)

THE DIVERSE FORMS OF THE FAMILY

Studies have shown how diverse family forms are found in different societies. With regard to the rule of *residence*, some societies are *matrilocal* in their marriage and family customs while others are *patrilocal*. In the first case, the newly married couple stays with the woman's parents, whereas in the second case the couple lives with the man's parents. With regard to the rules of inheritance, *matrilineal* societies pass on property from mother to daughter while *patrilineal* societies do so from father to son. A *patriarchal* family structure exists where the men exercise authority and dominance, and *matriarchy* where the women play a similarly dominant role. However, matriarchy – unlike patriarchy – has been a theoretical rather than an empirical concept. There is no historical or anthropological evidence of matriarchy – i.e., societies where women exercise dominance. However, there do exist *matrilineal* societies, i.e., societies where women inherit property from their mothers but do not exercise control over it, nor are they the decision makers in public affairs.

The account of Khasi matriliney in Box 3.3 clarifies the distinction between matriliney and matriarchy. It shows the structural tensions created by matriliney which affect both men and women in Khasi society today.



Box 3.3

The Meghalaya Succession Act (passed by an all-male Meghalaya legislative assembly) received the President's assent in 1986. The Succession Act applies specifically to the Khasi and Jaintia tribes of Meghalaya and confers on 'any Khasi and Jaintia of sound mind not being a minor, the right to dispose of his self-acquired property by will'. The practice of making out a **will** does not exist in Khasi custom. Khasi custom prescribes the devolution of ancestral property in the female line.

There is a feeling, specially among the educated Khasi, that their rules of kinship and inheritance are biased in favour of women and are too restrictive. The Succession Act is therefore seen as an attempt at removing such restrictions and at correcting the perceived female bias in the Khasi tradition. To assess whether the popular perception of female bias in the Khasi tradition is indeed valid, it is necessary to view the Khasi matrilineal system in the context of the prevalent gender relations and definitions of gender roles.

Several scholars have highlighted the inherent contradictions in matrilineal systems. One such contradiction arises from the separation of the line of descent and inheritance on the one hand and the structure of authority and control on the other. The former, which links the mother to the daughter, comes in conflict with the latter, which links the mother's brother to the sister's son. [In other words, a woman inherits property from her mother and passes it on to her daughter, while a man controls his sister's property and passes on control to his sister's son. Thus, inheritance passes from mother to daughter whereas control passes from (maternal) uncle to nephew.]

Khasi matriliney generates intense role conflict for men. They are torn between their responsibilities to their natal house on the one hand, and to their wife and children on the other. In a way, the strain generated by such role conflict affects Khasi women more intensely. A woman can never be fully assured that her husband does not find his sister's house a more congenial place than her own. Similarly a sister will be apprehensive about her brother's commitment to her welfare because the wife with whom he lives can always pull him away from his responsibilities to his natal house.

The women are more adversely affected than men by the role conflict generated in the Khasi matrilineal system not only because men wield power and women are deprived of it, but also because the system is more lenient to men when there is a transgression of rules. Women possess only token authority in Khasi society; it is men who are the defacto power holders. The system is indeed weighted in favour of male matri-kin rather than male patri-kin. [In other words, despite matriliney, men are the power holders in Khasi society; the only difference is that a man's relatives on his mother's side matter more than his relatives on his father's side.]

(Source: Adapted from Tiplut Nongbri, 'Gender and the Khasi Family Structure' in Uberoi 1994.)

Questions

1. What is the role of the ideas of separation and hierarchy in the caste system?
2. What are some of the rules that the caste system imposes?
3. What changes did colonialism bring about in the caste system?
4. In what sense has caste become relatively 'invisible' for the urban upper castes?
5. How have tribes been classified in India?
6. What evidence would you offer against the view that 'tribes are primitive communities living isolated lives untouched by civilisation'?
7. What are the factors behind the assertion of tribal identities today?
8. What are some of the different forms that the family can take?
9. In what ways can changes in social structure lead to changes in the family structure?
10. Explain the difference between matriliney and matriarchy.

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Chapter 4

The Market as a Social Institution



We usually think of markets as places where things are bought and sold. In this common everyday usage, the word 'market' may refer to particular markets that we may know of, such as the market next to the railway station, the fruit market, or the wholesale market. Sometimes we refer not to the physical place, but to the gathering of people – buyers and sellers – who constitute the market. Thus, for example, a weekly vegetable market may be found in different places on different days of the week in neighbouring villages or urban neighbourhoods. In yet another sense, 'market' refers to an area or category of trade or business, such as the market for cars or the market for readymade clothes. A related sense refers to the demand for a particular product or service, such as the market for computer professionals.

What all of these meanings have in common is that they refer to a specific market, whose meaning is readily understandable from the context. But what does it mean to speak of 'the market' in a general way without referring to any particular place, gathering of people, or field of commercial activity? This usage includes not only all of the specific senses mentioned above, but also the entire spectrum of economic activities and institutions. In this very broad sense, then, 'the market' is almost equivalent to 'the economy'. We are used to thinking of the market as an economic institution, but this chapter will show you that the market is also a *social* institution. In its own way, the market is comparable to more obviously social institutions like caste, tribe or family discussed in Chapter 3.

4.1 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MARKETS AND THE ECONOMY

The discipline of economics is aimed at understanding and explaining how markets work in modern capitalist economies – for instance, how prices are determined, the probable impact of specific kinds of investment, or the factors that influence people to save or spend. So what does sociology have to contribute to the study of markets that goes beyond what economics can tell us?

To answer this question, we need to go back briefly to eighteenth century England and the beginnings of modern economics, which at that time was called 'political economy'. The most famous of the early political economists was Adam Smith, who in his book, *The Wealth of Nations*, attempted to understand the market economy that was just emerging at that time. Smith argued that the market economy is made up of a series of individual exchanges or transactions, which automatically create a functioning and ordered system. This happens even though none of the individuals involved in the millions of transactions had intended to create a system. Each person looks only to their own self-interest, but in the pursuit of this self-interest the interests of all – or of society – also seem to be looked after. In this sense, there seems to be some

The Market as a Social Institution

sort of an unseen force at work that converts what is good for each individual into what is good for society. This unseen force was called ‘the invisible hand’ by Adam Smith. Thus, Smith argued that the capitalist economy is driven by individual self-interest, and works best when individual buyers and sellers make rational decisions that serve their own interests. Smith used the idea of the ‘invisible hand’ to argue that society overall benefits when individuals pursue their own self-interest in the market, because it stimulates the economy and creates more wealth. For this reason, Smith supported the idea of a ‘free market’, that is, a market free from all kinds of regulation whether by the state or otherwise. This economic philosophy was also given the name ***laissez-faire***, a French phrase that means ‘leave alone’ or ‘let it be’.

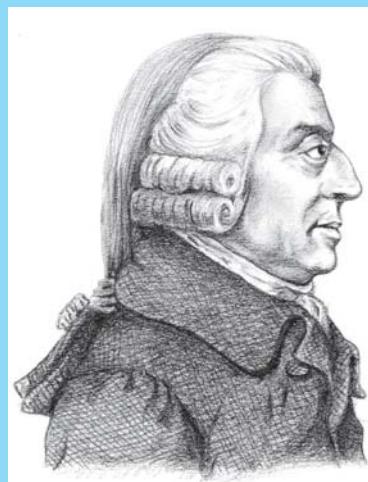
Modern economics developed from the ideas of early thinkers such as Adam Smith, and is based on the idea that the *economy* can be studied as a separate part of society that operates according to its own laws, leaving out the larger social or political context in which markets operate. In contrast to this approach, sociologists have attempted to develop an alternative way of studying *economic institutions* and processes within the larger social framework.

Sociologists view markets as social institutions that are constructed in culturally specific ways. For example, markets are often controlled or organised by particular social groups or classes, and have specific connections to other institutions, social processes and structures. Sociologists often express this idea by saying that economies are socially ‘embedded’. This is illustrated by two examples, one of a weekly tribal *haat*, and the other of a ‘traditional business community’ and its trading networks in colonial India.

A WEEKLY ‘TRIBAL MARKET’ IN DHORAI VILLAGE, BASTAR, CHATTISGARH

In most agrarian or ‘peasant’ societies around the world, periodic markets are a central feature of social and economic organisation. Weekly markets bring together people from surrounding villages, who come to sell their agricultural or other produce and to buy manufactured goods and other items that are not available in their villages. They attract traders from outside the local area, as well as moneylenders, entertainers, astrologers, and a host of other specialists offering their services and wares. In rural India there are also specialised markets that take place at less frequent intervals, for instance, cattle markets. These periodic markets link different regional and local economies together, and link them to the wider national economy and to towns and metropolitan centres.

Adam Smith
(1723-90)



Adam Smith is known as the fountainhead of contemporary economic thought. Smith’s reputation rests on his five-book series ‘The Wealth of Nations’ which explained how rational self-interest in a free-market economy leads to economic well being.



salt and agricultural implements, and consumption items such as bangles and jewellery. But for many visitors, the primary reason to come to the market is social – to meet kin, to arrange marriages, exchange gossip, and so on.

While the weekly market in tribal areas may be a very old institution, its character has changed over time. After these remote areas were brought under the control of the colonial state, they were gradually incorporated into the wider regional and national economies. Tribal areas were ‘opened up’ by building roads and ‘pacifying’ the local people (many of whom resisted colonial rule through their so-called ‘tribal rebellions’), so that the rich forest and mineral resources of these areas could be exploited. This led to the influx of traders, moneylenders, and other non-tribal people from the plains into these areas. The local tribal economy was transformed as forest produce was sold to outsiders, and money and new kinds of goods entered the system. Tribals were also recruited as labourers to work on plantations and mines that were established under colonialism. A ‘market’ for tribal labour developed during the colonial period. Due to all these changes, local tribal economies became linked into wider markets, usually with very negative consequences for local people. For example, the entry of traders and moneylenders from outside the local area led to the impoverishment of adivasis, many of whom lost their land to outsiders.

The weekly market as a social institution, the links between the local tribal economy and the outside, and the exploitative economic relationships between adivasis and others, are illustrated by a study of a weekly market in Bastar district. This district is populated mainly by Gonds, an adivasi group. At the weekly market, you find local people, including tribals and non-tribals (mostly Hindus), as well as outsiders – mainly Hindu traders of various castes. Forest officials also come to the market to conduct business with adivasis who work for the Forest Department, and the market attracts a variety of specialists selling their goods and services. The major goods that are exchanged in the market are manufactured goods (such as jewellery and trinkets, pots and knives), non-local foods (such as salt and *haldi* (turmeric)), local food and agricultural produce and manufactured items (such as bamboo baskets), and forest produce (such as tamarind and oil-seeds). The forest produce that is brought by the

adivasis is purchased by traders who carry it to towns. In the market, the buyers are mostly adivasis while the sellers are mainly caste Hindus. adivasis earn cash from the sale of forest and agricultural produce and from wage labour, which they spend in the market mainly on low-value trinkets and jewellery, and consumption items such as manufactured cloth.

According to Alfred Gell (1982), the anthropologist who studied Dhorai, the market has significance much beyond its economic functions. For example, the layout of the market symbolises the hierarchical inter-group social relations in this region. Different social groups are located according to their position in the caste and social hierarchy as well as in the market system. The wealthy and high-ranking Rajput jeweller and the middle-ranking local Hindu traders sit in the central 'zones', and the tribal sellers of vegetables and local wares in the outer circles. The quality of social relations is expressed in the kinds of goods that are bought and sold, and the way in which transactions are carried out. For instance, interactions between tribals and non-tribal traders are very different than those between Hindus of the same community: they express hierarchy and social distance rather than social equality.

An Adivasi Village Market in Bastar

Box 4.1

Dhorai is the name of a market village located deep in the hinterland of North Bastar district, Chattisgarh ... On non-market days Dhorai is a sleepy, tree-shaded hamlet straddling an unscaled road which winds it's way through the forest ... Social life in Dhorai revolves around two primitive tea-shops with a clientele of low-ranking employees of the State Forest service, whose misfortune it has been to be stationed in such a distant and insignificant spot ... Dhorai on non-market days – every day except Friday, that is – hardly exists at all; but Dhorai on a market day might be a totally different place. Parked trucks jam the road ... The lowly Forest Guards bustle about in smart, newly-pressed uniforms, while the more important officials of the Forest service, down for the day, oversee operations from the verandah of the Forest Rest House. They disburse payments to the tribal labourers ...

While the officials hold court in the Rest House, files of tribals continue to pour in from all directions, laden with the produce of the forest, of their fields, and of their own manufacture. They are joined by Hindu vegetable sellers, and by specialised craftsmen, potters, weavers and blacksmiths. The general impression is one of richness and confusion, compounded by the fact that a religious ceremony, as well as a market, is in process ... The whole world, it seems, is at the market, men and their Divinities alike. The marketplace is a roughly quadrangular patch of ground, about 100 yards square, at the centre of which there grows a magnificent banyan tree. The thatched market stalls are arranged in a concentric pattern, and are divided by narrow streets or defiles, along which customers manoeuvre themselves as best they can in the crush, trying to avoid treading on the goods of less established traders, who make use of every nook and cranny between the permanent stalls to display their wares.

Source: Gell 1982:470-71.

EXERCISE FOR Box 4.1

Read the excerpt in the box and answer the questions below.

1. What does this passage tell you about the relationship between the adivasis and the state (represented by the Forest Department officials)? Why are Forest Guards so important in adivasi districts? Why are they making payments to the tribal labourers?
2. What does the layout of the market suggest to you about its organisation and functioning? What kinds of people would have permanent stalls, and who are the “less established traders” sitting on the ground?
3. Who are the main buyers in the market, and who are the sellers? What kinds of goods flow through the market, and who are the buyers and sellers of different kinds of goods? What does this tell you about the nature of the local economy in this area and the relationship of adivasis to the larger society and economy?

CASTE-BASED MARKETS AND TRADING NETWORKS IN PRECOLONIAL AND COLONIAL INDIA

In some traditional accounts of Indian economic history, India’s economy and society are seen as unchanging. Economic transformation was thought to have begun only with the advent of colonialism. It was assumed that India consisted of ancient village communities that were relatively self-sufficient, and that their economies were organised primarily on the basis of non-market exchange. Under colonialism and in the early post-independence period, the penetration of the commercial money economy into local agrarian economies, and their incorporation into wider networks of exchange, was thought to have brought about radical social and economic changes in rural and urban society. While colonialism certainly brought about major economic transformations, for example due to the demand that land revenue be paid in cash, recent historical research has shown that much of India’s economy was already extensively monetised (trade was carried out using money) in the late pre-colonial period. And while various kinds of non-market exchange systems (such as the ‘**jajmani system**’) did exist in many villages and regions, even during the precolonial period villages were incorporated into wider networks of exchange through which agricultural products and other goods circulated (Bayly 1983, Stein and Subrahmanyam 1996). It now seems that the sharp line that was often drawn between the ‘traditional’ and the ‘modern’ (or the pre-capitalist and capitalist) economy is actually rather fuzzy. Recent historical research has also highlighted the extensive and sophisticated trading networks that existed in pre-colonial India. Of course, we know that for centuries India was a

major manufacturer and exporter of handloom cloth (both ordinary cotton and luxury silks), as well as the source of many other goods (such as spices) that were in great demand in the global market, especially in Europe. So it is not surprising that pre-colonial India had well-organised manufacturing centres as well as indigenous merchant groups, trading networks, and banking systems that enabled trade to take place within India, and between India and the rest of the world. These traditional trading communities or castes had their own systems of banking and credit. For instance, an important instrument of exchange and credit was the *hundi*, or bill of exchange (like a credit note), which allowed merchants to engage in long-distance trade. Because trade took place primarily within the caste and kinship networks of these communities, a merchant in one part of the country could issue a *hundi* that would be honoured by a merchant in another place.

The Nattukottai Chettiar (or Nakarattars) of Tamil Nadu, provide an interesting illustration of how these indigenous trading networks were organised and worked. A study of this community during the colonial period shows how its banking and trade activities were deeply embedded in the social organisation of the community. The structures of caste, kinship, and family were oriented towards commercial activity, and business activity was carried out within these social structures. As in most 'traditional' merchant communities, Nakarattar banks were basically *joint family* firms, so that the structure of the business firm was the same as that of the family. Similarly, trading and banking activities were organised through caste and kinship relationships. For instance, their extensive caste-based social networks allowed Chettiar merchants to expand their activities into Southeast Asia and Ceylon. In one view, the economic activities of the Nakarattars represented a kind of indigenous capitalism. This interpretation raises the question of whether there are, or were, forms of 'capitalism' apart from those that arose in Europe. (Rudner 1994)

Caste-based trade among the Nakarattars of Tamil Nadu

Box 4.2

This is not to say that the Nakarattar banking system resembled an economist's model of Western-style banking systems ... the Nakarattars loaned and deposited money with one another in caste-defined social relationships based on business territory, residential location, descent, marriage, and common cult membership. Unlike in modern Western banking systems, it was the reputation, decisions, and reserve deposits shared among exchange spheres defined according to these principles, and not a government-controlled central bank, that ... assured public confidence in individual Nakarattars as representatives of the caste as a whole. In other words, the Nakarattar banking system was a caste-based banking system. Individual Nakarattars organised their lives around participation in and management of various communal institutions adapted to the task of accumulating and distributing reserves of capital.

Source: Rudner 1994:234.

EXERCISE FOR Box 4.2

Read the extracts from *Caste and Capitalism in Colonial India* (Rudner 1994) in the box above and answer the following questions.

1. What are the significant differences between the Nakarattar banking system and the modern Western banking system, according to the author?
2. What are the different ways in which Nakarattar trading and banking activities are linked to other social structures?
3. Can you think of examples within the modern capitalist economy where economic activities are similarly 'embedded' in social structures?

SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF MARKETS – 'TRADITIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNITIES'

Many sociological studies of the Indian economy have focused on 'traditional merchant communities' or castes such as the Nakarattars. As you have already learned, there is a close connection between the caste system and the economy, in terms of landholding, occupational differentiation, and so on. This is also true in the case of trade and markets. In fact, 'Vaisyas' constitute one of the four *varnas* – an indication of the importance of the merchant and of trade or business in Indian society since ancient times. However, like the other *varnas*, 'Vaisya' is often a status that is *claimed* or aspired to rather than a fixed identity or social status. Although there are 'Vaisya' communities (such as *banias* in North

India), whose traditional occupation has been trade or commerce for a long time, there are some caste groups that have entered into trade. Such groups tend to acquire or claim 'Vaisya' status in the process of upward mobility. Like the history of all caste communities, in most cases there is a complex relationship between caste status or identity, and caste practices, including occupation. The 'traditional business communities' in India include not only 'Vaisyas', but also other groups with distinctive religious or other community identities,



such as the Parsis, Sindhis, Bohras, or Jains. Merchant communities did not always have a high status in society; for instance, during the colonial period the long-distance trade in salt was controlled by a marginalised 'tribal' group, the

Banjaras. In each case, the particular nature of community institutions and ethos gives rise to a different organisation and practice of business.

To understand the operation of markets in India, both in earlier periods and at present, we can examine how specific arenas of business are controlled by particular communities. One of the reasons for this caste-based specialisation is that trade and commerce often operate through caste and kinship networks, as we have seen in the case of the Nakarattars. Because businessmen are more likely to trust others of their own community or kin group, they tend to do business within such networks rather than with others outside – and this tends to create a caste monopoly within certain areas of business.

COLONIALISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF NEW MARKETS

The advent of colonialism in India produced major upheavals in the economy, causing disruptions in production, trade, and agriculture. A well-known example is the demise of the handloom industry due to the flooding of the market with cheap manufactured textiles from England. Although pre-colonial India already had a complex monetised economy, most historians consider the colonial period to be the turning point. In the colonial era India began to be more fully linked to the world capitalist economy. Before being colonised by the British, India was a major supplier of manufactured goods to the world market. After colonisation, she became a source of raw materials and agricultural products and a consumer of manufactured goods, both largely for the benefit of industrialising England. At the same time, new groups (especially the Europeans) entered into trade and business, sometimes in alliance with existing merchant communities and in some cases by forcing them out. But rather than completely overturning existing economic institutions, the expansion of the market economy in India provided new opportunities to some merchant communities, which were able to improve their position by re-orienting themselves to changing economic circumstances. In some cases, new communities emerged to take advantage of the economic opportunities provided by colonialism, and continued to hold economic power even after Independence.

A good example of this process is provided by the Marwaris, probably the most widespread and best-known business community in India. Represented by leading industrial families such as the Birlas, the community also includes shopkeepers and small traders in the bazaars of towns throughout the country. The Marwaris became a successful business community only during the colonial period, when they took advantage of new opportunities in colonial cities such

ACTIVITY 4.1

Visit a market or shopping area in the town or city where you live. Find out who the important traders are. To which community do they belong? Are there particular areas of business that are controlled by particular communities, for instance, jewellery shops, *kirana* (provisions) shops, the hardware trade, furniture making shops, and so on? Visit some of these shops and find out about the traders who run them and their communities. Are they hereditary family businesses?



as Calcutta and settled throughout the country to carry out trade and moneylending. Like the Nakarattars, the success of the Marwaris rested on their extensive social networks, which created the relations of trust necessary to operate their banking system. Many Marwari families accumulated enough wealth to become moneylenders, and by acting as bankers also helped the commercial expansion of the British in India (Hardgrove 2004). In the late colonial period and after Independence, some Marwari families transformed

themselves into modern industrialists, and even today Marwaris control more of India's industry than any other community. This story of the emergence of a new business community under colonialism, and its transformation from small migrant traders to merchant bankers to industrialists, illustrates the importance of the social context to economic processes.

4.2 UNDERSTANDING CAPITALISM AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM

One of the founders of modern sociology, Karl Marx, was also a critic of modern capitalism. Marx understood capitalism as a system of **commodity** production, or production for the market, through the use of wage labour. As you have already learned, Marx wrote that all economic systems are also social systems. Each **mode of production** consists of particular relations of production, which in turn give rise to a specific class structure. He emphasised that the economy does not consist of *things* (goods circulating in the market), but is made up of *relations* between *people* who are connected to one another through the process of production. Under the capitalist mode of production, labour itself becomes a commodity, because workers must sell their **labour power** in the market to earn a wage. This gives rise to two basic classes – capitalists, who own the means of production (such as the factories), and workers, who sell their labour to the capitalists. The capitalist class is able to profit from this system by paying the workers less than the value of what they actually produce, and so extracting **surplus value** from their labour. Marx's theory of capitalist economy and society provided the inspiration for numerous theories and debates about the nature of capitalism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

COMMODITISATION AND CONSUMPTION

The growth of capitalism around the world has meant the extension of markets into places and spheres of life that were previously untouched by this system.

Commodification occurs when things that were earlier not traded in the market become commodities. For instance, labour or skills become things that can be bought and sold. According to Marx and other critics of capitalism, the process of commodification has negative social effects. The commodification of labour is one example, but there are many other examples in contemporary society. For instance, there is a controversy about the sale of kidneys by the poor to cater to rich patients who need kidney transplants. According to many people, human organs should not become commodities. In earlier times, human beings themselves were bought and sold as slaves, but today it is considered immoral to treat people as commodities. But in modern society, almost everyone accepts the idea that a person's labour can be bought, or that other services or skills can be provided in exchange for money. This is a situation that is found only in capitalist societies, according to Marx.

In contemporary India, we can observe that things or processes that earlier were not part of market exchange become commodified. For example, traditionally, marriages were arranged by families, but now there are professional marriage bureaus and websites that help people to find brides and grooms for a fee. Another example are the many private institutes that offer courses in 'personality development', spoken English, and so on, that teach students (mostly middle class youth) the cultural and social skills required to succeed in the

ACTIVITY 4.2

Commoditisation or commodification – these are big words that sound very complicated. But the process they refer to is a familiar one and it is present in our everyday life. Here is a common example – bottled water.

In cities and towns and even in most villages now it is possible to buy water packed in sealed plastic bottles of 2 litres, 1 litre or smaller capacity. These bottles are marketed by a wide variety of companies and there are innumerable brand names. But this is a new phenomenon, not more than ten or fifteen years old. It is possible that you yourself may remember a time when bottled water was not around. Ask older people. Your parents' generation will certainly remember the initial feeling of novelty when bottled water became widely available. In your grandparents' generation, it was unthinkable that anyone could sell drinking water, charge money for it. But today we take bottled water for granted as a normal, convenient thing, a *commodity* that we can buy (or sell).

This is commoditisation/commodification – the process by which something which was not a commodity is made into a commodity and becomes part of the market economy. Can you think of other examples of things that have been commodified relatively recently? Remember, a commodity need not only be a thing or object; it can also be a service. Try also to think of things that are not commodities today but could become commodities in the future. What are the reasons why this could happen? Finally, try to think of things that were commodities in the past but have stopped being commodities today (i.e., they used to have market or exchange value before but do not have it now). When and why do commodities stop being commodities?



contemporary world. In earlier times, social skills such as good manners and etiquette were imparted mainly through the family. Or we could think of the burgeoning of privately owned schools and colleges and coaching classes as a process of commodification of education.

Another important feature of capitalist society is that **consumption** becomes more and more important, not just for economic reasons but because it has symbolic meaning. In modern societies, consumption is an important way in which social distinctions are created and communicated. The consumer conveys a message about his or her socio-economic status or cultural preferences by buying and displaying certain goods, and companies try to sell their goods by appealing to symbols of status or culture. Think of the advertisements that we see every day on television and roadside hoardings, and the meanings that advertisers try to attach to consumer goods in order to sell them.

One of sociology's founders, Max Weber, was among the first to point out that the goods that people buy and use are closely related to their status in society. He coined the term *status symbol* to describe this relationship. For example, among the middle class in India today, the brand of cell phone or the model of car that one owns are important markers of socio-economic status. Weber also wrote about how classes and status groups are differentiated on the basis of their **lifestyles**. Consumption is one aspect of lifestyle, but it also includes the way you decorate your home and the way you dress, your leisure activities, and many other aspects of daily life. Sociologists study consumption patterns and lifestyles because of their cultural and social significance in modern life.

ACTIVITY 4.3

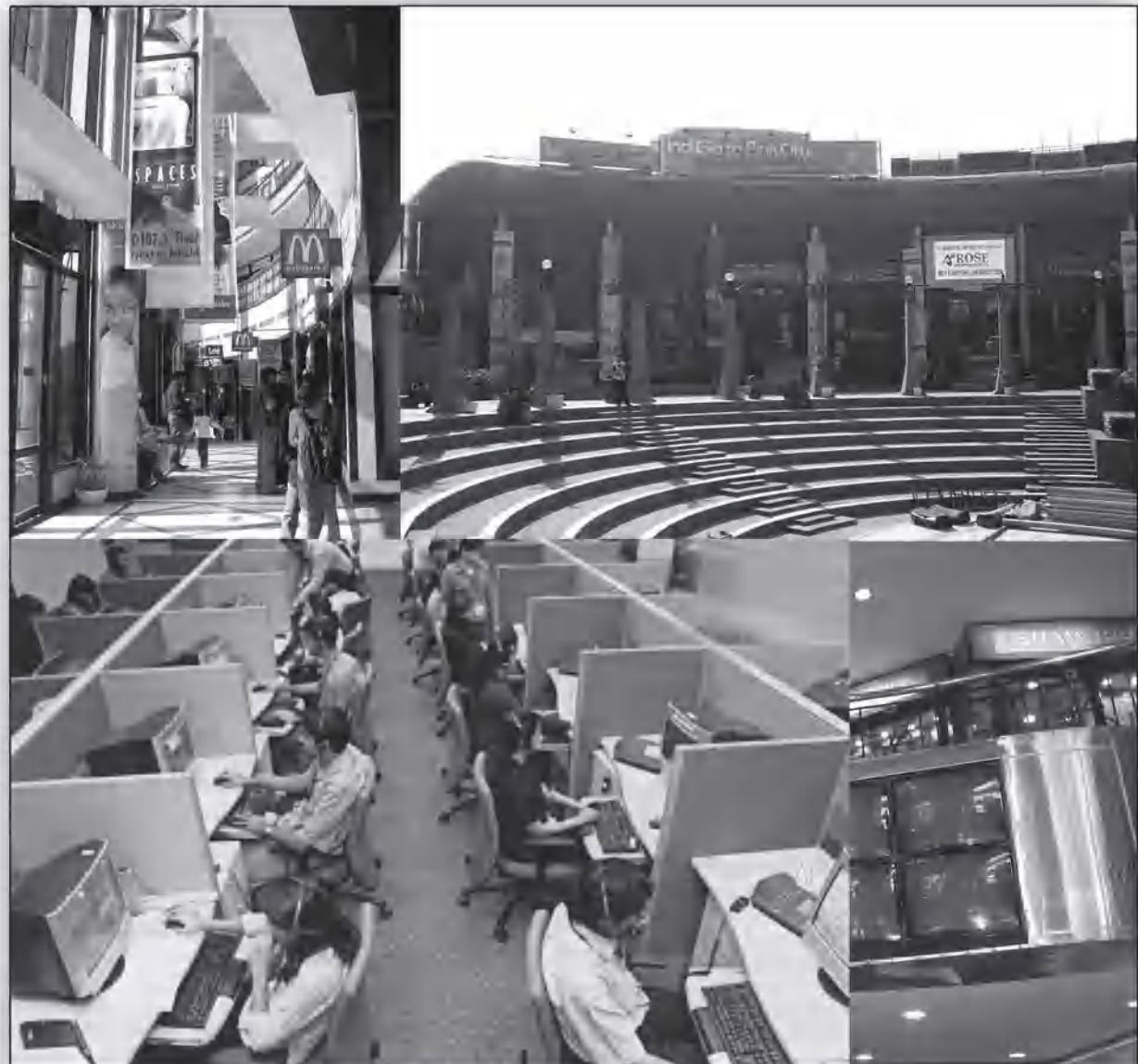
Interpretation of Advertisements

Make a collection of advertisements from newspapers and magazines. From the collection, choose two or three that you find interesting. For each of these advts., try to answer the following questions.

1. What is the product that is being advertised, and what image has been created of that product?
2. How has the advertiser tried to relate this product to a desirable lifestyle or social status?

4.3 GLOBALISATION – INTERLINKING OF LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

Since the late 1980s, India has entered a new era in its economic history, following the change in economic policy from one of state-led development to **liberalisation**. This shift also ushered in the era of **globalisation**, a period in which the world is becoming increasingly interconnected — not only economically but also culturally and politically. The term globalisation includes a number of trends, especially the increase in international movement of commodities, money, information, and people, as well as the development of technology (such as in computers, telecommunications, and transport) and other infrastructure to allow this movement.



A central feature of globalisation is the increasing extension and integration of markets around the world. This integration means that changes in a market in one part of the globe may have a profound impact somewhere else far away. For instance, India's booming software industry may face a slump if the U.S. economy does badly (as happened after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York), leading to loss of business and jobs here. The software services industries and business process outsourcing (**BPO**) industries (such as call centres) are some of the major avenues through which India is getting connected to the global economy. Companies based in India provide low-cost services and labour to customers located in the developed countries of the West. We can say that there is now a global market for Indian software labour and other services.

THE VIRTUAL MARKET – CONQUERING TIME AND SPACE?

Nasdaq Rings from Mysore – Infy's Remote Operation Scripts Record, Opens US Market

Box 4.3

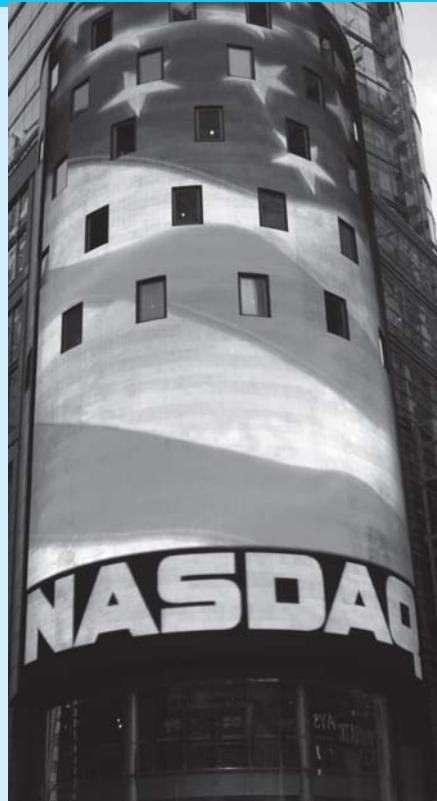
Mysore: If you still don't believe that the world is flat, then consider this: Infosys Technologies rang the Nasdaq opening bell remotely from Mysore. At 7 pm sharp (9.30 am US East Coast time), Infosys chairman and chief mentor N.R. Narayana Murthy pressed a button to mark the opening of Monday's trading session at Nasdaq's MarketSite Tower in Times Square, New York. The opening bell is a ceremonial event that represents the essence of Nasdaq's virtual market model. Since Nasdaq's operations are entirely electronic, it can be opened from any location around the world, symbolically bringing together investors and market participants at the beginning of each trading day.

Source: News item in the Times of India, Bangalore, August 1, 2006

EXERCISE FOR Box 4.3

NASDAQ is the name of a major electronic stock exchange based in New York. It operates exclusively through computerised electronic communications. It allows stock brokers and investors from around the world to buy and sell shares in the companies it lists. These transactions are conducted 'in real time' – i.e., they take effect within seconds, and they involve no paper – no paper documents or paper currency. Read the news item carefully and answer the questions below.

1. How is trading in a stock market (like NASDAQ or the Bombay Stock Exchange) different from trading in other markets? You can find out more about stock exchanges from newspapers, magazines and the internet.
2. What does this event – the opening of the US-based Nasdaq market located in New York by the Infosys chairman Narayana Murthy located in Mysore – tell you about the nature of markets (especially share and financial markets) in today's world, and about India's connection to the global economy?
3. The article describes the opening event as 'ceremonial'. Can you think of similar ceremonial practices or rituals that are important in other kinds of markets?



Under globalisation, not only money and goods, but also people, cultural products, and images circulate rapidly around the world, enter new circuits of exchange, and create new markets. Products, services, or elements of culture

When a market becomes a commodity: The Pushkar camel fair

Box 4.4

"Come the month of Kartika ... , Thar camel drivers spruce up their ships of the desert and start the long walk to Pushkar in time for Kartik Purnima ... Each year around 200,000 people converge here, bringing with them some 50,000 camels and cattle. The place becomes an extraordinary swirl of colour, sound and movement, thronged with musicians, mystics, tourists, traders, animals and devotees. It's a camel-grooming nirvana, with an incredible array of cornrows, anklets, embroidery and pom poms."

"The religious event builds in tandem with the Camel Fair in a wild, magical crescendo of incense, chanting and processions to dousing day, the last night of the fair, when thousands of devotees wash away their sins and set candles afloat on the holy water."

(From the Lonely Planet tourist guidebook for India, 11th edition)

EXERCISE FOR Box 4.4

Read the passages in Box 4.4, which are taken from a guide book meant for foreign tourists. The passage illustrates the way in which a market – in this case the traditional annual cattle market and fair at Pushkar – can itself become a kind of product for sale in another market, in this case the market for tourism.

[Look up any unfamiliar words in a dictionary. For your information: 'cornrows' is a kind of hairstyle, and in this passage it refers to decorative braiding of camel hair; 'dousing day' means the day (Kartik Poornima) when pilgrims take a holy bath in the Pushkar lake.] Discuss the passages in class before you go on to answer the questions:

1. What are the new circuits of goods, services, money, and people that have been created at Pushkar because it is now a part of the international tourist circuit?
2. How do you think the coming of large numbers of foreign and Indian tourists has changed the way in which this fair operates?
3. How does the religiosity of the place add to its marketability? Can we say that there is a market for spirituality in India?
4. Can you think of other examples of how religions, traditions, knowledge, or even images (for instance, of a Rajasthani woman in traditional dress) become commodities in the global market?



that were earlier outside of the market system are drawn into it. An example is the marketing of Indian spirituality and knowledge systems (such as yoga and ayurveda) in the West. The growing market for international tourism also suggests how culture itself may become a commodity. An example is the famous annual fair in Pushkar, Rajasthan, to which pastoralists and traders come from distant places to buy and sell camels and other livestock. While the Pushkar fair continues to be a major social and economic event for local people, it is also marketed internationally as a major tourist attraction. The fair is all the more attractive to tourists because it comes just before a major Hindu religious festival of Kartik Poornima, when pilgrims come to bathe in the holy Pushkar lake. Thus, Hindu pilgrims, camel traders, and foreign tourists mingle at this event, exchanging not only livestock and money but also cultural symbols and religious merit.

DEBATE ON LIBERALISATION – MARKET VERSUS STATE

The globalisation of the Indian economy has been due primarily to the policy of liberalisation that was started in the late 1980s. Liberalisation includes a range of policies such as the privatisation of public sector enterprises (selling government-owned companies to private companies); loosening of government regulations on capital, labour, and trade; a reduction in tariffs and import duties so that foreign goods can be imported more easily; and allowing easier access for foreign companies to set up industries in India. Another word for such changes is **marketisation**, or the use of markets or market-based processes (rather than government regulations or policies) to solve social, political, or economic problems. These include relaxation or removal of economic controls (deregulation), privatisation of industries, and removing government controls over wages and prices. Those who advocate marketisation believe that these steps will promote economic growth and prosperity because private industry is more efficient than government-owned industry.

The changes that have been made under the liberalisation programme have stimulated economic growth and opened up Indian markets to foreign companies. For example, many foreign branded goods are now sold, which were not previously available. Increasing foreign investment is supposed to help economic growth and employment. The privatisation of public companies is supposed to increase their efficiency and reduce the government's burden of running these companies. However, the impact of liberalisation has been mixed. Many people argue that liberalisation and globalisation have had, or will have, a negative net impact on India – that is, the costs and disadvantages will be more than the advantages and benefits. Some sectors of Indian industry (like software and information technology) or agriculture (like fish or fruit) may benefit from access to a global market, but other sectors (like automobiles, electronics or oilseeds) will lose because they cannot compete with foreign producers.

For example, Indian farmers are now exposed to competition from farmers in other countries because import of agricultural products is allowed. Earlier,

Indian agriculture was protected from the world market by support prices and subsidies. Support prices help to ensure a minimum income for farmers because they are the prices at which the government agrees to buy agricultural commodities. Subsidies lower the cost of farming because the government pays part of the price charged for inputs (such as fertilisers or diesel oil). Liberalisation is against this kind of government interference in markets, so support prices and subsidies are reduced or withdrawn. This means that many farmers are not able to make a decent living from agriculture. Similarly, small manufacturers have been exposed to global competition as foreign goods and brands have entered the market, and some have not been able to compete. The privatisation or closing of public sector industries has led to loss of employment in some sectors, and to growth of unorganised sector employment at the expense of the organised sector. This is not good for workers because the organised sector generally offers better paid and more regular or permanent jobs. (See the chapters on agrarian change and industry in the other textbook for Class XII, *Social Change and Development in India*).

In this chapter we have seen that there are many different kinds of markets in contemporary India, from the village haat to the virtual stock exchange. These markets are themselves social institutions, and are connected to other aspects of the social structure, such as caste and class, in various ways. In addition, we have learned that exchange has a social and symbolic significance that goes far beyond its immediate economic purpose. Moreover, the ways in which goods and services are exchanged or circulate is rapidly changing due to the liberalisation of the Indian economy and globalisation. There are many different ways and levels at which goods, services, cultural symbols, money, and so on, circulate — from the local market in a village or town right up to a global trading network such as the Nasdaq. In today's rapidly changing world, it is important to understand how markets are being constantly transformed, and the broader social and economic consequences of these changes.



Questions

The Market as a Social Institution

1. What is meant by the phrase 'invisible hand'?
2. How does a sociological perspective on markets differ from an economic one?
3. In what ways is a market – such as a weekly village market – a social institution?
4. How may caste and kin networks contribute to the success of a business?
5. In what ways did the Indian economy change after the coming of colonialism?
6. Explain the meaning of 'commoditisation' with the help of examples.
7. What is a 'status symbol'?
8. What are some of the processes included under the label 'globalisation'?
9. What is meant by 'liberalisation'?
10. In your opinion, will the long term benefits of liberalisation exceed its costs? Give reasons for your answer.

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Notes

Chapter 5

Patterns of Social Inequality and Exclusion



The family, caste, tribe and the market – these are the social institutions that have been considered in the last two chapters. In Chapters 3 and 4, these institutions were seen from the point of view of their role in forming communities and sustaining society. In this chapter we consider an equally important aspect of such institutions, namely their role in creating and sustaining patterns of inequality and exclusion.

For most of us who are born and live in India, social inequality and exclusion are facts of life. We see beggars in the streets and on railway platforms. We see young children labouring as domestic workers, construction helpers, cleaners and helpers in streetside restaurants (*dhabas*) and tea-shops. We are not surprised at the sight of small children, who work as domestic workers in middle class urban homes, carrying the school bags of older children to school. It does not immediately strike us as unjust that some children are denied schooling. Some of us read about caste discrimination against children in schools; some of us face it. Likewise, news reports about violence against women and prejudice against minority groups and the differently abled are part of our everyday lives.

This everydayness of social inequality and exclusion often make them appear inevitable, almost natural. They are seen as givens that cannot be changed. If we do sometimes recognise that inequality and exclusion are not inevitable, we often think of them as being 'deserved' or 'justified' in some sense. Perhaps the poor and marginalised are where they are because they are lacking in ability, or haven't tried hard enough to improve their situation? We thus tend to blame them for their own plight – if only they worked harder or were more intelligent, they wouldn't be where they are.

A closer examination will show that few work harder than those who are located at the lower ranks of society. As a South American proverb says – "If hard labour were really such a good thing, the rich would keep it all for themselves!" All over the world, back-breaking work like stone breaking, digging, carrying heavy weights, pulling rickshaws or carts is invariably done by the poor. And yet they rarely improve their life chances. How often do we come across a poor construction worker who rises to become even a petty construction contractor? It is only in films that a street child may become an industrialist, but even in films it is often shown that such a dramatic rise requires illegal or unscrupulous methods.

ACTIVITY 5.1

Identify some of the richest and some of the poorest people in your neighbourhood, people that you or your family are acquainted with. (For instance a rickshawpuller or a porter or a domestic worker and a cinema hall owner or a construction contractor or hotel owner, or doctor... It could be something else in your context). Try to talk to one person from each group

to find out about their daily routines. For each person, organise the information in the form of an imaginary diary detailing the activities of the person from the time they get up to the time they go to sleep on a typical (or average) working day. Based on these diaries, try to answer the following questions and discuss them with your classmates.

- How many hours a day do each of these persons spend at work? What kind of work do they do – in what ways is their work tiring, stressfull, pleasant or unpleasant? What kinds of relationship does it involve with other people – do they have to take orders, give orders, seek cooperation, enforce discipline....? Are they treated with respect by the people they have to deal with in their work, or do they themselves have to show respect for others?

It may be that the poorest, and in some cases even the richest, person you know actually has no real 'job' or is currently 'not working'. If this is so, do go ahead and find out about their daily routine anyway. But in addition, try to answer the following questions.

- Why is the person 'unemployed'? Has he/she been looking for work? How is he/she supporting herself/himself? In what ways are they affected by the fact of not having any work? Is their lifestyle any different from when they were working?

Activity 5.1 invites you to rethink the widely held commonsense view that hard work alone can improve an individual's life chances. It is true that hard work matters, and so does individual ability. If all other things were equal, then personal effort, talent and luck would surely account for all the differences between individuals. But, as is almost always the case, all other things are not equal. It is these non-individual or group differences that explain social inequality and exclusion.

5.1 WHAT IS SOCIAL ABOUT SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND EXCLUSION?

The question being asked in this section has three broad answers which may be stated briefly as follows. First, social inequality and exclusion are social because they are not about individuals but about groups. Second, they are social in the sense that they are not economic, although there is usually a strong link between social and economic inequality. Third, they are systematic and structured – there is a definite pattern to social inequalities. These three broad senses of the 'social' will be explored briefly below.

SOCIAL INEQUALITY

In every society, some people have a greater share of valued resources – money, property, education, health, and power – than others. These *social resources*

can be divided into three forms of capital – *economic capital* in the form of material assets and income; *cultural capital* such as educational qualifications and status; and *social capital* in the form of networks of contacts and social associations (Bourdieu 1986). Often, these three forms of capital overlap and one can be converted into the other. For example, a person from a well-off family (economic capital) can afford expensive higher education, and so can acquire cultural or educational capital. Someone with influential relatives and friends (social capital) may – through access to good advice, recommendations or information – manage to get a well-paid job.

Patterns of unequal access to social resources are commonly called *social inequality*. Some social inequality reflects innate differences between individuals for example, their varying abilities and efforts. Someone may be endowed with exceptional intelligence or talent, or may have worked very hard to achieve their wealth and status. However, by and large, social inequality is not the outcome of innate or ‘natural’ differences between people, but is produced by the society in which they live. Sociologists use the term *social stratification* to refer to a system by which categories of people in a society are ranked in a hierarchy. This hierarchy then shapes people’s identity and experiences, their relations with others, as well as their access to resources and opportunities. Three key principles help explain social stratification:

1. *Social stratification is a characteristic of society, not simply a function of individual differences.* Social stratification is a society-wide system that unequally distributes social resources among categories of people. In the most technologically primitive societies – hunting and gathering societies, for instance – little was produced so only rudimentary social stratification could exist. In more technologically advanced societies where people produce a surplus over and above their basic needs, however, social resources are unequally distributed to various social categories regardless of people’s innate individual abilities.
2. *Social stratification persists over generations.* It is closely linked to the family and to the inheritance of social resources from one generation to the next. A person’s social position is *ascribed*. That is, children assume the social positions of their parents. Within the caste system, birth dictates occupational opportunities. A Dalit is likely to be confined to traditional occupations such as agricultural labour, scavenging, or leather work, with little chance of being able to get high-paying white-collar or professional work. The ascribed aspect of social inequality is reinforced by the practice of *endogamy*. That is, marriage is usually restricted to members of the same caste, ruling out the potential for blurring caste lines through inter-marriage.
3. *Social stratification is supported by patterns of belief, or ideology.* No system of social stratification is likely to persist over generations unless it is widely viewed as being either fair or inevitable. The caste system, for example, is

justified in terms of the opposition of purity and pollution, with the Brahmins designated as the most superior and Dalits as the most inferior by virtue of their birth and occupation. Not everyone, though, thinks of a system of inequality as legitimate. Typically, people with the greatest social privileges express the strongest support for systems of stratification such as caste and race. Those who have experienced the exploitation and humiliation of being at the bottom of the hierarchy are most likely to challenge it.

Often we discuss social exclusion and discrimination as though they pertain to differential economic resources alone. This however is only partially true. People often face discrimination and exclusion because of their gender, religion, ethnicity, language, caste and disability. Thus women from a privileged background may face sexual harassment in public places. A middle class professional from a minority religious or ethnic group may find it difficult to get accommodation in a middle class colony even in a metropolitan city. People often harbour prejudices about other social groups. Each of us grows up as a member of a community from which we acquire ideas not just about our ‘communities’, our ‘caste’ or ‘class’ our ‘gender’ but also about others. Often these ideas reflect prejudices.

Prejudices refer to pre-conceived opinions or attitudes held by members of one group towards another. The word literally means ‘pre-judgement’, that is, an opinion formed in advance of any familiarity with the subject, before considering any available evidence. A prejudiced person’s preconceived views are often based on hearsay rather than on direct evidence, and are resistant to change even in the face of new information. Prejudice may be either positive or negative. Although the word is generally used for negative pre-judgements, it can also apply to favourable pre-judgement. For example, a person may be prejudiced in favour of members of his/her own caste or group and – without any evidence – believe them to be superior to members of other castes or groups.

Prejudices are often grounded in **stereotypes**, fixed and inflexible characterisations of a group of people. Stereotypes are often applied to ethnic and racial groups and to women. In a country such as India, which was colonised for a long time, many of these stereotypes are partly colonial creations. Some communities were characterised as ‘martial races’, some others as effeminate or cowardly, yet others as untrustworthy. In both English and Indian fictional writings we often encounter an entire group of people classified as ‘lazy’ or ‘cunning’. It may indeed be true that some individuals are sometimes lazy or cunning, brave or cowardly. But such a general statement is true of individuals in every group. Even for such individuals, it is not true all the time – the same individual may be both lazy and hardworking at different times. Stereotypes fix whole groups into single, homogenous categories; they refuse to recognise the variation across individuals and across contexts or across time. They treat an entire community as though it were a single person with a single all-encompassing trait or characteristic.

ACTIVITY 5.2

- Collect examples of prejudiced behaviour from films or novels.
- Discuss the examples you and your classmates have gathered. How are prejudices reflected in the manner a social group is depicted? How do we decide whether a certain kind of portrayal is prejudiced or not?
- Can you distinguish between instances of prejudice that were intentional – i.e., the film maker or writer *wanted* to show it as prejudiced – and unintentional or unconscious prejudice?

If prejudice describes attitudes and opinions, **discrimination** refers to actual behaviour towards another group or individual. Discrimination can be seen in practices that disqualify members of one group from opportunities open to others, as when a person is refused a job because of their gender or religion. Discrimination can be very hard to prove because it may not be open or explicitly stated. Discriminatory behaviour or practices may be presented as motivated by other, more justifiable, reasons rather than prejudice. For example, the person who is refused a job because of their caste may be told that they were less qualified than others, and that the selection was done purely on merit.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Social exclusion refers to ways in which individuals may become cut off from full involvement in the wider society. It focuses attention on a broad range of factors that prevent individuals or groups from having opportunities open to the majority of the population. In order to live a full and active life, individuals must not only be able to feed, clothe and house themselves, but should also have access to essential goods and services such as education, health, transportation, insurance, social security, banking and even access to the police or judiciary. Social exclusion is not accidental but systematic – it is the result of structural features of society.

It is important to note that social exclusion is involuntary – that is, exclusion is practiced regardless of the wishes of those who are excluded. For example, rich people are never found sleeping on the pavements or under bridges like thousands of homeless poor people in cities and towns. This does not mean that the rich are being ‘excluded’ from access to pavements and park benches, because they could certainly gain access if they wanted to, but they choose not to. Social exclusion is sometimes wrongly justified by the same logic – it is said that the excluded group itself does not wish to participate. The truth of such an argument is not obvious when exclusion is preventing access to something desirable (as different from something clearly undesirable, like sleeping on the pavement).

Prolonged experience of discriminatory or insulting behaviour often produces a reaction on the part of the excluded who then stop trying for inclusion. For example, ‘upper’ caste Hindu communities have often denied entry into temples for the ‘lower’ castes and specially the Dalits. After decades of such treatment, the Dalits may build their own temple, or convert to another religion like

Buddhism, Christianity or Islam. After they do this, they may no longer desire to be included in the Hindu temple or religious events. But this does not mean that social exclusion is not being practiced. The point is that the exclusion occurs regardless of the wishes of the excluded.

India like most societies has been marked by acute practices of social discrimination and exclusion. At different periods of history protest movements arose against caste, gender and religious discrimination. Yet prejudices remain and often, new ones emerge. Thus legislation alone is unable to transform society or produce lasting social change. A constant social campaign to change awareness and sensitivity is required to break them.

You have already read about the impact of colonialism on Indian society. What discrimination and exclusion mean was brought home to even the most privileged Indians at the hands of the British colonial state. Such experiences were, of course, common to the various socially discriminated groups such as women, *dalits* and other oppressed castes and tribes. Faced with the humiliation of colonial rule and simultaneously exposed to ideas of democracy and justice, many Indians initiated and participated in a large number of social reform movements.

In this chapter we focus on four such groups who have suffered from serious social inequality and exclusion, namely Dalits or the ex-untouchable castes; adivasis or communities referred to as 'tribal'; women, and the differently abled. We attempt to look at each of their stories of struggles and achievements in the following sections.

5.2 CASTE AND TRIBE – SYSTEMS JUSTIFYING AND PERPETUATING INEQUALITY

THE CASTE SYSTEM AS A DISCRIMINATORY SYSTEM

The caste system is a distinct Indian social institution that legitimises and enforces practices of discrimination against people born into particular castes. These practices of discrimination are humiliating, exclusionary and exploitative.

Historically, the caste system classified people by their occupation and status. Every caste was associated with an occupation, which meant that persons born into a particular caste were also 'born into' the occupation associated with their caste – they had no choice. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, each caste also had a specific place in the hierarchy of social status, so that, roughly speaking, not only were occupational categories ranked by social status, but there could be a further ranking within each broad occupational category. In strict scriptural terms, social and economic status were supposed to be sharply separated. For example, the ritually highest caste – the Brahmins – were not supposed to amass wealth, and were subordinated to the secular power of kings and rulers belonging to the Kshatriya castes. On the other

hand, despite having the highest secular status and power, the king was subordinated to the Brahmin in the ritual-religious sphere. (Compare this to the '*apartheid*' system described in Box 5.1)

However, in actual historical practice economic and social status tended to coincide. There was thus a fairly close correlation between social (i.e. caste) status and economic status – the 'high' castes were almost invariably of high economic status, while the 'low' castes were almost always of low economic status. In modern times, and particularly since the nineteenth century, the link between caste and occupation has become much less rigid. Ritual-religious prohibitions on occupational change are not easily imposed today, and it is easier than before to change one's occupation. Moreover, compared to a hundred or fifty years ago, the correlation between caste and economic status is also weaker – rich and poor people are to be found in every caste. But – and this is the key point – the caste-class correlation is still remarkably stable at the macro level. As the system has become less rigid, the distinctions between castes of broadly similar social and economic status have weakened. Yet, *between* different socio-economic groupings, the distinctions continue to be maintained.

Although things have certainly changed, they have not changed much at the macro level – it is still true that the privileged (and high economic status) sections of society tend to be overwhelmingly 'upper' caste while the disadvantaged (and low economic status) sections are dominated by the so called 'lower' castes. Moreover, the proportion of population that lives in poverty or affluence differs greatly across caste groups. (See Tables 1 and 2) In short, even though there have been major changes brought about by social movements over more than a century, and despite changed modes of production as well as concerted attempts by the state to suppress its public role in independent India, caste continues to affect the life chances of Indians in the twenty-first century.

Race and Caste – A Cross-Cultural Comparison

Box 5.1

Just like caste in India, race in South Africa stratifies society into a hierarchy. About one South African in seven is of European ancestry, yet South Africa's White minority holds the dominant share of power and wealth. Dutch traders settled in South Africa in the mid-seventeenth century; early in the nineteenth century, their descendants were pushed inland by British colonisation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the British gained control of what became the Union and then the Republic of South Africa.

To ensure their political control, the White European minority developed the policy of ***apartheid***, or separation of the races. An informal practice for many years, apartheid became law in 1948 and was used to deny the Black majority South African citizenship, ownership of land, and a formal voice in government. Every individual was classified by race and mixed marriages were prohibited. As a racial caste, Blacks held low-paying jobs; on average, they earned only one-fourth what whites did. In the latter half of the twentieth century, millions of Blacks were forcibly relocated to 'Bantustans' or 'homelands' – dirt-poor districts with no infrastructure or industry or jobs. All the

homelands together constituted only 14 per cent of South Africa's land, while Blacks made up close to 80 per cent of the country's population. The resulting starvation and suffering was intense and widespread. In short, in a land with extensive natural resources, including diamonds and precious minerals, the majority of people lived in abject poverty.

The prosperous White minority defended its privileges by viewing Blacks as social inferiors. However, they also relied on a powerful system of military repression to maintain their power. Black protestors were routinely jailed, tortured and killed. Despite this reign of terror, Blacks collectively struggled for decades under the leadership of the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela, and finally succeeded in coming to power and forming the government in 1994. Although the Constitution of post-apartheid South Africa has banned racial discrimination, economic capital still remains concentrated in White hands. Empowering the Black majority represents a continuing challenge for the new society.

"I have fought against White domination and I have fought against Black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Nelson Mandela, 20 April 1964, Rivonia Trial.

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE, 1999-2000

CASTE AND COMMUNITY GROUPS	RURAL INDIA	URBAN INDIA
	Spending Rs.327 or less per person per month	Spending Rs.454 or less per person per month
Scheduled Tribes	45.8	35.6
Scheduled Castes	35.9	38.3
OBCs	27.0	29.5
UC-Muslim	26.8	34.2
UC-Hindu	11.7	9.9
UC-Christian	9.6	5.4
UC-Sikh	0.0	4.9
UC-Others	16.0	2.7
ALL GROUPS	27.0	23.4

Note: OBC = Other Backward Classes; UC = 'Upper Castes', i.e., not SC/ST/OBC
Source: Computed from NSSO 55th Round (1999-2000) unit-level data on CD

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION THAT IS AFFLUENT, 1999-2000

CASTE AND COMMUNITY GROUPS	RURAL INDIA	URBAN INDIA
	Spending Rs. 1000 or more per person per month	Spending Rs. 2000 or more per person per month
Scheduled Tribes	1.4	1.8
Scheduled Castes	1.7	0.8
OBCs	3.3	2.0
UC-Muslim	2.0	1.6
UC-Hindu	8.6	8.2
UC-Christian	18.9	17.0
UC-Sikh	31.7	15.1
UC-Others	17.9	14.4
ALL GROUPS	4.3	4.5

Note: OBC = Other Backward Classes; UC = 'Upper Castes', i.e., not SC/ST/OBC

Source: Computed from NSSO 55th Round (1999-2000) unit-level data on CD

EXERCISE FOR TABLES 1 AND 2

Table 1 shows the percentage of the population of each caste/community that lives below the official 'Poverty Line' for 1999-2000. There are separate columns for rural and urban India.

Table 2 is organised in exactly the same way except that it shows the percentage of population living in affluence rather than in poverty. 'Affluence' is here defined as a monthly per person expenditure of Rs.1000 for rural India and Rs.2000 for urban India. This is equivalent to a family of five spending Rs.5000 per month in rural India and Rs.10,000 per month in urban India. Please take some time to study the tables carefully before you answer the questions below.

1. What is the percentage of the Indian population that was living below the poverty line in a) Rural India and b) Urban India?
2. Which caste/community group has the highest proportion of its members living in extreme poverty in a) rural and b) urban India? Which caste/community has the lowest percentage of population living in poverty?

3. Approximately how many times higher than the national average is the poverty percentage for each of the lower castes (ST, SC, OBC)? Is there a significant rural-urban difference?
4. Which caste/community has the lowest percentage of population living in affluence in rural and urban India respectively? How does this compare with the national average?
5. The affluent population of ‘Upper’ caste Hindus is roughly how many times larger than the percentage for the ‘lower’ castes (ST, SC, OBC)?
6. What do these tables tell you about the relative position of the OBCs? Is there a significant rural-urban difference?

UNTOUCHABILITY

‘Untouchability’ is an extreme and particularly vicious aspect of the caste system that prescribes stringent social sanctions against members of castes located at the bottom of the purity-pollution scale. Strictly speaking, the ‘untouchable’ castes are outside the caste hierarchy – they are considered to be so ‘impure’ that their mere touch severely pollutes members of all other castes, bringing terrible punishment for the former and forcing the latter to perform elaborate purification rituals. In fact, notions of ‘distance pollution’ existed in many regions of India (particularly in the south) such that even the mere presence or the shadow of an ‘untouchable’ person is considered polluting. Despite the limited literal meaning of the word, the institution of ‘untouchability’ refers not just to the avoidance or prohibition of physical contact but to a much broader set of social sanctions.

It is important to emphasise that the three main dimensions of untouchability – namely, exclusion, humiliation-subordination and exploitation – are all equally important in defining the phenomenon. Although other (i.e., ‘touchable’) low castes are also subjected to subordination and exploitation to some degree, they do not suffer the extreme forms of exclusion reserved for ‘untouchables.’ Dalits experience forms of exclusion that are unique and not practised against other groups – for instance, being prohibited from sharing drinking water sources or participating in collective religious worship, social ceremonies and festivals. At the same time, untouchability may also involve forced *inclusion* in a subordinated role, such as being compelled to play the drums at a religious event. The performance of publicly visible acts of (self-)humiliation and subordination is an important part of the practice of untouchability. Common instances include the imposition of gestures of deference (such as taking off headgear, carrying footwear in the hand, standing with bowed head, not wearing clean or ‘bright’ clothes, and so on) as well as routinised abuse and humiliation. Moreover, untouchability is almost always associated with economic exploitation of various kinds, most commonly through the imposition of forced, unpaid (or

பெண்கள் பாதுநர்வீன கழிப்பியம் முளிக்குளம்



under-paid) labour, or the confiscation of property. Finally, untouchability is a pan-Indian phenomenon, although its specific forms and intensity vary considerably across regions and socio-historical contexts.

The Everyday Ordeal of a Dalit Scavenger

Box 5.2

Among the estimated 8 million manual scavengers in India is Narayanamma, who work in a 400 seat public latrine in Anantpur municipality in Andhra Pradesh. From time to time, after the women using the toilet file out, Narayanamma and her fellow workers are called inside. There is no flush. The excrement only piles up at each seat, or flows into open drains. It is Narayanamma's job to collect it with her broom onto a flat, tin plate, and pile it into her basket. When the basket is filled, she carries it on her head to a waiting tractor-trolley parked at a distance of half a kilometre. And then she is back, waiting for the next call from the toilet. This goes on until about ten in the morning, when at last Narayanamma washes up, and returns home.

"*Ai, municipality come, clean this*", is how most people call out to Narayanamma and her fellow workers when they walk down the road.

It is as though we do not have a name, she says. And often they cover their noses when we walk past, as though we smell. We have to wait until someone turns on a municipal tap, or works a hand-pump, when we fill water, so that these are not polluted by our touch. In the tea-stalls, we do not sit with others on the benches; we squat on the ground separately. Until recently, there were separate broken teacups for us, which we washed ourselves and these were kept apart only for our use. This continues to be the practice in villages even in the periphery of Anantpur, as in many parts of the state.

(Source: Adapted from Mander 2001: 38-39).

The so-called 'untouchables' have been referred to collectively by many names over the centuries. Whatever the specific etymology of these names, they are all derogatory and carry a strongly pejorative charge. In fact, many of them continue to be used as forms of abuse even today, although their use is now a criminal offence. Mahatma Gandhi had popularised the term 'Harijan' (literally, children of God) in the 1930s to counter the pejorative charge carried by caste names.

However, the ex-untouchable communities and their leaders have coined another term, 'Dalit', which is now the generally accepted term for referring to these groups. In Indian languages, the term Dalit literally means 'downtrodden' and conveys the sense of an oppressed people. Though it was neither coined by Dr. Ambedkar nor frequently used by him, the term certainly resonates with his philosophy and the movement for empowerment that he led. It received wide currency during the caste riots in Mumbai in the early 1970s. The Dalit Panthers, a radical group that emerged in western India during that time, used the term to assert their identity as part of their struggle for rights and dignity.

STATE AND NON-STATE INITIATIVES ADDRESSING CASTE AND TRIBE DISCRIMINATION

The Indian state has had special programmes for the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes since even before Independence. The 'Schedules' listing the castes and tribes recognised as deserving of special treatment because of the massive discrimination practiced against them were drawn up in 1935, by the British Indian government. After Independence, the same policies have been continued and many new ones added. Among the most significant additions is the extension of special programmes to the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) since the early 1990s.

The most important state initiative attempting to compensate for past and present caste discrimination is the one popularly known as 'reservations'. This involves the setting aside of some places or 'seats' for members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in different spheres of public life. These include reservation of seats in the State and Central legislatures (i.e., state assemblies, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha); reservation of jobs in government service across all departments and public sector companies; and reservation of seats in educational institutions. The proportion of reserved seats is equal to the percentage share of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the total population. But for the OBCs this proportion is decided differently. The same principle is extended to other developmental programmes of the government, some of which are exclusively for the Scheduled Castes or Tribes, while others give them preference.

In addition to reservations, there have been a number of laws passed to end, prohibit and punish caste discrimination, specially untouchability. One of the earliest such laws was the Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850, which disallowed the curtailment of rights of citizens due solely to change of religion or caste. The most recent such law was the Constitution Amendment (Ninety Third Amendment) Act of 2005, which became law on 23rd January 2006. Coincidentally, both the 1850 law and the 2006 amendment related to education. The 93rd Amendment is for introducing reservation for the Other Backward Classes in institutions of higher education, while the 1850 Act was used to allow entry of Dalits to government schools. In between, there have been numerous laws, of which the important ones are, of course, the Constitution of India itself, passed in 1950; and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989. The Constitution abolished untouchability (Article 17) and introduced the reservation provisions mentioned above. The 1989 Prevention of Atrocities Act revised and strengthened the legal provisions punishing acts of violence or humiliation against Dalits and adivasis. The fact that legislation was passed repeatedly on this subject is proof of the fact that the law alone cannot end a social practice. In fact, as you will have seen from newspapers and the media, cases of discrimination including atrocities against Dalits and adivasis, continue to take place all over India today. The particular case mentioned in Box 5.3 is only

one example; you can find numerous others in the newspapers and media.

State action alone cannot ensure social change. In any case, no social group howsoever weak or oppressed is only a victim. Human beings are always capable of organising and acting on their own – often against very heavy odds – to struggle for justice and dignity. Dalits too have been increasingly active on the political, agitational, and cultural fronts. From the pre-Independence struggles and movements launched by people like Jotiba Phule, Iyotheedas, Periyar, Ambedkar and others (See Chapter 3) to contemporary political organisations like the Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh or the Dalit Sangharsh Samiti of Karnataka, Dalit political assertion has come a long way. (For an example of a contemporary struggle, see Box 5.3) Dalits have also made significant contributions to literature in several Indian languages, specially Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu and Hindi. (See Box 5.4 which features a short poem by the well known Marathi Dalit poet, Daya Pawar.)

ACTIVITY 5.3

Obtain a copy of the Constitution of India. You can get it from your school library, from a bookshop, or from the Internet (web address: <http://indiacode.nic.in/>).

Find and list all the articles and sections (laws) that deal with the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, or with caste-related problems like Untouchability. You can make a chart of the most important laws and put them up in your class.

D for Dalit, D for Defiance

Gohana is a small, dusty town on the Sonepat-Rohtak highway of Haryana with billboards promising progress... Past the town square, Gohana's largest dalit neighbourhood, Valmiki Colony, has risen from the ashes. On 31 August 2005, it was looted and burnt by a mob of Jats after a Jat youth was killed in a scuffle with some dalit youngsters. Dalits had fled their homes fearing attacks by Jats after the murder; the patrolling police had chosen not to stop the mobs from torching 54 dalit houses. "The arson was the Jats' way of teaching the dalits a lesson," said Vinod Kumar, whose house was burnt. "The police, administration and the government are dominated by Jats; they simply watched our houses burn."

Five months later, the burnt houses have been rebuilt, their facades painted in bright pink, red and green. Marble tiles with bright pictures of Valmiki adorn the facades of every house, asserting the dalit identity of the residents. "We had to return. It is our home," said Kumar, sitting on a newly acquired sofa in the drawing room of his house painted blue.

Kumar embodies the spirit of the dalits of Gohana. In his early 30s, he is not the scavenger the caste society ordered him to be, but a senior assistant in an insurance company. Most dalits have embraced education and stepped across the line of control of the caste system. "There are many of us who have a masters degree and work in private and government jobs. Most of our boys go to school and so do the girls," he said. [...] The young men of the Valmiki Colony are not the stereotyped, submissive, suffering dalits that one would traditionally expect to encounter. Dressed in imitation Nike shoes and Wrangler jeans, their body language is defiant. However, the journey of upward social mobility remains tough for the vast majority of

Box 5.3

landless dalits in Haryana. "Most boys drop out after high school because of acute poverty," said Sudesh Kataria, an assistant engineer working for a multinational. He has a diploma in electrical engineering from the Industrial Training Institute, Gurgaon. Kataria's best friend at ITI, a Jat, once invited him to a family wedding but insisted that he shouldn't reveal his identity. "At the wedding a guest asked me about my caste and I lied. Then he asked me about my village and I told him the truth. He knew my village was a dalit village." A fight broke out between the hosts and the guests — how can they let a dalit in? "They washed the chair I sat on and threw me out," Kataria recalls.

Kataria wants a new life for the dalits — he campaigns throughout the villages of Gurgaon with other educated dalits. "Our people will rise, stronger and powerful. We need to unite. And once we unite and fight back, there will be no Gohanas or Jhajjars. Not any more."

(Source: Adapted from an article by Basharat Peer, in Tehelka February 18, 2006)

The City by Daya Pawar

Box 5.4

One day someone digs up a twentieth century city and ends on this observation.
Here's an interesting inscription:
'This water tap is open to all castes and religions'.
What could it have meant:
That this society was divided?
That some were high while others were low?
Well, all right, then this city deserved burying—
Why did they call it the machine age?
Seems like the Stone Age in the twentieth century.

THE OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES

Untouchability was the most visible and comprehensive form of social discrimination. However, there were a large group of castes that were of low status and were also subjected to varying levels of discrimination short of untouchability. These were the service and artisanal castes who occupied the lower rungs of the caste hierarchy. The Constitution of India recognises the possibility that there may be groups other than the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes who suffer from social disadvantages. These groups – which

need not be based on caste alone, but generally are identified by caste – were described as the 'socially and educationally backward classes'. This is the constitutional basis of the popular term 'Other Backward Classes' (OBCs), which is in common use today.

Like the category of the 'tribe' (see Chapter 3), the OBCs are defined negatively, by what they are not. They are neither part of the 'forward' castes at the upper end of the status spectrum, nor of the Dalits at the lower end. But since caste has entered all the major Indian religions and is not confined to Hinduism alone, there are also members of other religions who belong to the backward castes and share the same traditional occupational identification and similar or worse socio-economic status.

For these reasons, the OBCs are a much more diverse group than the Dalits or adivasis. The first government of independent India under Jawaharlal Nehru appointed a commission to look into measures for the welfare of the OBCs. The First Backward Classes Commission headed by Kaka Kalelkar submitted its report in 1953. But the political climate at the time led to the report being sidelined. From the mid-fifties, the OBC issue became a regional affair pursued at the state rather than the central level.

The southern states had a long history of backward caste political agitation that had started in the early twentieth century. Because of these powerful social movements, policies to address the problems of the OBCs were in place long before they were discussed in most northern states. The OBC issue returned to the central level in the late 1970s after the Emergency when the Janata Party came to power. The Second Backward Classes Commission headed by B.P. Mandal was appointed at this time. However, it was only in 1990, when the central government decided to implement the ten-year old Mandal Commission report, that the OBC issue became a major one in national politics.

Since the 1990s we have seen the resurgence of lower caste movements in north India, among both the OBCs and Dalits. The politicisation of the OBCs allows them to convert their large numbers – recent surveys show that they are about 41% of the national population – into political influence. This was not possible at the national level before, as shown by the sidelining of the Kalelkar Commission report, and the neglect of the Mandal Commission report.

The large disparities between the upper OBCs (who are largely landed castes and enjoy dominance in rural society in many regions of India) and the lower OBCs (who are very poor and disadvantaged, and are often not very different from Dalits in socio-economic terms) make this a difficult political category to work with. However, the OBCs are severely under-represented in all spheres except landholding and political representation (they have a large number of MLAs and MPs). Although the upper OBCs are dominant in the rural sector, the situation of urban OBCs is much worse, being much closer to that of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes than to the upper castes.

ADIVASI STRUGGLES

Like the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes are social groups recognised by the Indian Constitution as specially marked by poverty, powerlessness and social stigma. The *jana* or tribes were believed to be ‘people of the forest’ whose distinctive habitat in the hill and forest areas shaped their economic, social and political attributes. However, ecological isolation was nowhere absolute. Tribal groups have had long and close association with Hindu society and culture, making the boundaries between ‘tribe’ and ‘caste’ quite porous. (Recall the discussion of the concept of tribe in Chapter 3).



In the case of adivasis, the movement of populations from one area to another further complicates the picture. Today, barring the North-Eastern states, there are no areas of the country that are inhabited exclusively by tribal people; there are only areas of tribal *concentration*. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, non-tribals have moved into the tribal districts of central India, while tribal people from the same districts have migrated to plantations, mines, factories and other places of employment.

In the areas where tribal populations are concentrated, their economic and social conditions are usually much worse than those of non-tribals. The impoverished and exploited circumstances under which adivasis live can be traced historically to the pattern of accelerated resource extraction started by the colonial British government and continued by the government of independent India. From the late nineteenth century onwards, the colonial government reserved most forest tracts for its own use, severing the rights that adivasis had long exercised to use the forest for gathering produce and for shifting cultivation. Forests were now to be protected for maximising timber production. With this policy, the mainstay of their livelihoods was taken away from adivasis, rendering their lives poorer and more insecure. Denied access to forests and land for cultivation, adivasis were forced to either use the forests illegally (and be harassed and prosecuted as 'encroachers' and thieves) or migrate in search of wage labour.

The Independence of India in 1947 should have made life easier for adivasis but this was not the case. One, the government monopoly over forests continued. If anything, the exploitation of forests accelerated. Two, the policy of capital-intensive industrialisation adopted by the Indian government required mineral resources and power-generation capacities which were concentrated in Adivasi areas. Adivasi lands were rapidly acquired for new mining and dam projects. In the process, millions of adivasis were displaced without any appropriate compensation or rehabilitation. Justified in the name of 'national development' and 'economic growth', these policies were actually a form of internal colonialism, subjugating adivasis and alienating the resources upon which they depended. Projects such as the Sardar Sarovar dam on the river Narmada in western India and the Polavaram dam on the river Godavari in Andhra Pradesh will displace hundreds of thousands of adivasis, driving them to greater destitution. These processes continue to prevail and have become even more powerful since the 1990s when economic liberalisation policies were officially adopted by the Indian government. It is now easier for corporate firms to acquire large areas of land by displacing adivasis.

Like the term Dalit, the term Adivasi connotes political awareness and the assertion of rights. Literally meaning 'original inhabitants', the term was coined in the 1930s as part of the struggle against the intrusion by the colonial government and outside settlers and moneylenders. Being Adivasi is about shared experiences of the loss of forests, the alienation of land, repeated displacements since Independence in the name of 'development projects' and much more.

In spite of the heavy odds against them and in the face of their marginalisation many tribal groups have been waging struggles against outsiders (called ‘dikus’) and the state. In post-Independence India, the most significant achievements of Adivasi movements include the attainment of statehood for Jharkhand and Chattisgarh, which were originally part of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh respectively. In this respect adivasis and their struggles are different from the Dalit struggle because, unlike Dalits, adivasis were concentrated in contiguous areas and could demand states of their own.

In the Name of Development — Adivasis in the Line of Fire

Box 5.5

The new year brought death to Orissa. On 2 January 2006, police opened fire on a group of adivasis, killing twelve and injuring many others. For the past 23 days, the Adivasis had blocked the state highway at Kalinganagar, peacefully protesting against the take-over of their farmlands by a steel company. Their refusal to surrender their land was a red rag to an administration under pressure to expedite industrial development in the state. The stakes were high — not only this piece of land but the entire policy of accelerated industrialisation would be jeopardised if the government were to entertain the adivasis’ demands. The police were brought in to forcibly clear the highway. In the confrontation that followed, twelve adivasi men and women lost their lives. Many of them were shot in the back as they were trying to run away. When the dead adivasis’ bodies were returned to their families, it was found that the police had cut off their hands, the men’s genitals and the women’s breasts. The corpses’ mutilation was a warning — we mean business.

The Kalinganagar incident, like many horrors before it and after, briefly made the headlines and then disappeared from public view. The lives and deaths of poor adivasis slid back into obscurity. Yet their struggle still continues and by revisiting it, we not only remind ourselves of the need to address ongoing injustice, but also appreciate how this conflict encapsulates many of the key issues in the sphere of environment and development in India today. Like many adivasi-dominated parts of the country, Kalinganagar in Jajpur district of central Orissa is a paradox. Its wealth of natural resources contrasts sharply with the poverty of its inhabitants, mainly small farmers and labourers. The rich iron ore deposits in the area are state property and their ‘development’ means that Adivasi lands are compulsorily acquired by the state for a pittance. While a handful of local residents may get secure jobs on the lower rungs of the industrial sector, most are impoverished even further and survive on the edge of starvation as wage-labourers. It is estimated that 30 million people, more than the entire population of Canada, have been displaced by this land acquisition policy since India became independent in 1947 (Fernandes 1991). Of these, almost 75 per cent are, by the government’s own admission, ‘still awaiting rehabilitation’. This process of land acquisition is justified as being in the public interest since the state is committed to promoting economic growth by expanding industrial production and infrastructure.

It is claimed that such growth is necessary for national development.

To these arguments has been added a new justification. Since 1990, the Indian government has adopted a policy of economic liberalisation — divesting the state of its welfare functions and dismantling the institutional apparatuses regulating private firms. Economic policy has been re-oriented to maximise foreign

exchange earnings, with concessions and subsidies given to Indian and foreign firms to encourage them to invest in production for export. Kalinganagar's iron ore attracted increased interest due to the booming international demand for steel and spurred a steel company, which had bought land from the Orissa state government, to start work on a new steel plant by building a wall enclosing the factory site. It was the construction of this wall that sparked off protests leading to the killing of adivasis. The state government had forcibly acquired this land from them years ago by paying them a few thousand rupees per acre. Since the meagre compensation did not enable adivasis to invest in an alternative livelihood, they had continued to live in the area and cultivate the land that legally no longer belonged to them (after acquiring the land, the administration had not put it to any use). The move in December 2005 to enclose this land directly deprived adivasis of their sole source of livelihood. Their desperation was fuelled by anger when they learnt that the state government had sold the acquired land to the steel firm at a price roughly ten times the compensation amount paid to the original owners. Adivasis took to the streets, refusing to give up the land that they survived on.

The struggle of adivasis in Orissa and its violent reprisal highlight how conflicts over land and related natural resources remain central to the challenge of India's development. Kalinganagar is now marked along with Narmada, Singrauli, Tehri, Hirakud, Koel Karo, Suvarnarekha, Nagarhole, Plachimada and many other sites, on the map of environmental conflicts in India. Like the others, its contours too reflect the deep social and political divides that characterise contemporary India.

To read more about the Kalinganagar issue see: Frontline, v. 23, n.1, Jan 14-27, 2006 or the People's Union for Civil Liberties report at <http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Dalit-tribal/2006/kalinganagar.htm>

5.3 STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY AND RIGHTS

Because of the obvious biological and physical differences between men and women, gender inequality is often treated as natural. However, despite appearances, scholars have shown that the inequalities between men and women are social rather than natural. For example, there are no biological reasons that can explain why so few women are found in positions of public power. Nor can nature explain why women generally receive a smaller or no share in family property in most societies. But the strongest argument comes from the societies that were different from the 'normal' or common pattern. If women were biologically unfit to be inheritors and heads of families, how did matrilineal societies (as the Nairs of Kerala used to be, and as the Khasis of Meghalaya still are) work for centuries? How have women managed to be successful farmers and traders in so many African societies? There is, in short, nothing biological about the inequalities that mark the relations between men and women. Gender is thus also a form of social inequality and exclusion like caste and class, but with its own specific features. In this section we will look at how gender inequality came to be recognised as inequality in the Indian context, and the kinds of responses that this recognition produced.

The women's question arose in modern India as part of the nineteenth century middle class social reform movements. The nature of these movements varied from region to region. They are often termed as middle class reform movements because many of these reformers were from the newly emerging western educated Indian middle class. They were often at once inspired by the democratic ideals of the modern west and by a deep pride in their own democratic traditions of the past. Many used both these resources to fight for women's rights. We can only give illustrative examples here. We draw from the anti-sati campaign led by Raja Rammohunn Roy in Bengal, the widow remarriage movement in the Bombay Presidency where Ranade was one of the leading reformers, from Jyotiba Phule's simultaneous attack on caste and gender oppression, and from the social reform movement in Islam led by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

Raja Rammohun Roy's attempts to reform society, religion and the status of women can be taken as the starting point of nineteenth century social reform in Bengal. A decade before establishing the Brahmo Samaj in 1828, Roy undertook the campaign against "sati" which was the first women's issue to receive public attention. Rammohun Roy's ideas represented a curious mixture of Western rationality and an assertion of Indian traditionality. Both trends can be located in the over arching context of a response to colonialism. Rammohun thus attacked the practice of *sati* on the basis of both appeals to humanitarian and natural rights doctrines as well as Hindu *shastras*.

The deplorable and unjust treatment of the Hindu upper caste widows was a major issue taken up by the social reformers. Ranade used the writings of scholars such as Bishop Joseph Butler whose *Analogy of Religion* and *Three Sermons on Human Nature* dominated the moral philosophy syllabus of Bombay University in the 1860s. At the same time, M.G. Ranade's writings entitled the *The Texts of the Hindu Law on the Lawfulness of the Remarriage of Widows and Vedic Authorities for Widow Marriage* elaborated the *shastric* sanction for remarriage of widows.

While Ranade and Rammohun Roy belonged to one kind of nineteenth century upper caste and middle class social reformers, Jotiba Phule came from a socially excluded caste and his attack was directed against both caste and gender discrimination. He founded the Satyashodak Samaj with its primary emphasis on "truth seeking". Phule's first practical social reform efforts were to aid the two groups considered lowest in traditional Brahmin culture: women and untouchables. (See Chapter 3)

ACTIVITY 5.4

- Find out about a social reformer in your part of the country. Collect information about her/him.
- Read an autobiography/biography of any social reformer.
- Can you see any of the ideas they fought for existing today in our everyday lives or in our constitutional provisions.



ACTIVITY 5.5

- Make a list of professions in which women are involved today.
- Can you think of any educational field where women are barred today? Perhaps the recent discussion on women in the Indian armed forces may throw some light on this.

As in the case of other reformers, a similar trend of drawing upon both modern western ideas as well as the sacred texts characterised Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's efforts to reform Muslim society. He wanted girls to be educated, but within the precincts of their homes. Like Dayanand Saraswati of the Arya Samaj, he stood for women's education but sought for a curriculum that included instruction in religious principles, training in the arts of housekeeping and handicrafts and rearing of children. This may appear very stereotypical today. One has to however realise that once rights such as education for women were accepted it started a process that finally made it impossible to confine women to only some kinds of education.

It is often assumed that social reform for women's rights was entirely fought for by male reformers and that ideas of women's equality are alien imports. To learn how wrong both these assumptions are, read the following extracts from two books written by women, *Stree Purush Tulana* written in 1882 and *Sultana's Dream* written in 1905.

Stree Purush Tulana (or Comparison of Men and Women) was written by a Maharashtrian housewife, Tarabai Shinde, as a protest against the double standards of a male dominated society. A young Brahmin widow had been sentenced to death by the courts for killing her newborn baby because it was illegitimate, but no effort had been made to identify or punish the man who had fathered the baby. *Stree Purush Tulana* created quite a stir when it was published. Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain was born in a well-to-do Bengali Muslim family, and was lucky to have a husband who was very liberal in outlook and

From *Stree Purush Tulana* 1882

Box 5.6

...Who are these women you give such names to? Whose womb did you take your birth in? Who carried the killing burden of you for nine months? Who was the saint who made you the light in her eye, ...How would you feel if someone said about your mother, "That old chap's mother, you know, she's a gateway to hell'. Or your sister, "That so-and so-s' sister, she's a real storehouse of deceit'. ...Would you just sit and listen to their bad words?...

...Then you get blessed with a bit of education and promoted to some important new office- and you start feeling ashamed of your first wife. Money works its influence on you and you begin to say to yourself, what does a wife matter after all? Don't we just give them a few rupees a month and keep them at home like any other servant, to do the cooking and look after the house? You begin to think of her like some female slave you've paid for....If one of your horses died it wouldn't take long to replace it, and there's no great labour needed to get another wife either. ..The problem is Yama hasn't got time to carry off wives fast enough, or you'd probably get through several different ones in one day!

From *Sultana's Dream* (1905)

Box 5.7

... "What is the matter, dear?" she said affectionately.
"I feel somewhat awkward," I said, in a rather apologising tone, "as being a purdahnishin woman I am not accustomed to walking about unveiled."
"You need not be afraid of coming across a man here. This is Ladyland, free from sin and harm..."
...I became very curious to know where the men were. I met more than a hundred women while walking there, but not a single man.
"Where are the men?" I asked her.
"In their proper places, where they ought to be."
"Pray let me know what you mean by 'their proper places.'"
"Oh, I see my mistake, you cannot know our customs, as you were never here before. We shut our men indoors."
"Just as we are kept in the zenana?"
"Exactly so."
"How funny." I burst into a laugh. Sister Sara laughed too.

encouraged her education first in Urdu and later in Bengali and English. She was already a successful author in Urdu and Bengali when she wrote *Sultana's Dream* to test her abilities in English. This remarkable short story is probably the earliest example of science fiction writing in India, and among the first by a woman author anywhere in the world. In her dream, Sultana visits a magical country where the gender roles are reversed. Men are confined to the home and observe 'purdah' while women are busy scientists vying with each other at inventing devices that will control the clouds and regulate rain, and machines that fly or 'air-cars'.

Apart from the early feminist visions there were a large number of women's organisations that arose both at the all India and local levels in the early twentieth century. And then began the participation of women in the national movement itself. Not surprisingly women's rights were part and parcel of the nationalist vision.

In 1931, the Karachi Session of the Indian National Congress issued a declaration on the Fundamental Rights of Citizenship in India whereby it committed itself to women's equality. The declaration reads as follows:

1. All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex.
2. No disability attaches to any citizen, by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex, in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling.

ACTIVITY 5.6

- Find out the names of a few women's organisations that emerged both at the national level and in your part of the country.
- Find out about any woman who was part of a tribal or peasant movement, a trade union or one of the many strands of the freedom movement.
- Identify a novel, a short story or play in your region which depicted the struggle of women against discrimination.

ACTIVITY 5.7

Divide your class into groups. Each group can chose a topic relating to women's rights on which they must collect information from newspapers, radio, television news or other source. Discuss your findings with your classmates.

Possible examples of topics could be :

- 33 per cent reservation for women in elected bodies
- Domestic violence
- Right to employment ... there are many other topics of interest, choose the ones which interest you.

3. The franchise shall be on the basis of universal adult suffrage.
4. Woman shall have the right to vote, to represent and the right to hold public offices. (Report of the Sub-Committee, 'Woman's Role in Planned Economy', 1947: 37-38).

Two decades after Independence, women's issues re-emerged in the 1970s. In the nineteenth century reform movements, the emphasis had been on the backward aspects of tradition like sati, child marriage, or the ill treatment of widows. In the 1970s, the emphasis was on 'modern' issues – the rape of women in police custody, dowry murders, the representation of women in popular media, and the gendered consequences of unequal development. The law was a major site for reform in the 1980s and after, specially when it was discovered that many laws of concern to women had not been changed since the 19th century. As we enter the twenty-first century, new sites of gender injustice are emerging. You will recall the discussion of the declining sex ratio in Chapter 2. The sharp fall in the child sex ratio and the implicit social bias against the girl child represents one of the new challenges of gender inequality.

Social change whether on women's rights or any other issue is never a battle won once and for all. As with other social issues the struggle is long, and the women's movement in India will have to fight to defend hard won rights as well as take up new issues as they emerge.

5.4 THE STRUGGLES OF THE DIFFERENTLY ABLED

The differently abled are not 'disabled' only because they are physically or mentally 'impaired' but also because society is built in a manner that does not cater to their needs. In contrast to the struggles over Dalit, adivasi or women's rights, the rights of the differently abled have been recognised only very recently. Yet in all historical periods, in all societies there have been people who are differently abled. One of the leading activists and scholars of disability in the Indian context, Anita Ghai, argues that this invisibility of the disabled can be compared to the *Invisible Man* of Ralph Ellison. Ellison's novel of that name is a famous indictment of racism against African Americans in the USA.

I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in the circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of

hard distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, figments of their imagination. Indeed everything and anything except me. (Ellison, 1952: 3)

The very term 'differently abled' is significant because it draws attention to the fact that public perception of the 'disabled' needs to be questioned.

Here are some common features central to the public perception of 'disability' all over the world —

- Disability is understood as a biological given.
- Whenever a disabled person is confronted with problems, it is taken for granted that the problems originate from her/his impairment.
- The disabled person is seen as a victim.
- Disability is supposed to be linked with the disabled individual's self perception.
- The very idea of disability suggests that they are in need of help.

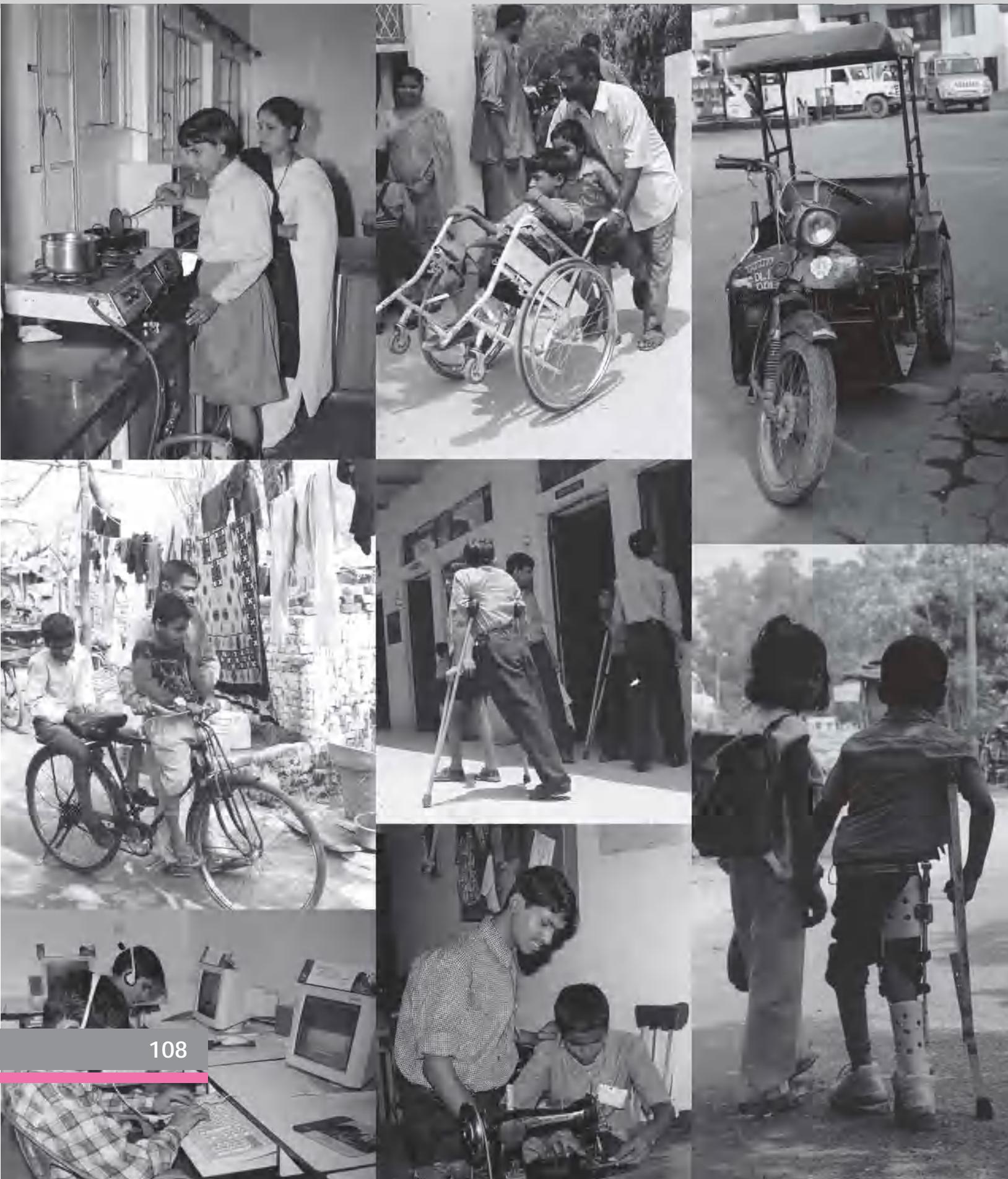
In India labels such as 'disability', 'handicap', 'crippled', 'blind' and 'deaf' are used synonymously. Often these terms are hurled at people as insults. In a culture that looks up to bodily 'perfection', all deviations from the 'perfect body' signify abnormality, defect and distortion. Labels such as *bechara* (poor thing) accentuate the victim status for the disabled person. The roots of such attitudes lie in the cultural conception that views an impaired body as a result of fate. Destiny is seen as the culprit, and disabled people are the victims. The common perception views disability as retribution for past *karma* (actions) from which there can be no reprieve. The dominant cultural construction in India therefore looks at disability as essentially a characteristic of the individual. The popular images in mythology portray the disabled in an extremely negative fashion.

The very term 'differently abled' challenges each of these assumptions. Terms such as 'mentally challenged', 'visually impaired' and 'physically impaired' came to replace the more trite negative terms such as 'retarded', 'crippled' or 'lame'. The disabled are rendered disabled not because they are biologically disabled but because society renders them so.

We are disabled by buildings that are not designed to admit us, and this in turn leads to a range of further disabilities regarding our education, our chances of gaining employment, our social lives and so on. The disablement lies in the construction of society, not in the physical condition of the individual. (Brisenden 1986, p. 176)

ACTIVITY 5.8

- Find out how different traditional or mythical stories depict the disabled. You can draw from any of the innumerable regional sources of folklore, mythology, and traditional storytelling in India, or from any other part of the world.
- Make a list of popular sayings or proverbs that show negative attitudes towards the disabled.



The social construction of disability has yet another dimension. There is a close relationship between disability and poverty. Malnutrition, mothers weakened by frequent childbirth, inadequate immunisation programmes, accidents in overcrowded homes, all contribute to an incidence of disability among poor people that is higher than among people living in easier circumstances. Furthermore, disability creates and exacerbates poverty by increasing isolation and economic strain, not just for the individual but for the family; there is little doubt that disabled people are among the poorest in poor countries.

ACTIVITY 5.9

Have you seen the film *Iqbal*? If you have not do try and see it. It is an exemplary story of the grit and determination of a young boy who cannot hear and speak but who has a passion for cricket and finally excels as a bowler. The film brings alive not just Iqbal's struggles but also the many possible concrete meanings of the phrase 'differently abled'.

Shastri Bhawan,

New Delhi

Dated: 15.06.2005

Sub: - Invitation of suggestions/ comments on Draft National Policy for Persons with Disabilities.

1. According to the Census, 2001, there are 2.19 crore persons with disabilities in India which constitute 2.13 per cent of total population. This includes persons with visual, hearing, speech, locomotor and mental disabilities. Seventy five per cent persons with disabilities live in rural areas.
2. A comprehensive legal and institutional structure has already been put in place for the welfare of persons with disabilities. The Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act of 1995 was enacted...
3. Rehabilitation of persons with disabilities requires multisectoral collaborative approach of various central government ministries, state Governments, UT administrations, members of civil society, organisations of persons with disabilities and non-government organisations working for the welfare of persons with disabilities so that better synergy in delivery of services is achieved. ...

Director, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment,

Room No. 253, A-Wing, Shastri Bhawan,

New Delhi-110001 Tele fax-011-23383853

Box 5.8

Significantly, efforts to redress the situation have come from the disabled themselves. The government has had to respond as the notification in the box 5.8 shows.

It is only recently with the efforts of the differently abled themselves that some awareness is building in society on the need to rethink 'disability'. This is illustrated by the newspaper report below.

Recognition of disability is absent from the wider educational discourse. This is evident from the historical practices within the educational system that continue to marginalise the issue of disability by maintaining two separate streams – one for disabled students and one for everyone else.

'Disabled-unfriendly' Courts

Describing the non-consideration of handicapped persons for Judge posts as an "exclusive" policy of the higher judiciary, a senior jurist says by continuing to ignore the handicapped, the judiciary is violating a statutory mandate. "The High Court building itself is far from disabled-friendly." All entrances to the actual court complex are preceded by staircases and none of them has a ramp. Even to access the limited elevator facility, one has to climb several steps.

The condition of the City Civil Court, where many handicapped or injured persons come to depose before courts hearing accident claims cases, is worse. One can see disabled, injured or old people being carried up the stairs by their companions, says an advocate.

The Hindu Wednesday 2 August 2006.

Box 5.9

In this chapter we have looked at caste, tribe, gender and disability as institutions that generate and perpetuate inequalities and exclusion. However, they also provoke struggles against these inequalities. Historically, the understanding of inequality in the social sciences has been dominated by notions of class, race and more recently, gender. It is only later that the complexities of other categories like caste and tribe have received attention. In the Indian context, caste, tribe and gender are now getting the attention they deserve. But there remain categories that are still in need of attention, such as those who are marginalised by religion or by a combination of categories. More complex formations like groups defined by religion and caste, gender and religion, or caste and region are likely to claim our attention in the near future, as shown, for example, by the Sachar Committee Report on the Muslim community.

In a country where half the children in the age group of 5-14 are out of school how can there be space for children with disabilities, especially if a segregated schooling is being advocated for them? Even if the legislation optimistically tries to make education available to every disabled child, parents in a village do not see this as instrumental in achieving any autonomy for their disabled child. What they would prefer is perhaps a better way of fetching water from the well and improved agricultural facilities. Similarly, parents in an urban slum expect education to be related to a world of work that would enhance their child's basic quality of life.

Source: Anita Ghai 'Disability in the Indian Context', 2002:93

Box 5.10

ACTIVITY 5.10

Read the quote above and discuss the different ways in which the problems of the disabled are socially constituted.

Questions

Patterns of Social Inequality and Exclusion

1. How is social inequality different from the inequality of individuals?
2. What are some of the features of social stratification?
3. How would you distinguish prejudice from other kinds of opinion or belief?
4. What is social exclusion?
5. What is the relationship between caste and economic inequality today?
6. What is untouchability?
7. Describe some of the policies designed to address caste inequality.
8. How are the Other Backward Castes different from the Dalits (or Scheduled Castes)?
9. What are the major issues of concern to adivasis today?
10. What are the major issues taken up by the women's movement over its history?
11. In what sense can one say that 'disability' is as much a social as a physical thing?

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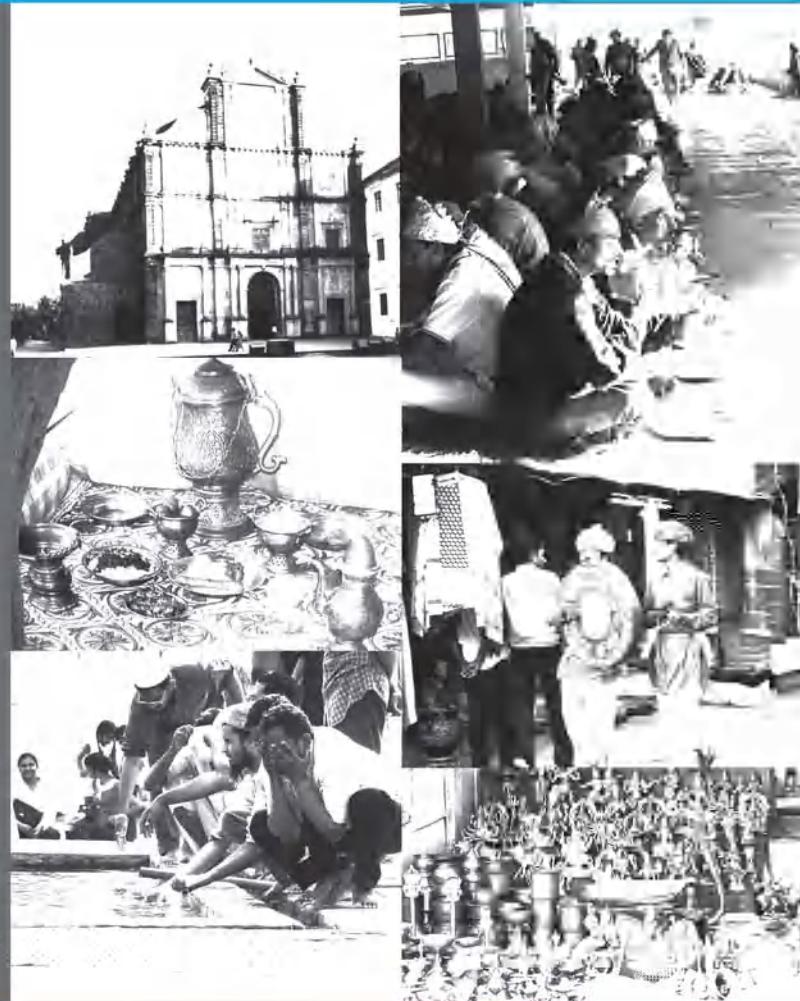
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Notes

Chapter 6

The Challenges of Cultural Diversity



Different kinds of social institutions, ranging from the family to the market, can bring people together, create strong collective identities and strengthen social cohesion, as you learnt in Chapters 3 and 4. But, on the other hand, as Chapters 4 and 5 showed, the very same institutions can also be sources of inequality and exclusion. In this chapter, you will learn about some of the tensions and difficulties associated with cultural diversity. What precisely does 'cultural diversity' mean, and why is it seen as a challenge?

The term 'diversity' emphasises *differences* rather than inequalities. When we say that India is a nation of great cultural diversity, we mean that there are many different types of social groups and communities living here. These are communities defined by cultural markers such as language, religion, sect, race or caste. When these diverse communities are also part of a larger entity like a nation, then difficulties may be created by competition or conflict between them.

This is why cultural diversity can present tough challenges. The difficulties arise from the fact that cultural identities are very powerful – they can arouse intense passions and are often able to mobilise large numbers of people. Sometimes cultural differences are accompanied by economic and social inequalities, and this further complicates things. Measures to address the inequalities or injustices suffered by one community can provoke opposition from other communities. The situation is made worse when scarce resources – like river waters, jobs or government funds – have to be shared.

If you read the newspapers regularly, or watch the news on television, you may often have had the depressing feeling that India has no future. There seem to be so many divisive forces hard at work tearing apart the unity and integrity of our country – communal riots, demands for regional autonomy, caste wars... You might have even felt upset that large sections of our population are not being patriotic and don't seem to feel as intensely for India as you and your classmates do. But if you look at any book dealing with the history of modern India, or books dealing specifically with issues like communalism or regionalism (for example, Brass 1974), you will realise that these problems are not new ones. Almost all the major 'divisive' problems of today have been there ever since Independence, or even earlier. But in spite of them India has not only survived as a nation, but is a stronger nation-state today.

As you prepare to read on, remember that this chapter deals with difficult issues for which there are no easy answers. But some answers are better than others, and it is our duty as citizens to try our utmost to produce the best answers that are possible within the limitations of our historical and social context. Remember also that, given the immense challenges presented by a vast and extremely diverse collection of peoples and cultures, India has on the whole done fairly well compared to most other nations. On the other hand, we also have some significant shortcomings. There is a lot of room for improvement and much work needs to be done in order to face the challenges of the future ...

6.1 CULTURAL COMMUNITIES AND THE NATION-STATE

Before discussing the major challenges that diversity poses in India – issues such as regionalism, communalism and casteism – we need to understand the relationship between nation-states and cultural communities. Why is it so important for people to belong to communities based on cultural identities like a caste, ethnic group, region, or religion? Why is so much passion aroused when there is a perceived threat, insult, or injustice to one's community? Why do these passions pose problems for the nation-state?

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Every human being needs a sense of stable identity to operate in this world. Questions like — Who am I? How am I different from others? How do others understand and comprehend me? What goals and aspirations should I have? – constantly crop up in our life right from childhood. We are able to answer many of these questions because of the way in which we are socialised, or taught how to live in society by our immediate families and our community in various senses. (Recall the discussion of socialisation in your Class XI textbooks.) The socialisation process involves a continuous dialogue, negotiation and even struggle against significant others (those directly involved in our lives) like our parents, family, kin group and our community. Our community provides us the language (our mother tongue) and the cultural values through which we comprehend the world. It also anchors our self-identity.

Community identity is based on birth and 'belonging' rather than on some form of acquired qualifications or 'accomplishment'. It is what we 'are' rather than what we have 'become'. We don't have to do anything to be born into a community – in fact, no one has any choice about which family or community or country they are born into. These kinds of identities are called 'ascriptive' – that is, they are determined by the accidents of birth and do not involve any choice on the part of the individuals concerned. It is an odd fact of social life that people feel a deep sense of security and satisfaction in belonging to communities in which their membership is entirely accidental. We often identify so strongly with communities we have done nothing to 'deserve' – passed no exam, demonstrated no skill or competence... This is very unlike belonging to, say, a profession or team. Doctors or architects have to pass exams and demonstrate their competence. Even in sports, a certain level of skill and performance are a necessary pre-condition for membership in a team. But our membership in our families or religious or regional communities is without preconditions, and yet it is total. In fact, most ascriptive identities are very hard to shake off; even if we choose to disown them, others may continue to identify us by those very markers of belonging.

Perhaps it is because of this accidental, unconditional and yet almost inescapable belonging that we can often be so emotionally attached to our

community identity. Expanding and overlapping circles of community ties (family, kinship, caste, ethnicity, language, region or religion) give meaning to our world and give us a sense of identity, of who we are. That is why people often react emotionally or even violently whenever there is a perceived threat to their community identity.

ACTIVITY 6.1

To get a clearer understanding of the expanding circles of community ties which shape our sense of identity, you can do a small survey designed as a game. Interview your school mates or other friends: each interviewee gets four chances to answer each of two questions: 'Who am I?' and 'Who do others think I am?'. But the answers must be in a single word or short phrase; they cannot include any names (your own or your parents'/guardians' names; cannot include your class/school, etc.). Interviews must be done singly and in private, i.e., other potential interviewees should not be able to hear what is said. Each person should only be interviewed once (i.e., different interviewers cannot interview the same person). You can record the answers and analyse them later. Which types of identities predominated? What was the most common first choice? Which was often the last choice? Were there any patterns to the answers? Did the answers for 'who am I' differ greatly, somewhat, or not at all from answers to 'who do others think I am'?

A second feature of ascriptive identities and community feeling is that they are universal. Everyone has a motherland, a mother tongue, a family, a faith... This may not necessarily be strictly true of every individual, but it is true in a general sense. And we are all equally committed and loyal to our respective identities. Once again it is possible to come across people who may not be particularly committed to one or the other aspect of their identity. But the possibility of this commitment is potentially available to most people. Because of this, conflicts that involve our communities (whether of nation, language, religion, caste or region) are very hard to deal with. Each side in the conflict thinks of the other side as a hated enemy, and there is a tendency to exaggerate the virtues of one's own side as well as the vices of the other side. Thus, when two nations are at war, patriots in each nation see the other as the enemy aggressor; each side believes that God and truth are on their side. In the heat of the moment, it is very hard for people on either side to see that they are constructing matching but reversed mirror images of each other.

It is a social fact that no country or group ever mobilises its members to struggle for untruth, injustice or inequality – everyone is always fighting for truth, justice, equality... This does not mean that both sides are right in every conflict, or that there is no right and wrong, no truth. Sometimes both sides are indeed equally wrong or right; at other times history may judge one side to be the aggressor and the other to be the victim. But this can only happen long after the heat of the conflict has cooled down. Some notion of mutually agreed upon truth is very hard to establish in situations of identity conflict; it usually takes decades, sometimes centuries for one side to accept that it was wrong (See Box 6.1).

When 'Victors' Apologise

Box 6.1

It is not uncommon for the losing side in a war to be forced to apologise for the bad things that it did. It is only rarely that the winners accept that they were guilty of wrong doing. However, in recent times there have been many such examples from around the world. Nations or communities that were on the 'winning' side, or that are still in a dominant position, are beginning to accept that they have been responsible for grave injustices in the past and are seeking to apologise to the affected communities.

In Australia, there has been a long debate on an official apology from the Australian nation (where the majority of the population today is of white-European origin) to the descendants of the native peoples who were the original inhabitants of the forcibly colonised land. Most state governments in Australia have passed some variant of the following apology resolution:

We, the peoples of Australia, of many origins as we are, make a commitment to go on together in a spirit of reconciliation. We value the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of lands and waters.

We recognise this land and its waters were settled as colonies without treaty or consent. [...] Our nation must have the courage to own the truth, to heal the wounds of its past so that we can move on together at peace with ourselves. As we walk the journey of healing, one part of the nation apologises and expresses its sorrow and sincere regret for the injustices of the past, so the other part accepts the apologies and forgives. [...] And so, we pledge ourselves to stop injustice, overcome disadvantage, and respect that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to self-determination within the life of the nation.

In the United States of America there has been a longstanding debate about apologies to the Native American community (the original inhabitants of the land driven out by war) and to the Black community (brought as slaves from Africa). No consensus has been reached yet.

In Japan, official policy has long recognised the need to apologise for the atrocities of war and colonisation during the periods when Japan occupied parts of East Asia including Korea and parts of China. The most recent apology is from a 15th August 2005 speech by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi:

In the past, Japan, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. Sincerely facing these facts of history, I once again express my feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology, and also express the feelings of mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, in the war. I am determined not to allow the lessons of that horrible war to erode, and to contribute to the peace and prosperity of the world without ever again waging a war.

Similar debates have gone on in South Africa, where a white minority was in power and brutally oppressed the black majority consisting of the native population. In Britain as well, there has been public discussion on whether the nation should apologise for its role in colonialism, or in promoting slavery. Interestingly, the latter issue has also been taken up by cities – for example, the port city of Bristol debated whether the city council should pass a resolution apologising for the role that Bristol played in the slave trade.

Sources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bringing_Them_Home#Apologies
http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2005/08/15danwa_e.html

ACTIVITY 6.2

Read Box 6.1 carefully. What purpose do you think such apologies serve? After all, the actual victims and the actual exploiters or oppressors may be long dead – they cannot be compensated or punished. Then for whom and for what reason are such apologies offered or debated?

Can you think of other examples where anonymous ordinary people (i.e., people who are not famous or powerful) who are no longer living are remembered, celebrated or honoured in a public way? What purpose is served by memorials and monuments like, for example, the India Gate monument in Delhi? (To whom is this monument dedicated? If you don't know, try to find out.)

Think about the kind of apology mentioned in Box 6.1 in the Indian context. If you were asked to propose such a thing, which groups or communities do you think we as a nation should 'apologise' to? Discuss this in class and try to reach a consensus. What are the arguments and counter-arguments given for various candidate groups?

Did your opinion on such 'apologies' change after the class discussion?

COMMUNITIES, NATIONS AND NATION-STATES

At the simplest level, a nation is a sort of large-scale community – it is a community of communities. Members of a nation share the desire to be part of the same political collectivity. This desire for political unity usually expresses itself as the aspiration to form a *state*. In its most general sense, the term state refers to an abstract entity consisting of a set of political-legal institutions claiming control over a particular geographical territory and the people living in it. In Max Weber's well-known definition, a state is a "body that successfully claims a monopoly of legitimate force in a particular territory" (Weber 1970:78).

A nation is a peculiar sort of community that is easy to describe but hard to define. We know and can describe many specific nations founded on the basis of common cultural, historical and political institutions like a shared religion, language, ethnicity, history or regional culture. But it is hard to come up with any defining features, any characteristics that a nation *must* possess. For every possible criterion there are exceptions and counter-examples. For example, there are many nations that do not share a single common language, religion, ethnicity and so on. On the other hand, there are many languages, religions or ethnicities that are shared across nations. But this does not lead to the formation of a single unified nation of, say, all English speakers or of all Buddhists.

How, then, can we distinguish a nation from other kinds of communities, such as an ethnic group (based on common descent in addition to other commonalities of language or culture), a religious community, or a regionally-defined community? Conceptually, there seems to be no hard distinction – any of the other types of community can one day form a nation. Conversely, no particular kind of community can be guaranteed to form a nation.

ACTIVITY 6.3

Is it really true that there is no characteristic that is common to each and every nation? Discuss this in class. Try to make a list of possible criteria or characteristics that could define a nation. For each such criterion, make a list of examples of nations that meet the criterion, and also a list of nations that violate it.

In case you came up with the criterion that every nation must possess a territory in the form of a continuous geographical area, consider the cases mentioned below. [Locate each country or region on a world map; you will also need to do a little bit of prior research on each case...]

- Alaska and the United States of America
- Pakistan before 1971 (West Pakistan + East Pakistan)
- Malvinas/Falkland Islands and the United Kingdom
- Austria and Germany
- Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela
- Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates

[Hint: The first three cases are examples of geographically distant territories belonging to the same nation; the last three cases are examples of countries with contiguous territory, shared language and culture but separate nation-states.]

■ Can you add to this list of examples?

The criterion that comes closest to distinguishing a nation is the state. Unlike the other kinds of communities mentioned before, nations are communities that have a state of their own. That is why the two are joined with a hyphen to form the term *nation-state*. Generally speaking, in recent times there has been a one-to-one bond between nation and state (one nation, one state; one state, one nation). But this is a new development. It was not true in the past that a single state could represent only one nation, or that every nation must have its own state. For example, when it was in existence, the Soviet Union explicitly recognised that the peoples it governed were of different 'nations' and more than one hundred such internal nationalities were recognised. Similarly, people constituting a nation may actually be citizens or residents of different states. For example, there are more Jamaicans living outside Jamaica than in Jamaica – that is, the population of 'non-resident' Jamaicans exceeds that of 'resident' Jamaicans. A different example is provided by 'dual citizenship' laws. These laws allow citizens of a particular state to also – simultaneously – be citizens of another state. Thus, to cite one instance, Jewish Americans may be citizens of Israel as well as the USA; they can even serve in the armed forces of one country without losing their citizenship in the other country.

In short, today it is hard to define a nation in any way other than to say that it is a community that has succeeded in acquiring a state of its own. Interestingly, the opposite has also become increasingly true. Just as would-be or aspiring



nationalities are now more and more likely to work towards forming a state, existing states are also finding it more and more necessary to claim that they represent a nation. One of the characteristic features of the modern era (recall the discussion of modernity from Chapter 4 of your Class XI textbook, *Understanding Society*) is the establishment of democracy and nationalism as dominant sources of political legitimacy. This means that, today, 'the nation' is the most accepted or proper justification for a state, while 'the people' are the

ultimate source of legitimacy of the nation. In other words, states 'need' the nation as much or even more than nations need states.

But as we have seen in the preceding paragraphs, there is no historically fixed or logically necessary relationship between a nation-state and the varied forms of community that it could be based on. This means that there is no pre-determined answer to the question: How should the 'state' part of the nation-state treat the different kinds of community that make up the 'nation' part? As is shown in Box 6.2 (which is based on the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report of 2004 on Culture and Democracy), most states have generally been suspicious of cultural diversity and have tried to reduce or eliminate it. However, there are many successful examples – including India – which show that it is perfectly possible to have a strong nation-state without having to 'homogenise' different types of community identities into one standard type.

Threatened by community identities, states try to eliminate cultural diversity

Box 6.2

Historically, states have tried to establish and enhance their political legitimacy through nation-building strategies. They sought to secure ... the loyalty and obedience of their citizens through policies of assimilation or integration. Attaining these objectives was not easy, especially in a context of cultural diversity where citizens, in addition to their identifications with their country, might also feel a strong sense of identity with their community – ethnic, religious, linguistic and so on.

Most states feared that the recognition of such difference would lead to social fragmentation and prevent the creation of a harmonious society. In short, such identity politics was considered a threat to state unity. In addition, accommodating these differences is politically challenging, so many states have resorted to either suppressing these diverse identities or ignoring them on the political domain.

Policies of assimilation – often involving outright suppression of the identities of ethnic, religious or linguistic groups – try to erode the cultural differences between groups. Policies of integration seek to assert a single national identity by attempting to eliminate ethno-national and cultural differences from the public and political arena, while allowing them in the private domain. Both sets of policies assume a singular national identity.

Assimilationist and integrationist strategies try to establish singular national identities through various interventions like:

- Centralising all power to forums where the dominant group constitutes a majority, and eliminating the autonomy of local or minority groups;
- Imposing a unified legal and judicial system based on the dominant group's traditions and abolishing alternative systems used by other groups;
- Adopting the dominant group's language as the only official 'national' language and making its use mandatory in all public institutions;
- Promotion of the dominant group's language and culture through national institutions including state-controlled media and educational institutions;
- Adoption of state symbols celebrating the dominant group's history, heroes and culture, reflected in such things as choice of national holidays or naming of streets etc.;
- Seizure of lands, forests and fisheries from minority groups and indigenous people and declaring them 'national resources' ...

Source: Adapted from UNDP Human Development Report 2004, Ch.3, Feature 3.1

Box 6.2 speaks of 'assimilationist' and 'integrationist' policies. Policies that promote assimilation are aimed at persuading, encouraging or forcing all citizens to adopt a uniform set of cultural values and norms. These values and norms are usually entirely or largely those of the dominant social group. Other, non-dominant or subordinated groups in society are expected or required to give up their own cultural values and adopt the prescribed ones. Policies promoting integration are different in style but not in overall objective: they insist that the public culture be restricted to a common national pattern, while all 'non-national' cultures are to be relegated to the private sphere. In this case too, there is the danger of the dominant group's culture being treated as 'national' culture.

You can probably see what the problem is by now. There is no necessary relationship between any specific form of community and the modern form of the state. Any of the many bases of community identity (like language, religion, ethnicity and so on) may or may not lead to nation formation – there are no guarantees. But because community identities can act as the basis for nation-formation, already existing states see all forms of community identity as dangerous rivals. That is why states generally tend to favour a single, homogenous national identity, in the hope of being able to control and manage it. However, suppressing cultural diversity can be very costly in terms of the

alienation of the minority or subordinated communities whose culture is treated as ‘non-national’. Moreover, the very act of suppression can provoke the opposite effect of intensifying community identity. So encouraging, or at least allowing, cultural diversity is good policy from both the practical and the principled point of view.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE INDIAN NATION-STATE – AN OVERVIEW

The Indian nation-state is socially and culturally one of the most diverse countries of the world. It has a population of about 1029 million people, currently the second largest – and soon to become the largest – national population in the world. These billion-plus people speak about 1,632 different languages and dialects. As many as eighteen of these languages have been officially recognised and placed under the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, thus guaranteeing their legal status. In terms of religion, about 80.5% of the population are Hindus, who in turn are regionally specific, plural in beliefs and practices, and divided by castes and languages. About 13.4% of the population are Muslims, which makes India the world’s third largest Muslim country after Indonesia and Pakistan. The other major religious communities are Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.9%), Buddhists (0.8%) and Jains (0.4%). Because of India’s huge population, these small percentages can also add up to large absolute numbers.

In terms of the nation-state’s relationship with community identities, the Indian case fits neither the assimilationist nor the integrationist model described in Box 6.2. From its very beginning the independent Indian state has ruled out an assimilationist model. However, the demand for such a model has been expressed by some sections of the dominant Hindu community. Although ‘national integration’ is a constant theme in state policy, India has not been ‘integrationist’ in the way that Box 6.2 describes. The Constitution declares the state to be a secular state, but religion, language and other such factors are not banished from the public sphere. In fact these communities have been explicitly recognised by the state. By international standards, very strong constitutional protection is offered to minority religions. In general, India’s problems have been more in the sphere of implementation and practice rather than laws or principles. But on the whole, India can be considered a good example of a ‘state-nation’ though it is not entirely free from the problems common to nation-states.

National unity with cultural diversity – Building a democratic “state-nation”

Box 6.3

An alternative to the nation-state, then, is the “state nation”, where various “nations”— be they ethnic, religious, linguistic or indigenous identities— can co-exist peacefully and cooperatively in a single state polity.

Case studies and analyses demonstrate that enduring democracies can be established in polities that are multicultural. Explicit efforts are required to end the

The Challenges of Cultural Diversity

cultural exclusion of diverse groups ... and to build multiple and complementary identities. Such responsive policies provide incentives to build a feeling of unity in diversity — a "we" feeling. Citizens can find the institutional and political space to identify with both their country and their other cultural identities, to build their trust in common institutions and to participate in and support democratic politics. All of these are key factors in consolidating and deepening democracies and building enduring "state-nations".

India's constitution incorporates this notion. Although India is culturally diverse, comparative surveys of long-standing democracies including India show that it has been very cohesive, despite its diversity. But modern India is facing a grave challenge to its constitutional commitment to multiple and complementary identities with the rise of groups that seek to impose a singular Hindu identity on the country. These threats undermine the sense of inclusion and violate the rights of minorities in India today. Recent communal violence raises serious concerns for the prospects for social harmony and threatens to undermine the country's earlier achievements.

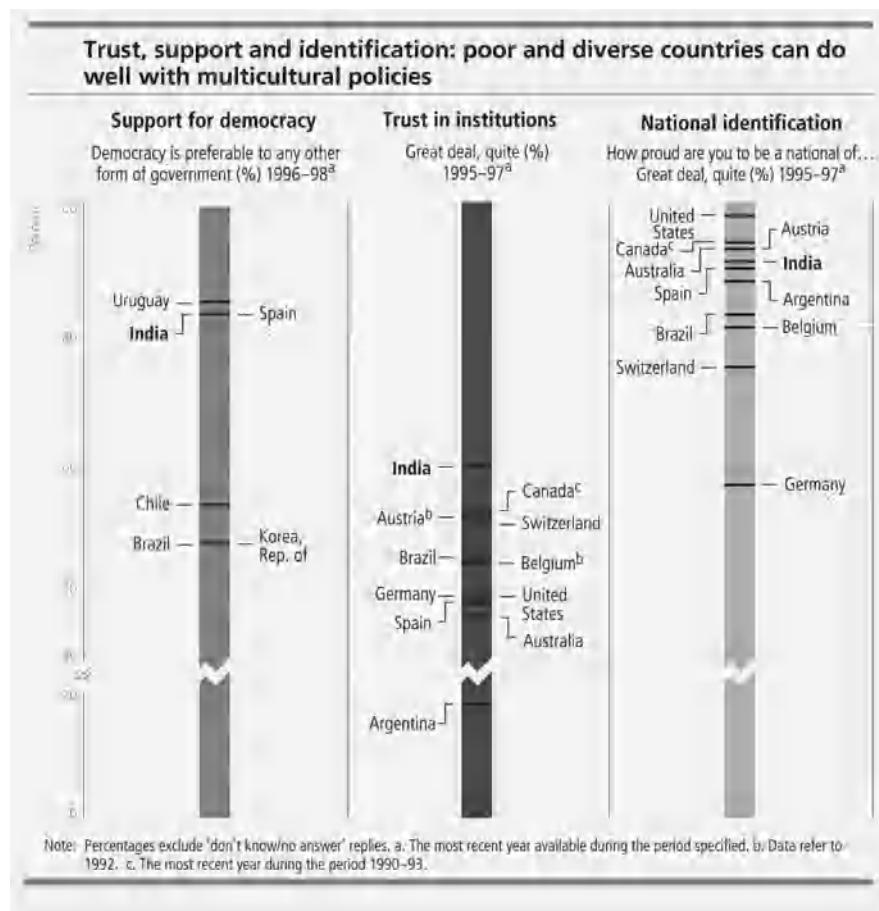
And these achievements have been considerable. Historically, India's constitutional design recognised and responded to distinct group claims and enabled the polity to hold together despite enormous regional, linguistic and cultural diversity. As evident from India's performance on indicators of identification, trust and support (Chart 1), its citizens are deeply committed to the country and to democracy, despite the country's diverse and highly stratified society. This performance is particularly impressive when compared with that of other long-standing—and wealthier—democracies.

The challenge is in reinvigorating India's commitment to practices of pluralism, institutional accommodation and conflict resolution through democratic means. Critical for building a multicultural democracy is a recognition of the shortcomings of historical nation-building exercises and of the benefits of multiple and complementary identities. Also important are efforts to build the loyalties of all groups in society through identification, trust and support. National cohesion does not require the imposition of a single identity and the denunciation of diversity. Successful strategies to build "state-nations" can and do accommodate diversity constructively by crafting responsive policies of cultural recognition. They are effective solutions for ensuring the longer terms objectives of political stability and social harmony.

Source: Adapted from UNDP Human Development Report 2004, Ch.3, Feature 3.1



CHART 1: FOSTERING CULTURAL DIVERSITY STRENGTHENS FAITH IN THE INDIAN STATE

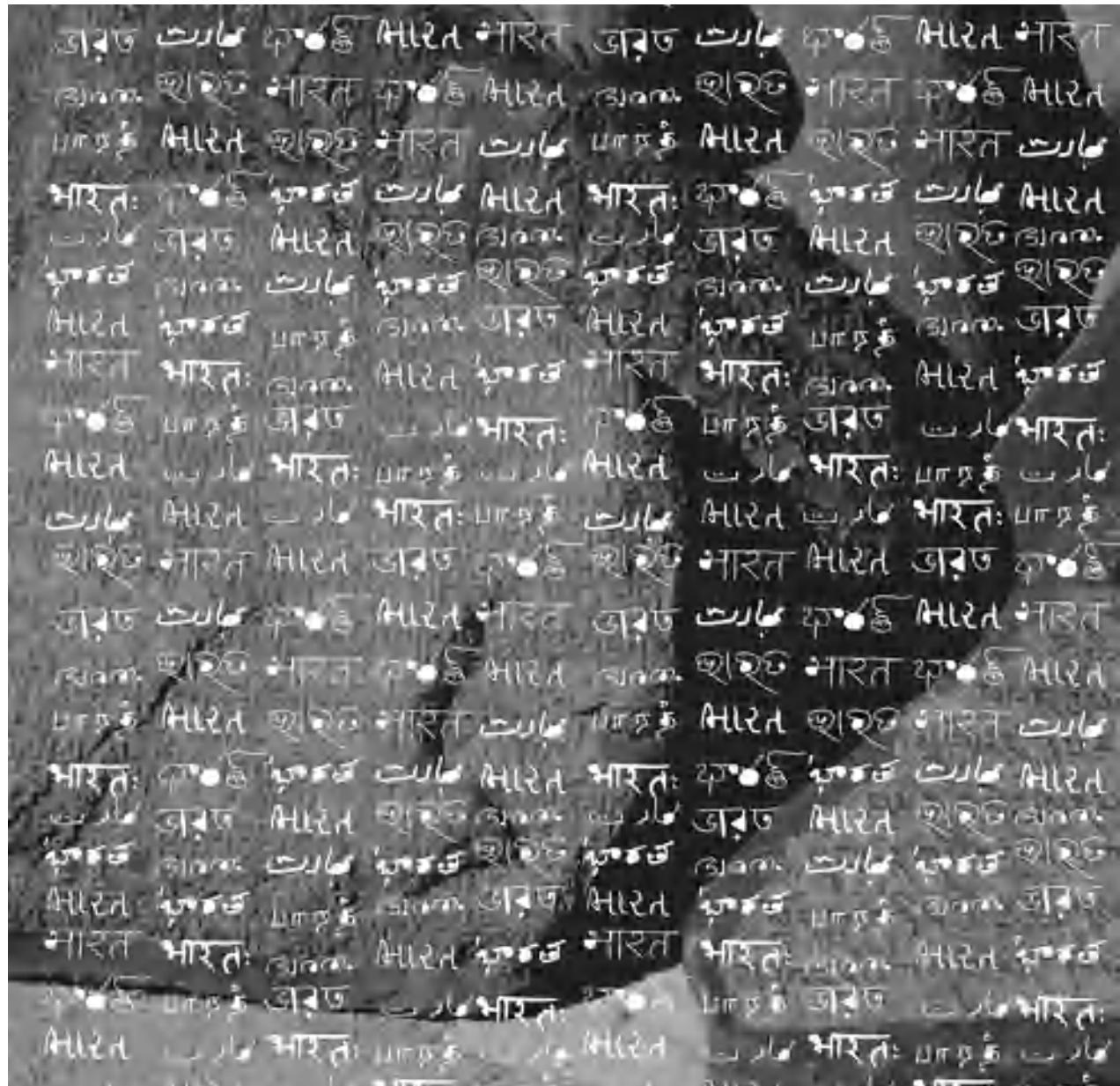


Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2004, Ch.3, Feature 3.1, Figure 2.

6.2 REGIONALISM IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

Regionalism in India is rooted in India's diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, and religions. It is also encouraged by the geographical concentration of these identity markers in particular regions, and fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation. Indian federalism has been a means of accommodating these regional sentiments. (Bhattacharyya 2005).

After Independence, initially the Indian state continued with the British-Indian arrangement dividing India into large provinces, also called 'presidencies'. (Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta were the three major presidencies; incidentally, all three cities after which the presidencies were named have changed their names recently). These were large multi-ethnic and multilingual provincial states constituting the major political-administrative units of a semi-federal state



called the Union of India. For example, the old Bombay State (continuation of the Bombay Presidency) was a multilingual state of Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada and Konkani speaking people. Similarly, the Madras State was constituted by Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam speaking people. In addition to the presidencies and provinces directly administered by the British Indian government, there were also a large number of princely states and principalities all over India. The larger princely states included Mysore, Kashmir, and Baroda. But soon after the adoption of the Constitution, all these units of the colonial era had to be reorganised into ethno-linguistic States within the Indian union in response to strong popular agitations. (See Box 6.4 on the next page).

Linguistic States Helped Strengthen Indian Unity

Box 6.4

The Report of the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) which was implemented on November 1, 1956, has helped transform the political and institutional life of the nation.

The background to the SRC is as follows. In the 1920s, the Indian National Congress was reconstituted on linguistic lines. Its provincial units now followed the logic of language – one for Marathi speakers, another for Oriya speakers, etc. At the same time, Gandhi and other leaders promised their followers that when freedom came, the new nation would be based on a new set of provinces based on the principle of language.

However, when India was finally freed in 1947, it was also divided. Now, when the proponents of linguistic states asked for this promise to be redeemed, the Congress hesitated. Partition was the consequence of intense attachment to one's faith; how many more partitions would that other intense loyalty, language, lead to? So ran the thinking of the top Congress bosses including Nehru, Patel and Rajaji.

On the other side, the rank and file Congressmen were all for the redrawing of the map of India on the lines of language. Vigorous movements arose among Marathi and Kannada speakers, who were then spread across several different political regimes – the erstwhile Bombay and Madras presidencies, and former princely states such as Mysore and Hyderabad. However, the most militant protests ensued from the very large community of Telugu speakers. In October 1953, Potti Sriramulu, a former Gandhian, died seven weeks after beginning a fast unto death. Potti Sriramulu's martyrdom provoked violent protests and led to the creation of the state of Andhra Pradesh. It also led to the formation of the SRC, which in 1956 put the formal, final seal of approval on the principle of linguistic states.

In the early 1950s, many including Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru feared that states based on language might hasten a further subdivision of India. In fact, something like the reverse has happened. Far from undermining Indian unity, linguistic states have helped strengthen it. It has proved to be perfectly consistent to be Kannadiga and Indian, Bengali and Indian, Tamil and Indian, Gujarati and Indian...

To be sure, these states based on language sometimes quarrel with each other. While these disputes are not pretty, they could in fact have been far worse. In the same year, 1956, that the SRC mandated the redrawing of the map of India on linguistic lines, the Parliament of Ceylon (as Sri Lanka was then known) proclaimed Sinhala the country's sole official language despite protests from the Tamils of the north. One left-wing Sinhala MP issued a prophetic warning to the chauvinists. "One language, two nations", he said, adding: "Two languages, one nation".

The civil war that has raged in Sri Lanka since 1983 is partly based on the denial by the majority linguistic group of the rights of the minority. Another of India's neighbours, Pakistan, was divided in 1971 because the Punjabi and Urdu speakers of its western wing would not respect the sentiments of the Bengalis in the east.

It is the formation of linguistic states that has allowed India to escape an even worse fate. If the aspirations of the Indian language communities had been ignored, what we might have had here was – "One language, fourteen or fifteen nations."

The Challenges of Cultural Diversity

Language coupled with regional and tribal identity – and not religion – has therefore provided the most powerful instrument for the formation of ethno-national identity in India. However, this does not mean that all linguistic communities have got statehood. For instance, in the creation of three new states in 2000, namely Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand, language did not play a prominent role. Rather, a combination of ethnicity based on tribal identity, language, regional deprivation and ecology provided the basis for intense regionalism resulting in statehood. Currently there are 28 States (federal units) and 7 Union territories (centrally administered) within the Indian nation-state.

NOTE: In this chapter, the word “State” has a capital S when it is used to denote the federal units within the Indian nation-state; the lower case ‘state’ is used for the broader conceptual category described above.



Couples from different regions 1880s to 1930s: Clockwise from top left corner: Gujarat; Tripura; Bombay; Aligarh; Hyderabad; Goa; Calcutta. From Malavika Karlekar, *Visualising Indian Women 1875-1947*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

ACTIVITY 6.4

Find out about the origins of your own State. When was it formed? What were the main criteria used to define it? – Was it language, ethnic/tribal identity, regional deprivation, ecological difference or other criterion? How does this compare with other States within the Indian nation-state?

Try to classify all the States of India in terms of the criteria for their formation.

Are you aware of any current social movements that are demanding the creation of a State? Try to find out the criteria being used by these movements. [Hint: Check the Telengana and Vidarbha movements, and others in your region...]

Respecting regional sentiments is not just a matter of creating States: this has to be backed up with an institutional structure that ensures their viability as relatively autonomous units within a larger federal structure. In India this is done by Constitutional provisions defining the powers of the States and the Centre. There are lists of ‘subjects’ or areas of governance which are the exclusive responsibility of either State or Centre, along with a ‘Concurrent List’ of areas where both are allowed to operate. The State legislatures determine the composition of the upper house of Parliament, the Rajya Sabha. In addition there are periodic committees and commissions that decide on Centre-State relations. An example is the Finance Commission which is set up every ten years to decide on sharing of tax revenues between Centre and States. Each Five Year Plan also involves detailed State Plans prepared by the State Planning Commissions of each state.

On the whole the federal system has worked fairly well, though there remain many contentious issues. Since the era of liberalisation (i.e., since the 1990s) there is concern among policy makers, politicians and scholars about increasing inter-regional economic and infrastructural inequalities. As private investment (both foreign and Indian) is given a greater role in economic development, considerations of regional equity get diluted. This happens because private investors generally want to invest in already

developed States where the infrastructure and other facilities are better. Unlike private industry, the government can give some consideration to regional equity (and other social goals) rather than just seek to maximise profits. So left to itself, the market economy tends to increase the gap between developed and backward regions. Fresh public initiatives will be needed to reverse current trends.

6.3 THE NATION-STATE AND RELIGION-RELATED ISSUES AND IDENTITIES

Perhaps the most contentious of all aspects of cultural diversity are issues relating to religious communities and religion-based identities. These issues may be broadly divided into two related groups – the secularism–communalism set and the minority–majority set. Questions of secularism and communalism are about the state’s relationship to religion and to political groupings that invoke religion as their primary identity. Questions about minorities and majorities involve decisions on how the state is to treat different religious, ethnic

or other communities that are *unequal* in terms of numbers and/or power (including social, economic and political power).

MINORITY RIGHTS AND NATION BUILDING

In Indian nationalism, the dominant trend was marked by an inclusive and democratic vision. Inclusive because it recognised diversity and plurality. Democratic because it sought to do away with discrimination and exclusion and bring forth a just and equitable society. The term 'people' has not been seen in exclusive terms, as referring to any specific group defined by religion, ethnicity, race or caste. Ideas of humanism influenced Indian nationalists and the ugly aspects of exclusive nationalism were extensively commented upon by leading figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore.

Rabindranath Tagore on the evils of exclusive nationalism

Box 6.5

...where the spirit of the Western nationalism prevails, the whole people is being taught from boyhood to foster hatreds and ambitions by all kinds of means -- by the manufacture of half-truths and untruths in history, by persistent misrepresentation of other races and the culture of unfavourable sentiments towards them...Never think for a moment that the hurt you inflict upon other races will not infect you, or that the enemities you sow around your homes will be a wall of protection to you for all time to come? To imbue the minds of a whole people with an abnormal vanity of its own superiority, to teach it to take pride in its moral callousness and ill-begotten wealth, to perpetuate humiliation of defeated nations by exhibiting trophies won from war, and using these schools in order to breed in children's minds contempt for others, is imitating the West where she has a festering sore...

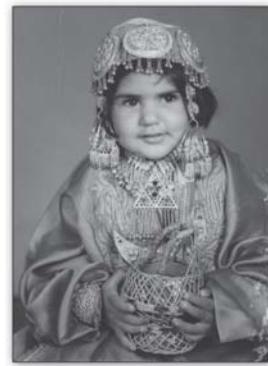
Source: *On Nationalism* by Rabindranath Tagore. First published in 1917, Reprint Edition of Macmillan, Madras 1930.

To be effective, the ideas of inclusive nationalism had to be built into the Constitution. For, as already discussed (in section 6.1), there is a very strong tendency for the dominant group to assume that their culture or language or religion is synonymous with the nation state. However, for a strong and democratic nation, special constitutional provisions are required to ensure the rights of all groups and those of minority groups in particular. A brief discussion on the definition of minorities will enable us to appreciate the importance of safeguarding minority rights for a strong, united and democratic nation.

The notion of minority groups is widely used in sociology and is more than a merely numerical distinction – it usually involves some sense of relative disadvantage. Thus, privileged minorities such as extremely wealthy people are not usually referred to as minorities; if they are, the term is qualified in some way, as in the phrase 'privileged minority'. When minority is used without qualification, it generally implies a relatively small but also disadvantaged group.



The sociological sense of minority also implies that the members of the minority form a collectivity – that is, they have a strong sense of group solidarity, a feeling of togetherness and belonging. This is linked to disadvantage because the experience of being subjected to prejudice and discrimination usually heightens feelings of intra-group loyalty and interests (Giddens 2001:248). Thus, groups that may be minorities in a statistical sense, such as people who are left-handed or people born on 29th February, are not minorities in the sociological sense because they do not form a collectivity.



However, it is possible to have anomalous instances where a minority group is disadvantaged in one sense but not in another. Thus, for example, religious minorities like the Parsis or Sikhs may be relatively well-off economically. But they may still be disadvantaged in a cultural sense because of their small numbers relative to the overwhelming majority of Hindus. Religious or cultural minorities need special protection because of the demographic dominance of the majority. In democratic politics, it is always possible to convert a numerical majority into political power through elections. This means that religious or cultural minorities – regardless of their economic or social position – are politically vulnerable. They must face the risk that the majority community will capture political power and use the state machinery to suppress their religious or cultural institutions, ultimately forcing them to abandon their distinctive identity.



Relative size and distribution of religious minorities

Box 6.6

As is well known, Hindus constitute an overwhelming majority in India: they number about 828 millions and account for 80.5% of the total population according to the 2001 Census. The Hindu population is *four times larger* than the combined population of all other minority religions, and about *six times larger* than the largest minority group, the Muslims.

However, this can also be misleading because Hindus are not a homogenous group and are divided by caste – as indeed are all the other major religions, albeit to different extents. The Muslims are by far the largest religious minority in India – they numbered 138 millions and were 13.4% of the population in 2001. They are scattered all over the country, constitute a majority in Jammu and Kashmir and have sizeable pockets in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Rajasthan.

Christians constitute around 2.3% of the population (24 million) and are scattered all over, with sizeable pockets in the north eastern and southern states. The three Christian-majority states are all in the North East – Nagaland (90%), Mizoram (87%) and Meghalaya (70%). Sizeable proportions of Christians are also found in Goa (27%) and Kerala (19%).

The Sikhs constitute 1.9% of the population (19 million) and although they are found scattered across the country, they are concentrated in Punjab where they are in a majority (60%).

There are also several other small religious groups – Buddhists (8 million, 0.8%), Jains (4 million, 0.4%), and ‘Other Religions and Persuasions’ (under 7 million, 0.7%). The highest proportion of Buddhists is found in Sikkim (28%) and Arunachal Pradesh (13%), while among the larger states Maharashtra has the highest share of Buddhists at 6%. The highest concentrations of Jains are found in Maharashtra (1.3%), Rajasthan (1.2%) and Gujarat (1%).

In the long years of struggle against British colonialism, Indian nationalists understood the imperative need to recognise and respect India’s diversity. Indeed ‘unity in diversity’ became a short hand to capture the plural and diverse nature of Indian society. Discussions on minority and cultural rights mark many of the deliberations of the Indian National Congress and find final expression in the Indian Constitution (Zaidi 1984).

Dr. Ambedkar on protection of minorities

Box 6.7

To diehards who have developed a kind of fanaticism against minority protection I would like to say two things. One is that *minorities are an explosive force which, if it erupts, can blow up the whole fabric of the state*. The history of Europe bears ample and appalling testimony to this fact. The other is that the minorities in India have agreed to place their existence in the hands of the majority. In the history of negotiations for preventing the partition of Ireland, Redmond said to Carson “Ask for any safeguard you like for the Protestant minority but let us have a United Ireland.” Carson’s reply was “Damn your safeguards, we don’t want to be ruled by you.” No minority in India has taken this stand.

[John Redmond, catholic majority leader; Sir Edward Carson, protestant minority leader]

(Source: Constituent Assembly Debates 1950: 310-311, cited in Narang 2002:63)

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956)



Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar Buddhist revivalist, jurist, scholar and political leader, is the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. Born in a poor untouchable community, he spent his life fighting against untouchability and the caste system.



The makers of the Indian Constitution were aware that a strong and united nation could be built only when all sections of people had the freedom to practice their religion, and to develop their culture and language. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Constitution, made this point clear in the Constituent Assembly, as shown in Box 6.7.

In the last three decades we have witnessed how non-recognition of the rights of different groups of people in a country can have grave implications for national unity. One of key issues that led to the formation of Bangladesh was the unwillingness of the Pakistani state to recognise the cultural and linguistic rights of the people of Bangladesh.

The Indian Constitution on minorities and cultural diversity

Box 6.8

Article 29:

- (1) Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.
- (2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or received out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

Article 30:

- (1) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- (2) The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.

One of the many contentious issues that formed the backdrop of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka was the imposition of Sinhalese as a national language. Likewise any forcible imposition of a language or religion on any group of people in India weakens national unity which is based upon a recognition of differences. Indian nationalism recognises this, and the Indian Constitution affirms this (Box 6.8).

Finally, it is useful to note that minorities exist everywhere, not just in India. In most nation-states, there tend to be a dominant social group whether cultural, ethnic, racial or religious. Nowhere in the world is there a nation-state consisting exclusively of a single homogenous cultural group. Even where this was almost true (as in countries like Iceland, Sweden or South Korea), modern capitalism, colonialism and large scale migration have brought in a plurality of groups. Even the smallest state will have minorities, whether in religious, ethnic, linguistic or racial terms.

COMMUNALISM, SECULARISM AND THE NATION-STATE

COMMUNALISM

In everyday language, the word '**communalism**' refers to aggressive chauvinism based on religious identity. Chauvinism itself is an attitude that sees one's own group as the only legitimate or worthy group, with other groups being seen – by definition – as inferior, illegitimate and opposed. Thus, to simplify further, communalism is an aggressive political ideology linked to religion. This is a peculiarly Indian, or perhaps South Asian, meaning that is different from the sense of the ordinary English word. In the English language, "communal" means something related to a community or collectivity as different from an individual. The English meaning is neutral, whereas the South Asian meaning is strongly charged. The charge may be seen as positive – if one is sympathetic to communalism – or negative, if one is opposed to it.



ACTIVITY 6.5

There are many instances of a 'majority' in one context being converted into a 'minority' in another context (or the other way around). Find out about concrete examples of this, and discuss the implications. Remember that the sociological concept of a minority involves not just relative numbers but also relative power. [Suggestions: Whites in South Africa before and after the end of apartheid; Hindus in Kashmir; Muslims in Gujarat; Upper castes among Hindus; Tribals in North Eastern states;]



It is important to emphasise that communalism is about politics, not about religion. Although communalists are intensely involved with religion, there is in fact no necessary relationship between personal faith and communalism. A communalist may or may not be a devout person, and devout believers may or may not be communalists. However, all communalists do believe in a *political identity* based on religion. The key factor is the attitude towards those who believe in other kinds of identities, including other religion-based identities. Communalists cultivate an aggressive political identity, and are prepared to condemn or attack everyone who does not share their identity.

One of the characteristic features of communalism is its claim that religious identity overrides everything else. Whether one is poor or rich, whatever one's occupation, caste or political beliefs, it is religion alone that counts. All Hindus are the same as are all Muslims, Sikhs and so on. This has the effect of constructing large and diverse groups as singular and homogenous. It is noteworthy that this is done for one's own group as well as for others. This would obviously rule out the possibility that Hindus, Muslims and Christians who belong to Kerala, for example, may have as much or more in common with each other than with their co-religionists from Kashmir, Gujarat or Nagaland. It also denies the possibility that, for instance, landless agricultural labourers (or industrialists) may have a lot in common even if they belong to different religions and regions.

Communalism is an especially important issue in India because it has been a recurrent source of tension and violence. During communal riots, people become faceless members of their respective communities. They are willing to kill, rape, and loot members of other communities in order to redeem their pride, to protect their home turf. A commonly cited justification is to avenge the deaths or dishonour suffered by their co-religionists elsewhere or even in the distant past. No region has been wholly exempt from communal violence of one kind or another. Every religious community has faced this violence in greater or lesser degree, although the proportionate impact is far more traumatic for minority communities. To the extent that governments can be held responsible for communal riots, no government or ruling party can claim to be blameless in this regard. In fact, the two most traumatic contemporary instances of communal violence occurred under each of the major political parties. The anti-Sikh riots of Delhi in 1984 took place under a Congress regime. The unprecedented scale and spread of anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002 took place under a BJP government.

India has had a history of communal riots from pre-Independence times, often as a result of the divide-and-rule policy adopted by the colonial rulers. But colonialism did not invent inter-community conflicts – there is also a long history of pre-colonial conflicts – and it certainly cannot be blamed for post-Independence riots and killings. Indeed, if we wish to look for instances of

Kabir Das – A Lasting Symbol of Syncretic Traditions

The poems of Kabir, synthesising Hindu and Muslim devotion are cherished symbols of pluralism:

*Moko Kahan Dhundhe re Bande
Mein To Tere Paas Mein
Na Teerath Mein, Na Moorat Mein
Na Ekant Niwas Mein
Na Mandir Mein, Na Masjid Mein
Na Kabe Kailas Mein
Mein To Tere Paas Mein Bande
Mein To Tere Paas Mein...*

Box 6.9

Where do you search for me?
I am with you
Not in pilgrimage, nor in icons
Neither in solitude
Not in temples, nor in mosques
Neither in *Kaaba* nor in *Kailash*
I am with you o man
I am with you ...

religious, cultural, regional or ethnic conflict they can be found in almost every phase of our history. But we should not forget that we also have a long tradition of religious pluralism, ranging from peaceful co-existence to actual inter-mixing or syncretism. This syncretic heritage is clearly evident in the devotional songs and poetry of the Bhakti and Sufi movements (Box 6.9). In short, history provides us with both good and bad examples; what we wish to learn from it is up to us.

SECULARISM

As we have seen above, the meanings of the terms communal and communalism are more or less clear, despite the bitter controversies between supporters and opponents. By contrast, the terms ‘secular’ and ‘secularism’ are very hard to define clearly, although they are also equally controversial. In fact, **secularism** is among the most complex terms in social and political theory. In the western context the main sense of these terms has to do with the separation of church and state. The separation of religious and political authority marked a major turning point in the social history of the west. This separation was related to the process of “secularisation”, or the progressive retreat of religion from public life, as it was converted from a mandatory obligation to a voluntary personal practice. Secularisation in turn was related to the arrival of modernity and the rise of science and rationality as alternatives to religious ways of understanding the world.

The Indian meanings of secular and secularism include the western sense but also involve others. The most common use of secular in everyday language is as the opposite of communal. So, a secular person or state is one that does not favour any particular religion over others. Secularism in this sense is the opposite of religious chauvinism and it need not necessarily imply hostility to religion as such. In terms of the state-religion relationship, this sense of

ACTIVITY 6.6

Talk to your parents and the elders in your family and collect from them poems, songs, short stories which highlight issues such as religious pluralism, syncretism or communal harmony. When you have collected all this material and presented them in class, you may be pleasantly surprised to learn how broad based our traditions of religious pluralism are, and how widely they are shared across different linguistic groups, regions and religions.

secularism implies equal respect for all religions, rather than separation or distancing. For example, the secular Indian state declares public holidays to mark the festivals of all religions.

One kind of difficulty is created by the tension between the western sense of the state maintaining a distance from all religions and the Indian sense of the state giving equal respect to all religions. Supporters of each sense are upset by whatever the state does to uphold the other sense. Should a secular state provide subsidies for the Haj pilgrimage, or manage the Tirupati-Tirumala temple complex, or support pilgrimages to Himalayan holy places? Should all religious holidays be abolished, leaving only Independence Day, Republic Day, Gandhi Jayanti and Ambedkar Jayanti for example? Should a secular state ban cow slaughter because cows are holy for a particular religion? If it does so, should it also ban pig slaughter because another religion prohibits the eating of pork? If Sikh soldiers in the army are allowed to have long hair and wear turbans, should Hindu soldiers also be allowed to shave their heads or Muslim soldiers allowed to have long beards? Questions of this sort lead to passionate disagreements that are hard to settle.

Another set of complications is created by the tension between the Indian state's simultaneous commitment to secularism as well as the protection of minorities. The protection of minorities requires that they be given special consideration in a context where the normal working of the political system places them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the majority community. But providing such protection immediately invites the accusation of favouritism or 'appeasement' of minorities. Opponents argue that secularism of this sort is only an excuse to favour the minorities in return for their votes or other kinds of support. Supporters argue that without such special protection, secularism can turn into an excuse for imposing the majority community's values and norms on the minorities.

These kind of controversies become harder to solve when political parties and social movements develop a vested interest in keeping them alive. In recent times, communalists of all religions have contributed to the deadlock. The resurgence and newly acquired political power of the Hindu communalists has added a further dimension of complexity. Clearly a lot needs to be done to improve our understanding of secularism as a principle and our practice of it as a policy. But despite everything, it is still true that India's Constitution and legal structure has proved to be reasonably effective in handling the problems created by various kinds of communalism.

The first generation of leaders of independent India (who happened to be overwhelmingly Hindu and upper caste) chose to have a liberal, secular state governed by a democratic constitution. Accordingly, the 'state' was conceived in culturally neutral terms, and the 'nation' was also conceived as an inclusive territorial-political community of all citizens. Nation building was viewed mainly as a state-driven process of economic development and social transformation.

The expectation was that the universalisation of citizenship rights and the induction of cultural pluralities into the democratic process of open and competitive politics would evolve new, civic equations among ethnic communities, and between them and the state (Sheth:1999). These expectations may not have materialised in the manner expected. But ever since Independence, the people of India, through their direct political participation and election verdicts have repeatedly asserted their support for a secular Constitution and state. Their voices should count.

6.4 STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

You may have noticed that much of this chapter has been concerned with the state. The **state** is indeed a very crucial institution when it comes to the management of cultural diversity in a nation. Although it claims to represent the nation, the state can also become somewhat independent of the nation and its people. To the extent that the state structure – the legislature, bureaucracy, judiciary, armed forces, police and other arms of the state – becomes insulated from the people, it also has the potential of turning authoritarian. An authoritarian state is the opposite of a democratic state. It is a state in which the people have no voice and those in power are not accountable to anyone. Authoritarian states often limit or abolish civil liberties like freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of political activity, right to protection from wrongful use of authority, right to the due processes of the law, and so on. Apart from **authoritarianism**, there is also the possibility that state institutions become unable or unwilling to respond to the needs of the people because of corruption, inefficiency, or lack of resources. In short, there are many reasons why a state may not be all that it should be. Non-state actors and institutions become important in this context, for they can keep a watch on the state, protest against its injustices or supplement its efforts.

Civil society is the name given to the broad arena which lies beyond the private domain of the family, but outside the domain of both state and market. Civil society is the non-state and non-market part of the public domain in which individuals get together voluntarily to create institutions and organisations. It is the sphere of active citizenship: here, individuals take up social issues, try to influence the state or make demands on it, pursue their collective interests or seek support for a variety of causes. It consists of voluntary associations, organisations or institutions formed by groups of citizens. It includes political parties, media institutions, trade unions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), religious organisations, and other kinds of collective entities. The main criteria for inclusion in civil society are that the organisation should not be state-controlled, and it should not be a purely commercial profit-making entity. Thus, Doordarshan is not part of civil society though private television channels are; a car manufacturing company is not part of civil society but the trade unions to which its workers belong are. Of course these criteria allow for a lot of grey areas. For

example, a newspaper may be run like a purely commercial enterprise, or an NGO may be supported by government funds.

The Indian people had a brief experience of authoritarian rule during the 'Emergency' enforced between June 1975 and January 1977. Parliament was suspended and new laws were made directly by the government. Civil liberties were revoked and a large number of politically active people were arrested and jailed without trial. Censorship was imposed on the media and government officials could be dismissed without normal procedures. The government coerced lower level officials to implement its programmes and produce instant results. The most notorious was the forced sterilisation campaign in which large numbers died due to surgical complications. When elections were held unexpectedly in early 1977, the people voted overwhelmingly against the ruling Congress Party.

The Emergency shocked people into active participation and helped energise the many civil society initiatives that emerged in the 1970s. This period saw the resurgence of a wide variety of social movements including the women's, environmental, human rights and dalit movements. Today the activities of civil society organisations have an even wider range, including advocacy and lobbying activity with national and international agencies as well as active participation

Forcing the State to Respond to the People: The Right to Information Act

Box 6.10

The Right to Information Act 2005 (Act No. 22/2005) is a law enacted by the Parliament of India giving Indians (except those in the State of Jammu and Kashmir who have their own special law) access to Government records. Under the terms of the Act, any person may request information from a "public authority" (a body of Government or instrumentality of State) which is expected to reply expeditiously or within thirty days. The Act also requires every public authority to computerise their records for wide dissemination and to proactively publish certain categories of information so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.



This law was passed by Parliament on 15 June 2005 and came into force on 13 October 2005. Information disclosure in India was hitherto restricted by the Official Secrets Act 1923 and various other special laws, which the new RTI Act now overrides.

The Act specifies that citizens have a right to:

- request any information (as defined)
- take copies of documents
- inspect documents, works and records
- take certified samples of materials of work.
- obtain information in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts.

in various movements. The issues taken up are diverse, ranging from tribal struggles for land rights, devolution in urban governance, campaigns against rape and violence against women, rehabilitation of those displaced by dams and other developmental projects, fishermen's struggles against mechanised fishing, rehabilitation of hawkers and pavement dwellers, campaigns against slum demolitions and for housing rights, primary education reform, distribution of land to dalits, and so on. Civil liberties organisations have been particularly important in keeping a watch on the state and forcing it to obey the law. The media, too, has taken an increasingly active role, specially its emergent visual and electronic segments.

Among the most significant recent initiatives is the campaign for the Right to Information. Beginning with an agitation in rural Rajasthan for the release of information on government funds spent on village development, this effort grew into a nation-wide campaign. Despite the resistance of the bureaucracy, the government was forced to respond to the campaign and pass a new law formally acknowledging the citizens' right to information (Box 6.10). Examples of this sort illustrate the crucial importance of civil society in ensuring that the state is accountable to the nation and its people.

ACTIVITY 6.9

Find out about the civil society organisations or NGOs that are active in your neighbourhood. What sorts of issues do they take up? What sort of people work in them? How and to what extent are these organisations different from

- a) government organisations;
- b) commercial organisations?

1. What is meant by cultural diversity? Why is India considered to be a very diverse country?
2. What is community identity and how is it formed?
3. Why is it difficult to define the nation? How are nation and state related in modern society?
4. Why are states often suspicious of cultural diversity?
5. What is regionalism? What factors is it usually based on?
6. In your opinion, has the linguistic reorganisation of states helped or harmed India?
7. What is a 'minority'? Why do minorities need protection from the state?
8. What is communalism?
9. What are the different senses in which 'secularism' has been understood in India?
10. What is the relevance of civil society organisations today?

Questions

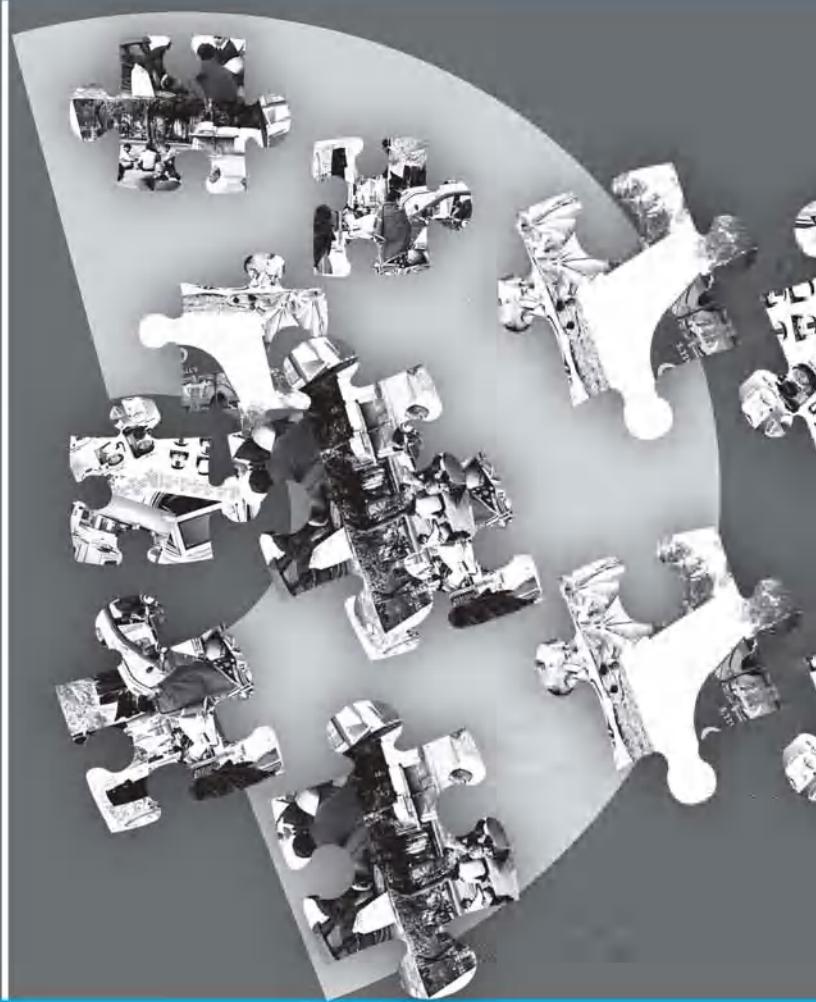
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Notes

Chapter 7

Suggestions for Project Work



This chapter suggests some small practical research projects that you can try out. There is a big difference between reading about research and actually doing it. Practical experience of trying to answer a question and collecting evidence systematically is a very valuable experience. This experience will hopefully introduce you to the excitement and also some of the difficulties of sociological research. Before you read this chapter, please refer once again to Chapter 5 ("Doing Sociology: Research Methods") in the Class XI textbook, *Introducing Sociology*.

The projects suggested here have tried to anticipate the potential problems of organising this kind of activity for large numbers of students in different kinds of schools located in different kinds of contexts. These are intended just to give you a feel for research. A "real" research project would obviously be more elaborate and involve much more time and effort than is possible in your setting. These are meant as suggestions; feel free to think up ideas of your own in consultation with your teachers.

Every research question needs an appropriate or suitable research method. A given question may be answered with more than one method, but a given research method is not necessarily appropriate for all questions. In other words, for most research questions one has a choice of possible methods but this choice is usually limited. One of the first tasks of the researcher – after carefully specifying the research question – is to select a suitable method. This selection must be done not only according to technical criteria (i.e., the degree of compatibility between question and method), but also practical considerations. These latter might include the amount of time available to do the research; the resources available in terms of both people and materials; the circumstances or situations in which it has to be done, and so on.

For example, let us suppose you are interested in comparing co-educational schools with 'boys only' or 'girls only' schools. This, of course, is a broad topic. You must first formulate a specific question that you want to answer. Examples could be: Do students in co-educational schools do better in studies than students in boys/girls only schools? Are boys only schools always better than co-educational schools in sports? Are children in single sex schools happier than children in co-educational schools, or some other such question. Having decided on a specific question, the next step is to choose the appropriate method.

For the last question, 'Are school children in single sex schools happier?', for example, you could choose to interview students of different kinds of schools. In the interview you could ask them directly how they felt about their school. You could then analyse the answers you collect to see if there is any difference between those who attend different kinds of schools. As an alternative, you could try to use a different method – say that of direct observation – to answer the research question. This means that you would have to spend time in co-educational and boys/girls schools, observing how students behave. You would have to decide on some criteria by which you could say if students are

more or less happy with their school. So, after observing different kinds of schools for sufficient time, you could hope to answer your question. A third method you could use is the survey method. This would involve preparing a questionnaire designed to get information on how students felt about their schools. You would then distribute the questionnaire to an equal number of students in each kind of school. You would then collect the filled-in questionnaires and analyse the results.

Here are some examples of some practical difficulties that you might face when doing research of this kind. Suppose you decide to do a survey. You must first make enough copies of the questionnaire. This involves time, effort and money. Next, you may need permission from teachers to distribute the questionnaire to students in their classrooms. You may not get permission the first time, or you may be asked to come back later..... After you have distributed the questionnaire you may find that many people have not bothered to return it to you or have not answered all questions, or other such problems. You then have to decide how to deal with this – go back to your respondents and ask them to complete the questionnaires; or ignore the incomplete questionnaires and consider only the complete ones; consider only the completed answers, and so on. You must be prepared to deal with such problems during research work.

7.1 VARIETY OF METHODS

You may remember the discussion of research methods in Chapter 5 of the Class XI textbook, *Introducing Sociology*. This may be a good time to revisit this chapter and refresh your memory.

SURVEY METHOD

A survey usually involves asking a relatively large number of people (such as 30, 100, 2000, and so on; what is considered ‘large’ depends on the context and the kind of topic) the same fixed set of questions. The questions may be asked by an investigator in person where they are read out to the respondent, and his/her answers are noted down by the investigator. Or the questionnaire may be handed over to the respondents who then fill it up themselves and give it back. The main advantage of the survey is that it can cover a lot of people, so that the results are truly representative of the relevant group or population. The disadvantage is that the questions to be asked are already fixed. No on-the-spot adjustments are possible. So, if a question is misunderstood by the respondents, then wrong or misleading results can be produced. If a respondent says something interesting then this cannot be followed up with further questions on the subject because you have to stick to the questionnaire format. Moreover, questionnaires are like a snapshot taken at one particular moment. The situation may change later or may have been different before, but the survey wouldn’t capture this.

INTERVIEWS

An interview is different from a survey in that it is always conducted in person and usually involves much fewer persons (as few as 5, 20, or 40, usually not much more than that). Interviews may be *structured*, that is, follow a pre-determined pattern of questions or *unstructured*, where only a set of topics is pre-decided, and the actual questions emerge as part of a conversation. Interviews may be more or less *intensive*, in the sense that one may interview a person for a long time (2-3 hours) or in repeated visits to get a really detailed version of their story.

Interviews have the advantage of being flexible in that promising topics may be pursued in greater detail, questions may be refined or modified along the way, and clarifications may be sought. The disadvantage of the interview method is that it cannot cover a large number of people and is limited to presenting the views of a select group of individuals.

OBSERVATION

Observation is a method where the researcher must systematically watch and record what is happening in whatever context or situation that has been chosen for the research. This sounds simple but may not always be easy to do in practice. Careful attention has to be paid to what is happening without pre-judging what is relevant to the study and what is not. Sometimes, what is *not* happening is as important or interesting as what does actually happen. For example, if your research question is about how different classes of people use specific open spaces, then it is significant that a given class or group of people (say poor people, or middle class people for example) never enter the space, or are never seen in it.

COMBINATIONS OF MORE THAN ONE METHOD

You can also try to combine methods to approach the same research question from different angles. In fact, this is often highly recommended. For example, if you are researching the changing place of mass media sources like newspapers and television in social life, you could combine a survey with archival methods. The survey will tell you about what is happening today, while the archival methods might tell you about what magazines, newspapers or television programmes were like in the past.

7.2 POSSIBLE THEMES AND SUBJECTS FOR SMALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

Suggestions for Project Work

teachers. Remember that these are only topics – you need to select specific *questions* based on these topics. Remember also that most methods can be used with most of these topics, but that the specific question chosen must be suitable for the method chosen. You can also use combinations of methods. The topics are in no particular order. Topics that are not obviously or directly derived from your textbooks have been emphasised because it will be easier for you and your teachers to think of your own project ideas related to the texts.

1. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

What part does it play in people's lives? Who needs it? Why do they need it? To what degree are different kinds of people dependent on public transport? What sorts of problems and issues are associated with public transport? How have forms of public transport been changing over time? Does differential access to public transport cause social problems? Are there groups who do not need public transport? What is their attitude towards it? You could also take up the case of a particular form of transport – say the tonga, or the rickshaw, or the train – and write about its history in relation to your town or city. What are the changes this mode of transport gone through? Who have been its main rivals? Is the competition with rivals being lost or won? For what reasons? What is the likely future of this mode of transport? Will anyone miss it?

If you live in Delhi, try to find out more about the Delhi Metro. Could you write a science-fiction like account of what the Metro would be like fifty years from now, in, say 2050 or 2060? (Remember, it is not easy to write good science fiction! You must give reasons for the things you imagine; these future things must be related in some coherent fashion to things/relations/situations that exist in the present. So you would have to imagine how public transport will evolve given present conditions, and what the role of the Metro would be in future compared to what it is now.)



2. ROLE OF COMMUNICATION MEDIA IN SOCIAL LIFE

Communication media could include the mass media, like newspapers, television, films, internet and so on – i.e., media which convey information and are seen/accessed by large numbers of people. It could also include the media that people use for communicating with each other, such as the telephone, letters, mobile phones, email and internet. In these areas, you could try to investigate, for example, the changing place of mass media in social life and the shifts within major formats like print, radio, television, and so on. At a different level, you could try to ask a different sort of question about the likes and dislikes of particular groups (classes, age groups, genders) regarding films, books etc. How do people perceive the new communication media (like mobile phones, or internet) and their impact? What can we learn through observation and inquiry about their place in people's lives? Observation allows you to capture the divergence (if any) between stated views and actual behaviour. (How many hours do people really watch television, as different from how many hours they feel they watch, or feel is appropriate to watch etc..) What are some of the consequences of shift in format? (For example, has TV really reduced the importance of radio and newspapers, or does each format still have its own special niche?) What are the reasons why people prefer one or the other format?



Alternatively, you could think of doing any number of projects based on a content analysis of the media (newspapers, magazines, television etc.) and how they have treated particular themes or subjects, such as, for example, schools and school education, the environment, caste, religious conflicts, sports events, local versus national or regional news, etc. etc.

3. HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES AND DOMESTIC WORK

This refers to all the devices used to do work in the household, such as gas, kerosene or other type of stoves; mixies, grinders and food processors of various kinds; the electric or other kind of iron for ironing clothes; washing machines; ovens; toaster; pressure cooker, and so on. How has work within the household changed over time? Has the coming of these devices changed the nature of work and specially the intra-household division of labour? Who are the people who use these devices? Are they mostly men or women, young or old, paid or unpaid workers? How do the users feel about them? Have they really made work easier? Have there been any changes in the age-related jobs done within the household? (i.e., do younger/older people do different kinds of jobs now as compared to earlier?)



Alternatively, you could simply concentrate on how the domestic tasks are distributed within the household – who does what, and whether there have been changes lately.



4. THE USE OF PUBLIC SPACE

This research topic is about the different uses to which public space (such as an open field, the roadside or footpath, empty plots in housing colonies, space outside public offices, and the like) is put. For example, some spaces support a lot of small scale commercial activity like roadside vendors, small temporary shops and parking lots etc. Other spaces seem empty but get used in different ways – to hold marriage or religious functions, for public meetings, as a dumping ground for various kinds of things... Many spaces are occupied by poor homeless people and become in effect their homes. Try to think of research questions in this general area: What do people from different classes (e.g., the poor, middle classes, affluent people etc.) feel about the use of public space? What kind of a resource do they represent for these groups? How has the use of a particular open space in your neighbourhood been changing over time? Has it generated any conflicts or frictions? What are the reasons for this conflict?

5. CHANGING ASPIRATIONS OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

Did you always have the same ambitions throughout your life? Most people change their goals, specially at young ages. This research topic tries to discover what these changes are and whether there are any patterns to the changes across different groups. You could try choosing research groups such as different age groups (eg., classes 5, 8 and 11) in different kinds of schools; different genders; different parental backgrounds etc. and see if any patterns emerge. You could also include adults in your research design and see what they remember about these sorts of changes, and whether there is any pattern to changes after school as compared to changes within the school-going age.

6. THE 'BIOGRAPHY' OF A COMMODITY

Think of a particular consumption item in your own home, such as a television set, a motor cycle, a carpet or a piece of furniture. Try to imagine what the life-history of that commodity would be. Write about it as though you were that commodity and were writing an 'auto-biography'. What are the circuits of exchange through which it has moved to get to where it is now? Can you trace the social relations through which the item was produced, traded, and purchased? What is its symbolic significance, for its owners – i.e. for you, your family, for the community?



If it could think and talk, what would your television set (or sofa set, or motorcycle...) have to say about the people it meets or sees (like your family or other families or households that you can imagine)?

RESEARCH		TYPE OF RESEARCH METHOD / TECHNIQUE	
TOPIC / AREA	OBSERVATION	SURVEY	
Modes of Public Transport; Local Railway or Bus Station	Modes of behaviour, expected etiquette, space sharing	Opinions on changes over time; experiences, difficulties etc.	
Domestic Appliances (Use of cooking fuel/ mode; fan, cooler, ac; iron; fridge; mixie...)	Patterns of use; domestic division of labour; gender aspects	Attitudes/memories relating to different type of appliances	
Use of Public Spaces (roadside, empty land, etc)	Observe how comparable open spaces are used in different localities	Opinions of a cross-section of people on different uses of specific public spaces	
Changing Aspirations of School Children at different ages (e.g. Classes 5, 8, 11)	Not suitable	Boys and Girls Adults of different generations (from memory)	
Place of the means of communication in social life (from mobile phones to satellite TV)	Watch how people use mobile phones in public – what place do these devices have in their lives?	How much TV do different kind of people watch, and what are their preferred programmes?	

Suggestions for Project Work

TYPE OF RESEARCH METHOD / TECHNIQUE

ARCHIVAL	INTERVIEWS	COMMENTS / SUGGESTIONS
Newspaper and other sources for history of change	Views of regular vs. occasional users; men vs. women etc.	Suitable only for biggish cities?
Advertisement patterns for different kinds of appliances	How do different type of people respond to specific appliances?	Boys to be encouraged to do this; should not become a 'girl's topic'
What were the different uses to which a particular space was put over the years?	Do people of different social classes, groups have different views on use of space?	Best to take familiar, specific places that people know about and relate to
Depends on availability of material from the past (such as school essays on this subject)	Talk to one group about their own evolution; or talk to different age groups	Interviewees should not be from own school
Analysis of media coverage and content on any current issue of interest	What do people feel about the decline of letter writing after the coming of phones?	Try not to pre-judge the issue (e.g. it is so sad that letter writing has declined) – ask, don't tell.

Notes

Glossary

Arithmetic progression: See 'progression - arithmetic'

Assimilation: A process of cultural unification and homogenisation by which newly entering or subordinate groups lose their distinctive culture and adopt the culture of the dominant majority. Assimilation may be forced or voluntary, and usually remains incomplete or blocked where the subordinate or entering group is not accorded full membership on equal terms. For example, if an immigrant community is discriminated against by the dominant majority, and is not allowed to intermarry.

Authoritarianism: A system of government that does not derive its legitimacy from the people. Not a democratic or republican form of government.

Birth Control: The use of techniques of contraception to prevent conception and birth.

BPO (Business Process Outsourcing): A practice whereby a particular part of the production process or component of a service industry is contracted out to be performed by a third party. For example, a telephone company that provides phone lines and services, may outsource its customer service division, i.e., get another smaller company to handle all calls and complaints by customers.

Capital: An accumulated fund of investible resources. Usually used for 'active' funds, i.e., funds that are not just being hoarded or saved, but are being held for investment. Capital seeks to grow, to add to itself – this is the process of accumulation.

Capitalism: A mode of production based on generalised commodity production, or a social system where (a) private property and the market have penetrated all sectors, converting everything including labour power into a saleable commodity; (b) two main classes exist – a mass of wage labourers who own nothing but their labour power (their capacity to perform labour), and a class of capitalists who, in order to survive as capitalists, must invest their capital and earn ever increasing profits in a competitive market economy.

Checks - positive: A term used by T.R. Malthus to refer to constraints on the rate of population growth that are imposed by nature regardless of the wishes of human beings. Examples of such checks include – famines, epidemics and other natural disasters.

Checks - preventive: A term used by T.R. Malthus to refer to constraints on the rate of population growth that are voluntarily imposed on themselves by human beings. Examples of such checks include – postponing marriage; and practicing celibacy or birth control.

Civil Society: The sphere of society that lies beyond the family but is not part of either state or market. The arena of voluntary associations and organisations formed for cultural, social, religious or other non-commercial and non-state collective pursuits.

Class: An economic grouping based on common or similar position in the social relations of production, levels of income and wealth, life style and political preferences.

Colonialism: The ideology by which a country seeks to conquer and colonise (forcibly settle, rule over) another. The colony becomes a subordinate part of the coloniser's country, and is exploited in various ways for the colonising country's gain. Related to imperialism, but involves a more sustained interest in settling down to live in and govern the colony (i.e., exercising detailed and local control) rather than (as with imperialism) plundering and departing, or ruling from a distance.

Commodification (or commoditisation): The transformation of a non-commodity (i.e., something that is not bought and sold for money in a market) into a commodity.

Commodity: A good or service that may be bought or sold in the market.

Commodity fetishism: A condition under capitalism under which social relations become expressed as relations between things.

Communalism: Chauvinism based on religious identity. The belief that religion supersedes all other aspects of a person's or group's identity. Usually accompanied by an aggressive and hostile attitude towards persons and groups of other religious (or non-religious) identities.

Community: A general term for any distinctive group whose members are connected to each other by consciously recognised commonalities and bonds of kinship, language, culture and so on. Belief in these commonalities is more important than actual proof of their existence.

Consumption: Final use of goods and services by people who have purchased them (consumers).

Democracy: A form of government which derives its legitimacy from the people, and relies on explicit popular endorsement through elections or other method of ascertaining the people's opinion.

Discourse: The framework of thinking in a particular area of social life. For instance, the discourse of criminality means how people in a given society think about criminality.

Discrimination: Practices, acts or activities resulting in the unjustified exclusion of the members of a particular group from access to goods, services, jobs, resources, etc., that are normally accessible to others. Discrimination has to be distinguished from prejudice, although the two are usually quite closely associated.

Diversity (Cultural Diversity): The presence within the larger national, regional or other context of many different kinds of cultural communities such as those defined by language, religion, region, ethnicity and so on. A multiplicity or plurality of identities.

Dominant Caste: A middle or upper-middle ranking caste with a large population and newly acquired land ownership rights. This combination makes these castes politically, economically and therefore socially dominant in the countryside in many regions of India. Dominant castes replace the older castes which exercised dominance; unlike these earlier castes, these are not 'twice born' castes (i.e., not from the brahmin, kshatriya or vaishya varnas).

Economic anthropology: A subfield of socio-cultural anthropology that studies the entire range of economies and cultures found in the prehistoric, historic and ethnographic records, especially non-market economic systems.

Embedded: (As in ‘socially embedded’) Existing within a larger context of society or culture which ‘frame’ or contextualise the process or phenomenon in question. To say that the economic institutions are embedded in society is to say that they exist within society and are able to function because of the background rules and arrangements made possible by society.

Endogamy: Requires an individual to marry within a culturally defined group of which he or she is already a member, as for example, caste.

Enumeration: Literally, ‘numbering’; refers to processes of counting and measurement, specially those relating to people, such as a census or survey.

Epidemic: Derived from the Greek (epi = upon; demos = the people). Refers to a sudden increase in the rate at which a disease affects the people of a given geographic area at a specific time. The key factor here is that the rate of incidence (the number of fresh cases reported per unit of time, such as a day, week, or month) has to be substantially higher than the ‘normal’ rate. This can be a partly subjective judgement. If a disease has a high but constant rate of incidence in a specific geographical area (i.e., there is no sudden increase) it is called an *endemic* disease. An epidemic that is not restricted to a given geographical area but is more widespread (i.e., it is at a national, international or even global level) is called a *pandemic*.

Ethnic cleansing: The creation of ethnically homogenous territories through the mass expulsion of other ethnic populations.

Ethnicity: An ethnic group is one whose members share a distinct awareness of a common cultural identity, separating them from other groups around them.

Exogamy: Requires the individual to marry outside of his/her own group.

Family: Is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, the adult members of which assume responsibility of caring for children.

Fertility: In the context of human population, this refers to the ability of human beings to reproduce. Since reproduction is primarily a female-centred process, fertility is calculated with reference to the female population, that is, in the child-bearing age group.

Gender: In social theory, the term reserved for the socially and culturally produced differences between men and women. (As different from ‘sex’ which refers to the physical-biological differences between men and women) Nature creates sexes, society creates genders.

Geometric progression: See ‘progression – geometric’

Globalisation: A complex series of economic, social, technological, cultural and political changes that have increased the interdependence, integration, and interaction among people and economic actors (companies) in disparate locations.

Integration: A process of cultural unification whereby cultural distinctions are relegated to the private domain and a common public culture is adopted for all groups. This usually involves the adoption of the dominant culture as the official culture. Expressions of cultural difference or distinctiveness are not encouraged or sometimes even prohibited in the public domain.

Jajmani system: Non-market exchange of produce, goods, and services within the (north) Indian village, without the use of money, based on the caste system and customary practices.

Jati: The word for caste; a region-specific hierarchical ordering of castes that marry within their boundaries, pursue hereditary occupations and are fixed by birth. This is the traditional system, but it has undergone many changes over time.

Kinship: Ties are connections between individuals, established either through marriage or through the lines of descent that connect blood relatives (mothers, fathers, siblings, offspring, etc.)

Labour power: Capacity for labour; the mental and physical capabilities of human beings that are used in the process of production. (As different from labour, which is work performed)

Laissez-faire: (French; literally, 'let be' or 'leave alone') – an economic philosophy that advocates free market system and minimal government intervention in economic matters.

Liberalisation: The process whereby state controls over economic activity are relaxed and left to the market forces to decide. In general, a process of making laws more liberal or permissive.

Lifechances: The potential opportunities or possible achievements available to a person during their life.

Lifestyle: A way of life; more concretely, the specific kinds and levels of consumption that define the everyday life of particular social groups.

Marketisation: The use of market based solutions to solve social, political, or economic problems.

Marriage: A socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals. When two people marry, they become *kin* to one another.

Minority groups: A group of people in a minority in a given society who, because of their distinct physical or cultural characteristics, find themselves in situations of inequality within that society. Such groups include ethnic minorities.

Mode of production: In Marx's historical materialism, a specific combination of forces of production and relations of production that create a historically distinct social formation.

Reciprocity: Informal, culturally regulated exchange (trade) of goods and services in a non-market economy.

Role Conflict: Conflict between the different social roles that the same individual is expected to play. For example, a working father may experience a role conflict between his role as a worker and his role as a father or husband.

Glossary

Monogamy: Restricts the individual to one spouse at a time. Under this system, at any given time a man can have only one wife and a woman can have only one husband.

Natal family: The family into which one is born, family of birth. (As different from the family into which one is married.)

Nation: A community that believes itself to be a community, based on several shared characteristics such as: common language, geographical location, history, religion, race, ethnicity, political aspirations, etc. However, nations may exist without one or more of such characteristics. A nation is comprised of its people, who are the ultimate guarantors of its existence, meaning and powers.

Nation - state: A particular type of state, characteristic of the modern world, in which a government has sovereign power within a defined territorial area, and the mass of the population are citizens who know themselves to be part of a single nation. Nation-states are closely associated with the rise of nationalism, although nationalist loyalties do not always conform to the boundaries of specific states that exist today. Nation-states developed as part of an emerging nation-state system, originating in Europe, but in current times spanning the whole globe.

Nationalism: Commitment, usually passionate commitment, to one's nation and everything related to it. Putting the nation first, being biased in its favour, etc. The ideology that commonalities of language, religion, history, race, ethnicity, etc., make the community distinctive and unique.

Prejudice: The holding of preconceived ideas about an individual or group, ideas that are resistant to change even in the face of new information. Prejudice may be either positive or negative, but the common usage is for negative or derogatory preconceptions.

Preventive - checks: See 'checks - preventive'

Productivity of agriculture: The amount of agricultural output (i.e., quantity of foodgrains or other crops) produced per unit area (e.g., acre, hectare, bigha, etc.). Increases in productivity refer to increases in agricultural output obtained solely through changes in the methods of farming and the quality of inputs, but without any expansion of the cultivated area. Examples of such changes include use of tractors, fertilisers, improved seeds, etc.

Progression - arithmetic: A series or sequence of numbers that may start with any number, but where each succeeding number is obtained by *adding* a fixed amount (number) to the preceding number. For example: 6, 10, 14, 18 and so on, where 6 is an arbitrary starting point, but $10 = 6 + 4$; $14 = 10 + 4$; $18 = 14 + 4$; and so on.

Progression - geometric: A series or sequence of numbers that may start with any number, but where each succeeding number is obtained by *multiplying* the preceding number by a constant multiple. For example: 4, 20, 100, 500 and so on, where 4 is an arbitrary starting point, but $20 = 4 \times 5$; $100 = 20 \times 5$; $500 = 100 \times 5$; and so on.

Reflexive: Literally, turning back on oneself. A reflexive (or self-reflexive) theory is one that seeks to explain not only the world but also its own operations within the world. Thus, a reflexive sociology will try to explain sociology itself as a social phenomenon, along with the other things it seeks to explain. Normally, theories seek to explain their object, not themselves.

Regionalism: The ideology of commitment to a particular regional identity which could be based on language, ethnicity and other characteristics in addition to geography.

Relations of production: Relations between people and groups with regard to production, especially those related to property and labour.

Replacement level: The level of fertility at which the existing generation produces just enough children to replace itself, so that the next generation is of the same size (total population) as the current one. This translates to the rule of thumb that a woman needs to have approximately 2.1 children to ensure that she and her spouse are 'replaced' (the extra 0.1 is required to compensate for the risk of unforeseen or accidental deaths). In other words, the replacement level of the total fertility rate is usually said to be 2.1.

Sanskritisation: A term invented by M.N. Srinivas to refer to the process by which middle or lower castes seek upward social mobility by imitating the ritual and social behaviour/practices of castes above themselves, usually brahmins or kshatriyas.

Scavenging: The practice of manual cleaning of human excreta and other garbage and waste products. Still practiced where sewerage systems are not in place. This can also be a service that the untouchable castes are forced to perform.

Secularism: There are different versions: (a) The doctrine by which the state is kept strictly separate from religion, i.e., separation of 'church and state' as in western societies. (b) The doctrine by which the state does not discriminate between different religions and shows equal respect to all. (c) The popular sense of the anti-thesis of communalism, i.e., an attitude that is not biased in favour of or against any religion.

Social constructionism: The perspective that emphasises society over nature in explaining reality. It views social relations, values and interactions – rather than biology or nature – as being decisive in determining the meaning and content of reality. (For example, social constructionism believes that things like gender, old age, famine, etc., are more social than physical or natural.)

Social exclusion: The combined outcome of deprivation and discrimination, which prevent individuals or groups from participating fully in the economic, social and political life of the society in which they live. Social exclusion is structural, i.e., the result of social processes and institutions rather than individual action.

Son preference: The social phenomenon where members of a community prefer to have sons rather than daughters, i.e., they value sons more than daughters. The existence of son preference can be established by observing social behaviour towards sons and daughters, or by asking people directly about their preferences and perceptions.

Glossary

State: An abstract entity consisting of a set of political-legal institutions claiming control over a particular geographical territory and the people living in it. A set of interlinked institutions for maintaining a monopoly over the use of legitimate violence in a specified territorial area. Includes institutions like the legislature, judiciary, executive, the army, policy and administration. In another sense, the name given to a regional government within a larger national structure, as in state government of Tamil Nadu, etc.

Stereotype: A fixed and inflexible characterisation of a group of people.

Stratification: The hierarchical arrangement of different segments of society into 'strata' or sub-groups whose members share the same general position in the hierarchy. Stratification implies inequality; egalitarian societies are in theory lacking in strata, though they may have other forms of sub-grouping which are not arranged in hierarchical terms.

Stock Market: A market for 'stocks' or shares in companies. Joint stock companies raise capital by selling shares – a share is a specified portion of the company's assets. Share holders pay money to own shares in a company, and the company uses this money to conduct its business. The shareholders are paid dividends, or a share of the profits made by the company that is distributed according to the number of shares held by each shareholder. A stock market is the place or mechanism for the buying and selling of such shares.

Surplus value: Increase in the value of investment, or return to capital; under capitalism, surplus value is derived from surplus labour, or labour performed that is in excess of what is needed to equal the wage paid to the labourer.

Syncretism: A cultural phenomenon characterised by the inter-mingling or mixing of different religions or traditions. A hybrid of two distinct religious or cultural traditions.

Transgression: The violation of some rule or norm; going beyond socially or culturally determined rules and customs; breaking a social or cultural 'law' (which may not be a legal or formally written law).

Tribe: A social group consisting of collections of families and lineages (or clans) based on shared ties of kinship, ethnicity, common history or territorial-political organisation. Distinguished from a caste in that caste is a hierarchical system of mutually exclusive castes whereas a tribe is a single inclusive grouping (though it may have divisions based on clans or lineages).

Untouchability: A social practice within the caste system whereby members of the lowest castes are considered to be ritually impure to such an extent that they cause pollution by mere touch. Untouchable castes are at the bottom of the social scale and are excluded from most social institutions.

Varna: Literally, 'colour'; a nation-wide version of the caste system dividing society into four hierarchically ordered varnas or caste groups named – brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya and shudra.

Virtual market: A market that exists only electronically, and conducts transactions via computers and telecommunication media. The market does not exist in a physical sense, but only in terms of data that are stored electronically.

Will: Literally, volition or desire (the will to live, etc.). But as a noun, refers to a legal document specifying the wishes of person as to what should be done with her/his property after death. Usually involves inheritance – specification of the person to whom ownership of the dead person's assets are to be transferred.

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1 Structural Change

Understanding the present usually involves some grasp of its past. This holds true probably as much for an individual or social group as for an entire country such as India. India has a long and rich history. While knowing about its past in ancient and medieval times is very important, its colonial experience is particularly significant for comprehending modern India. This is not just because many modern ideas and institutions reached India through colonialism. It is also because such an exposure to modern ideas was contradictory or paradoxical. For example Indians in the colonial period read about western liberalism and freedom. Yet they lived under a western, colonial rule that denied Indians liberty and freedom. It is contradictions of this kind that shaped many of the structural and cultural changes that chapter 1 and 2 looks at.

As the next few chapters shall show, our social reform and nationalist movement, our laws, our political life and our Constitution, our industry and agriculture, our cities and our villages have been shaped by our paradoxical experience with colonialism. This has had lasting implications for our specific experience with modernity. The following are just some of the many instances we face in our daily life.

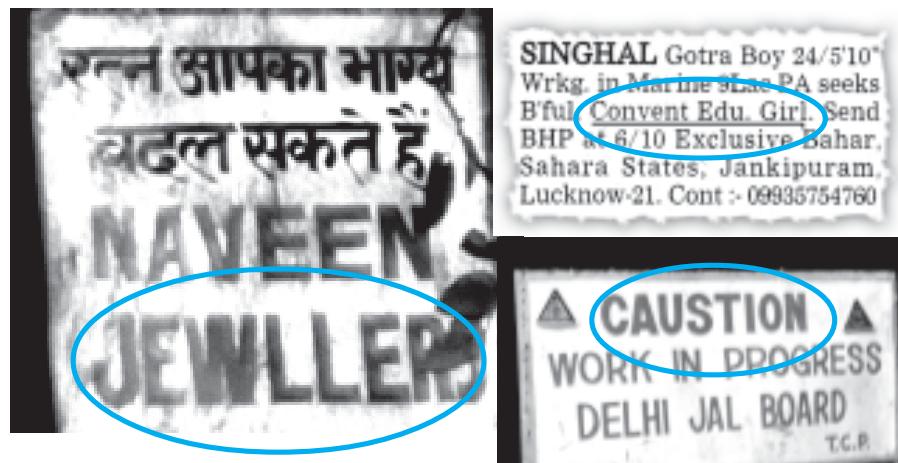
We have a parliamentary and a legal system, a police and educational system built very much on the British model. We drive on the left side of the road like the British. We have 'bread-omelette' and 'cutlets' as menu offered in many roadside eateries and canteens. A very popular manufacturer of biscuits, is actually named after Britain. Many school uniforms include neck-ties. We often admire the west and as often resent it. These are just some of the many and complex ways that British colonialism lives on in contemporary India.



Let us take the example of the English language to show how its impact has been many sided and paradoxical in India. This is not a matter about wrong spellings alone. English is not only widely used in India but we now have an impressive body of literary writings by Indians in English. This knowledge of English has given Indians an edge in the global market. But English continues to be a mark of privilege. Not knowing English is a disadvantage that tells in the job market. At the same time for those who were traditionally deprived of access to formal education such as the Dalits, knowledge of English may open doors of opportunities that were formerly closed.

In this chapter we focus on structural changes that *colonialism* brought in. We, therefore, need to shift from this broad impressionistic view to a clearer understanding of colonialism as a structure and system. Colonialism brought into being new political, economic and social structural changes. In this chapter we look at only two of these structural changes namely *industrialisation* and *urbanisation*. While the focus is on specific colonial context we also briefly touch on developments after independence.

All these structural changes were accompanied by cultural changes which, we look at in the next chapter. However any strict separation of the two is difficult. As you will see the structural changes are difficult to discuss without some mention of the cultural changes too.



Virtually English

Housewives and college students who know English take up plum assignments as online scorers in BPOs, writes K. Jeshi It is a familiar classroom scene. The only unfamiliar thing is the setting. Computer screens turn blackboards and housewives take over as teachers to evaluate English essays written by non-English speaking students in Asia. All, at the click of the mouse. The encouraging comments given by the evaluators here motivate students in Japan, Korea and China to learn English.

Online education, the new wave in the BPO segment, is bringing cheer to those who want to earn a fast buck. All you need is a flair for English, creative skills, basic computer knowledge, the drive to go that extra mile and willingness to learn.

Source: The HINDU, Thursday, May 04, 2006

ACTIVITY 1.1

- Think of everyday objects, such as pieces of furniture or kinds of food, or phrases in Indian languages that may be traced to our past as a British colony.
- Identify a novel or short story or film or television serial in any Indian language that recounts the times of colonialism. Discuss its many dimensions.
- You must have seen a court scene in a film or television serial. Did you notice the procedures? Most are borrowed from the British system. Not too many years ago Indian judges wore wigs when in court. Find out where did this practice come from?

1.1 UNDERSTANDING COLONIALISM



At one level, colonialism simply means the establishment of rule by one country over another. In the modern period western colonialism has had the greatest impact. India's past has been marked by the entry of numerous groups of people at different times who have established their rule over different parts of what constitutes modern India today. The impact of colonial rule is distinguishable from all other earlier rules because the changes it brought in were far-reaching and deep. History is full of examples of the annexation of foreign territory and the domination

of weaker by stronger powers. Nevertheless, *there is a vital difference between the empire building of pre-capitalist times and that of capitalist times*. Apart from outright pillage, the pre-capitalist conquerors benefited from their domination by exacting a continuous flow of tribute. On the whole they did not interfere with the economic base. They simply took the tribute that was skimmed off the economic surplus that was produced traditionally in the subjugated areas. (Alavi and Shanin, 1982)

In contrast British colonialism which was based on a capitalist system directly interfered to ensure greatest profit and benefit to British capitalism. Every policy was geared towards the strengthening and expansion of British capitalism. For instance it changed the very laws of the land. It changed not just land ownership laws but decided even what crops ought to be grown and what ought not to be. It meddled with the manufacturing sector. It altered the way production and distribution of goods took place. It entered into the forests. It cleared trees and started tea plantations. It brought in Forest Acts that changed the lives of pastoralists. They were prevented from entering many forests that had earlier provided valuable forage for their cattle. The box carries a brief account of the impact of colonial forest policy in North-East India.

Forest Policy in the Colonial Period in North-East India

Box 1.1

...The advent of the railways in Bengal ...marked an important turning point, which saw the conversion of its forest policy in Assam (Assam was then part of the Bengal province) from one of laissez faire into one of active intervention. ...The demand for railway sleepers transformed the forests in Assam (this included all the present-day seven sister states) from an unproductive wilderness into a lucrative source of revenue for the colonial administration.

Between 1861 and 1878, an area of approximately 269 square miles had been constituted as reserved forests. By 1894, the area had gone up to 3,683 square miles. And, by the end of the nineteenth century, the area of forests under the department was 20,061 square miles (constituting 42.2 per cent of the total area of the province), of which 3,609 square miles comprised reserved forests... Significantly, large areas of these forests are located in the hill areas occupied by tribal communities who for centuries depended upon and lived in close harmony with nature. (Nongbri, 2003)



Train passing through India's first creak bridge near Thane - 1854

Colonialism also led to considerable movement of people. It led to movement of people from one part to another within India. For instance people from present day Jharkhand moved to Assam to work on the tea plantations. A newly emerging middle class particularly from the British Presidency regions of Bengal and Madras moved as government employees and professionals like doctors and lawyers moved to different parts of the country. People were carted in ships from India to work on other colonised lands in distant Asia, Africa and Americas. Many died on their way. Most could never return. Today many of their descendants are known as people of Indian origin.

To facilitate the smooth functioning of its rule, colonialism introduced a wide array of changes in every sphere, be it legal or cultural or architectural. Colonialism was a story apart in the very scale and intensity of the changes that it brought about. Some of these changes were deliberate while some took place in an unintended fashion. For example we saw how western education was introduced to create Indians who would manage British colonialism. Instead it led to the growth of a nationalist and anti-colonial consciousness.

This magnitude and depth of the structural changes that colonialism unleashed can be better grasped if we try and understand some basic features

After 1834 till 1920, ships left from the ports of India on a regular basis carrying people of various religions, gender, classes and castes destined to work for a minimum of five years on one of the plantations in Mauritius. For many decades the recruiting ground was centred in Bihar, in particular, in districts such as Patna, Gaya, Arrah, Saran, Tirhoot, Champaran, Monghyr, Bhagalpur and Purnea. (Pineo 1984)

Box 1.2

of capitalism. Capitalism is an economic system in which the means of production are privately owned and organised to accumulate profits within a market system. (We have already discussed the capitalist market in the first book – *Indian Society*.) Capitalism in the west emerged out of a complex process of European exploration of the rest of the world, its plunder of wealth and resources, an unprecedented growth of science and technology, its harnessing to industries and agriculture. What marked capitalism from the very beginning was its dynamism, its potential to grow, expand, innovate, use technology and labour in a way best assured to ensure greatest profit. What marked it too was its global nature. Western colonialism was inextricably connected to the growth of western capitalism. This had a lasting impact on the way capitalism developed in a colonised country like India. In the next section on industrialisation and urbanisation we see how colonialism led to very distinct patterns.

If capitalism became the dominant economic system, nation states became the dominant political form. That we all live in nation states and that we all have a nationality or a national citizenship may appear natural to us today. Before the First World War passports were not widely used for international travel, and in most areas few people had one. Societies were, however, not always organised on these lines. Nation state pertains to a particular type of state, characteristic of the modern world. A government has sovereign power within a defined territorial area, and the people are citizens of a single nation. Nation states are closely associated with the rise of nationalism. The principle of nationalism assumes that any set of people have a right to be free and exercise sovereign power. It is an important part of the rise of democratic ideas. You will be reading more about this in chapter 3. It must have struck you that the practice of colonialism and the principle of nationalism and democratic rights are contradictory. For colonial rule implied foreign rule such as British rule over India. Nationalism implied that the people of India or of any colonised society have an equal right to be sovereign. Indian nationalist leaders were quick to grasp this irony. They declared that freedom or *swaraj* was their birth-right and fought for both political and economic freedom.

1.2 URBANISATION AND INDUSTRIALISATION

THE COLONIAL EXPERIENCE

Industrialisation refers to the emergence of machine production, based on the use of inanimate power resources like steam or electricity. In most standard western textbook of sociology we learn that in even the most advanced of traditional civilizations, most people were engaged in working on the land. The relatively low level of technological development did not permit more than a small minority to be freed from the chores of agricultural production. By contrast, a prime feature of industrial societies today is that a large majority of the

employed population work in factories, offices or shops rather than agriculture. Over 90 per cent of people in the west live in towns and cities, where most jobs are to be found and new job opportunities are created. Not surprisingly, therefore, we usually associate urbanisation with industrialisation. They often do occur together but not always so.

For instance in Britain, the first society to undergo industrialisation, was also the earliest to move from being rural to a predominantly urban country.

In 1800, well under 20 per cent of the population lived in towns or cities of more than 10,000 inhabitants. By 1900 this proportion had become 74 per cent. The capital city, London, was home to about 1.1 million people in 1800; it increased in size to a population of over 7 million by the start of the twentieth century. London was then by far the largest city ever seen in the world, a vast manufacturing, commercial and financial centre at the heart of a still-expanding British empire. (*Giddens 2001: 572*)

In India the impact of the very same British industrialisation led to *deindustrialisation* in some sectors. And *decline of old urban centres*. Just as manufacturing boomed in Britain, traditional exports of cotton and silk manufactures from India declined in the face of Manchester competition. This period also saw the further decline of cities such as Surat and Masulipatnam while Bombay and Madras grew. When the British took over Indian states, towns like Thanjavur, Dhaka, and Murshidabad lost their courts and, therefore, some of their artisans and court gentry. From the end of the 19th century, with the installation of mechanised factory industries, some towns became much more heavily populated.

Urban luxury manufactures like the high quality silks and cottons of Dacca or Murshidabad must have been hit first by the almost simultaneous collapse of indigenous court demand and the external market on which these had largely depended. Village crafts in the interior, and particularly, in regions other than eastern India where British penetration was earliest and deepest, probably survived much longer, coming to be seriously affected only with the spread of railways.

(*Sarkar 1983: 29*)



Jaipur



Chennai



Mumbai

**The Census of India Report, 1911,
Vol. 1, p. 408.**

The extensive importation of cheap European piecegoods and utensils, and the establishment in India itself of numerous factories of the Western type, have more or less destroyed many village industries. The high prices of agricultural produce have also led many village artisans to abandon their hereditary craft in favour of agriculture...The extent to which this disintegration of the old village organisation is proceeding varies considerably in different parts. The change is most noticeable in the more advanced provinces.

Box 1.3

Unlike Britain where the impact of industrialisation led to more people moving into urban areas, in India the initial impact of the same British industrialisation led to more people moving into agriculture. The Census of India Report shows this clearly.

Sociological writings in India have often discussed both the contradictory and unintended consequences of colonialism. Comparisons have been made between the industrialisation in

the west and the growth of a western middle class with that of the Indian experience. The box below carries one such observation. It also shows how industrialisation is not just about new machine based production but also a story of the growth of new social groups in society and new social relationships. In other words it is about changes in the Indian social structure.

Cities had a key role in the economic system of empires. Coastal cities such as Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai were favoured. From here primary commodities could be easily exported and manufactured goods could be cheaply imported. Colonial cities were the prime link between the economic centre or core in Britain and periphery or margins in colonised India. Cities in this sense were the concrete expression of global capitalism. In British India for example Bombay was planned and

The substitutes offered by the East India Company and subsequently by the British government were land ownership and facilities for education in English. The facts that the first remained unconnected with agricultural productivity and the second with the mainstream of Indian cultural traditions amply show that the alternatives were not sufficient in the sense that they could not create any genuine middle class. We know only too well that the zamindars become parasites in land and the graduates job hunters.

(Mukherjee 1979: 114)

Box 1.4

ACTIVITY 1.2

- Find out more about the beginnings of the three cities.
- Find out also more about the story of the names they were called by leading to the very recent changes from Bombay to Mumbai, Madras to Chennai, Calcutta to Kolkata, Bangalore to Bangaluru.
- Find out about the growth of other colonial urban centres.

re-developed so that by 1900 over three-quarters of India's raw cotton were shipped through the city. Calcutta exported jute to Dundee while Madras sent coffee, sugar, indigo dyes and cotton to Britain.

Urbanisation in the colonial period saw the decline of some earlier urban centres and the *emergence of new colonial cities*. Kolkata was one of the first of such cities. In 1690, an English merchant named Job Charnock arranged to lease three villages (named Kolikata, Gobindapur, and Sutanuti) by the river Hugli in order to set up a trading post. In 1698, Fort William was established by the river for defensive purposes, and a large open area was cleared around the fort for military engagements. The fort and the open area (called Maidan) formed the core of the city that emerged rather rapidly.

THE TEA PLANTATIONS

We have already seen how industrialisation and urbanisation did not happen in India quite the way it did in Britain. More importantly, this is not because we began industrialisation late, but because our early industrialisation and urbanisation in the modern period were governed by colonial interests.

We cannot go into details about different industries here. We simply take the case of the tea industry in India as an example. Official reports show how the colonial government often used unfair means to hire and forcibly keep labourers. And clearly acted on behalf of the British planters. From fictional and other accounts we get a glimpse of what life was for planters in this industry.



A model of the South Asian colonial city

Box 1.5

The European town...had spacious bungalows, elegant apartment houses, planned streets, trees on both sides of the street,...clubs for afternoon and evening get-togethers...The open space was reserved for...Western recreational facilities, such as race and golf courses, soccer and cricket. When domestic water supply, electric connections, and sewage links were available or technically possible, the European town residents utilised them fully, whereas their use was quite restricted to the native town.

(Dutt 1993: 361)



Significantly the colonial administrators were clear that harsh measures were taken against the labourers to make sure they benefited the planters. They were also fully aware that the laws of a colonised country did not have to stick to the democratic norms that the British back home had to follow in Britain.

How were labourers recruited?

Box 1.6

Tea industry began in India in 1851. Most of the tea gardens were situated in Assam. In 1903, the industry employed 4,79,000 permanent and 93,000 temporary employees. Since Assam was sparsely populated and the tea plantations were often located on uninhabited hillsides, bulk of the sorely needed labour had to be imported from other provinces. But to bring thousands of people every year from their far-off homes into strange lands, possessing an unhealthy climate and infected with strange fevers, required the provision of financial and other incentives, which the tea-planters of Assam were unwilling to offer. Instead, they had recourse to fraud and coercion; and they persuaded the government to aid and abet them in this unholy task by passing penal laws. ...The recruitment of labourers for tea gardens of Assam was carried on for years mostly by contractors under the provisions of the Transport of Native Labourers Act (No. III) of 1863 of Bengal as amended in 1865, 1870 and 1873.

From Curzon's Speeches II, pp. 238-9

Box 1.7

The labour system in Assam was essentially that of indenture by which the labourers went to Assam under contract for a number of years. The government helped the planters by providing for penal sanction in case of non-fulfillment of the contract by the labourers.

This view is explicitly made by T. Raleigh, Law Member, when speaking on the Assam Labour and Emigration Bill of 1901: "The labour-contract authorised by this Bill is a transaction by which, to put it rather bluntly, a man is often committed to Assam before he knows what he is doing, and is thereupon held to his promise for four years, with a threat of arrest and imprisonment if he fails to perform it. Conditions like these have no place in the ordinary law of master and servant. *We made them part of the law of British India at the instance and for the benefit of the planters of Assam... The fact remains that the motive power in this legislation is the interest of the planter, not the interest of the coolie*".

(ICP 1901, Vol XL, pp.133 cited in Chandra 1966: 361-2 emphasis inserted).

EXERCISE FOR BOX 1.6 AND 1.7

Read the two boxes below and discuss:

- The role of the colonial government and its legislations to regulate work.
- The role of the colonial state to help British tea planters.
- Find out where the descendants of the workers work and live today.

How did the planter's live?

Parbatpuri had always been an important offloading and loading point. The doughty British managers and their *mems* always came down from the estates surrounding Parbatpuri when a steamer docked there. In spite of the inaccessibility of the gardens, they had lived lives of luxury. Huge, sprawling bungalows, set on sturdy wooden stilts to protect the inmates from wild animals, were surrounded by velvety lawns and jewel bright flower beds...They had trained a large number of *malis*, *bawarchis* and bearers to serve them to perfection. Their wide verandahed houses gleamed and glistened under the ministrations of this army of liveried servants.

Of course, everything from scouring powder to self-raising flour, from safety pins to silverware, from delicate Nottingham lace tablecloths to bath salts, had come up the river on the steamers. Indeed, even the large cast-iron bathtubs that were invitingly placed in huge bathrooms, tubs which were filled every morning by busy *bistiwallahs* carrying buckets up from the bungalow's well, had been brought up via steamer.

(*Phukun* 2005)

Box 1.8

INDUSTRIALISATION IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

We saw in the earlier section how the colonial state had an important role in the way industrialisation and urbanisation took place in India. Here we very briefly touch upon how the independent Indian state played an active role in promoting industrialisation. And in some sense was responding to the impact that colonialism had on the growth of industry in India. Chapter 5 will deal with Indian industrialisation and its shift from the early years of independence to developments after 1990 with liberalisation.

For Indian nationalists the issue of economic exploitation under colonial rule was a central issue. Images of pre-colonial fabled riches of India contrasted with the poverty of British India. The Swadeshi movement strengthened the loyalty to the national economy. Modern ideas made people realise that poverty was preventable. Indian nationalists saw rapid industrialisation of the economy as the path towards both growth and social equity. Development of heavy and machine-making industries, expansion of the public sector and holding of a large cooperative sector were considered very important.

A modern and prosperous India, as visualised by Jawaharlal Nehru, was to be built on an edifice of giant steel plants or gigantic dams and power stations. Read Nehru's remarks on the Bhakra Nangal dam:

Our engineers tell us that probably nowhere else in the world is there a dam as high as this. The work bristles with difficulties and complications. As I walked around the site I thought that these days the biggest temple and mosques and gurdwara is the place where man works for the good of mankind. Which place can be greater than this, this Bhakra Nangal, where thousands and lakhs of men have worked, have shed their blood and sweat and laid down their lives as well? (Nehru 1980: 214)

ACTIVITY 1.3

For many of you Amul Butter and other Amul milk products may be familiar names. Find out how this milk industry emerged?

Box 1.9

Nearly a decade before the country's Independence, in 1938 a National Planning Committee with Jawaharlal Nehru as the Chairman and K.T. Shah as the general editor was set up by the Indian National Congress. The Committee started functioning in 1939, but it could not make much headway as the chairman was arrested by the British and the war broke out. Notwithstanding these obstacles, 29 sub-committees divided into eight groups were set up to deal with all aspects of national life and to work in accordance with a predetermined plan. The major areas on which the Committee focussed its attention were:

- (a) Agriculture and other sources of primary production
- (b) Industries or other secondary sources of production
- (c) Human factor: labour and population
- (d) Exchange and finance
- (e) Public utilities: transport and communication
- (f) Social services: health and housing
- (g) Education: general and technical
- (h) Woman's role in a planned economy

Among the sub-committees some submitted their final reports and several others interim reports before India became independent. Several reports were published by 1948-49.

The Planning Commission was set up in March 1950 by a resolution of the Government of India, which is defining the scope of the Commission's work.

ACTIVITY 1.4

Many new industrial towns emerged in India in the years after Independence. May be some of you live in such towns.

- Find out more about towns like Bokaro, Bhilai, Rourkela, Durgapur. Find out whether such industrial towns exist in your region.
- Do you know of townships built around fertilizer plants and oil wells.
- If no such town exists in your region, find out the reasons for the absence.

URBANISATION IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

You would be more than aware of increasing urbanisation in India. Recent years of globalisation have led to enormous expansion and change of cities. We shall be dealing with that later in chapter 6. Here we draw from a sociological account of the different kinds of urbanisation in India.

Writing on the different kinds of urbanisation witnesses in the first two decades after independence sociologist M.S.A. Rao argued that in India many villages all over India are becoming increasingly subject to the impact of urban influences. But the nature of urban impact varies according to the kind of relations a village has with a city or town. He describes three different situations of urban impact as mentioned in the box.



A view of an urban village

Box 1.10

Firstly, there are villages in which a sizeable number of people have sought employment in far-off cities. They live there leaving behind the members of their families in their natal villages. In Madhopur, a village in north central India, 77 out of 298 households have migrants, and a little less than half of all the migrants work in two cities of Bombay and Calcutta. About 75 percent of the total migrants send money regularly, and 83 per cent visit the village from four to five times a year to once in two years... A considerable number of emigrants reside not only in Indian cities but also in overseas towns. For instance, there are many overseas migrants from Gujarat villages living in African and British towns. They have built fashionable houses in their natal villages, invested money on land and industry, and have donated literally to the establishment of educational institutions and trusts...

The second kind of urban impact is to be seen in villages which are situated near an industrial town...When an industrial town like Bhilai comes up in the midst of villages, some villages are totally uprooted while the lands of others are partially acquired. The latter are found to receive an influx of immigrant workers, which not only stimulates a demand for houses and a market inside the village but creates problems of ordering relationships between the native residents and the immigrants...

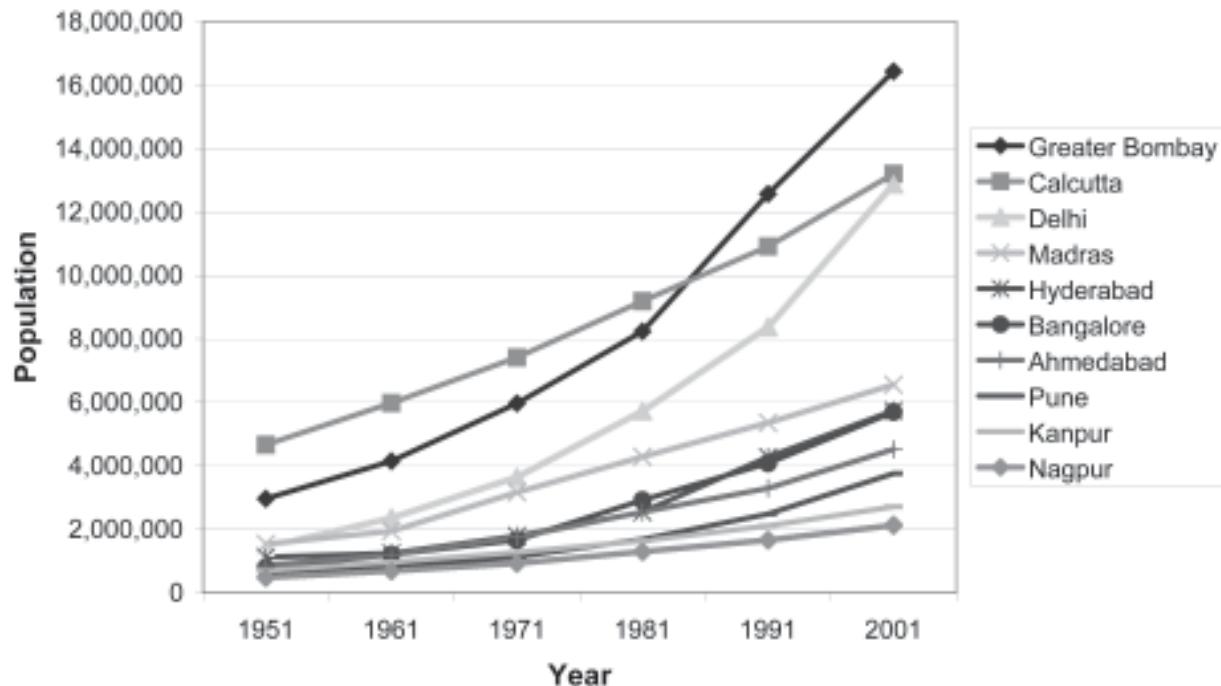
...The growth of metropolitan cities accounts for the third type of urban impact on the surrounding villages...While a few villages are totally absorbed in the process of expansion, only the land of many others, excluding the inhabited area, is used for urban development...

(Rao 1974: 486-490)

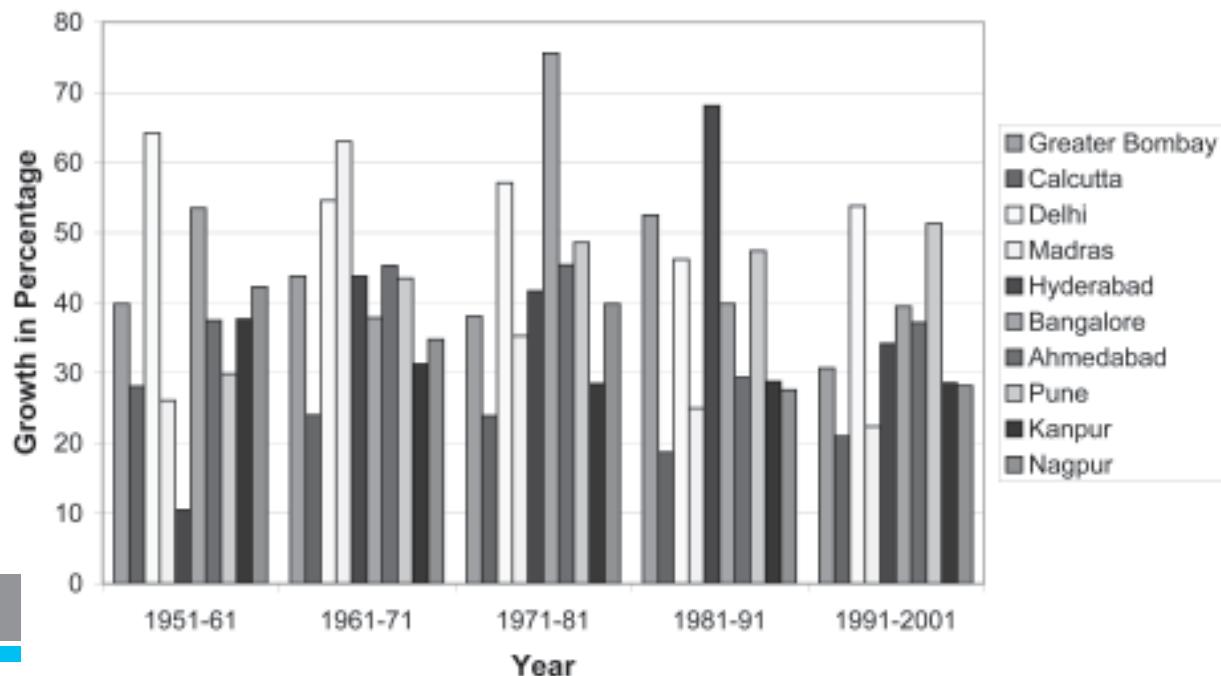
EXERCISE FOR Box 1.10

Read the above account carefully. May be you have seen other ways or similar ways that urbanisation takes place. Write a brief account of this. Discuss each other's accounts in class.

POPULATION OF SELECTED METROPOLITAN CITIES (URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS)



DECADAL GROWTH RATE POPULATION OF SELECTED METROPOLITAN CITIES IN PERCENTAGE



CONCLUSION

It will be obvious to you that colonialism is not just a topic in history but something which lives on in complex ways in our lives even today. It is also evident from the above account that industrialisation and urbanisation implies not just changes in production systems, technological innovations, density of settlements but also 'a way of life'. (Wirth 1938). You shall be reading more about industrialisation and urbanisation in independent India in chapter 5 and 6.

1. How has colonialism impacted our lives? You can either focus on one aspect like culture or politics or treat them together.
2. Industrialisation and urbanisation are linked processes. Discuss.
3. Identify any town or city with which you are familiar. Find out both the history of its growth and its contemporary status.
4. You may be living in a very small town, may be in a very big city, a semi urban settlement or a village.
 - Describe the place where you live.
 - What are the features, which make you think it is a town and not a city, a village and not a town, or a city and not a village?
 - Is there any factory where you live?
 - Is agriculture the main job that people do?
 - Is it the occupational nature that has a determining influence?
 - Is it the buildings?
 - Is it the availability of educational opportunities?
 - Is it the way people live and behave?
 - Is it the way people talk and dress?

Questions

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2 Cultural Change

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We saw in the last chapter how colonialism brought in changes that altered the structure of Indian society. Industrialisation and urbanisation transformed the lives of people. Factories replaced fields as places of work for some. Cities replaced villages as places to live for many. Living and working arrangements or structures changed. Changes also took place in culture, ways of life, norms, values, fashions and even body language. Sociologists understand, social structure, as a 'continuing arrangement of persons in relationships defined or controlled by institutions' and 'culture' as 'socially established norms or patterns of behaviour'. You have already studied about the structural changes that colonialism brought about in chapter 1. You will observe how important those structural changes are for understanding the cultural changes that this chapter seeks to understand.

This chapter looks at two related developments, both a complex product of the impact of colonial rule. The first deals with the deliberate and conscious efforts made by the 19th century social reformers and early 20th century nationalists to bring in changes in social practices that discriminated against women and 'lower' castes. The second with the less deliberate yet decisive changes in cultural practices that can broadly be understood as the four processes of sanskritisation, modernisation, secularisation and westernisation. Sanskritisation pre-dates the coming of colonial rule. The other three processes can be understood better as complex responses of the people of India to the changes that colonialism brought about.

2.1 SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY



Raja Ram Mohun Roy

Pandita Ramabai

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan

You have already seen the far-reaching impact of colonialism on our lives. The social reform movements which emerged in India in the 19th century arose to the challenges that colonial Indian society faced. You probably are familiar with what were termed social evils that plagued Indian society. The well-known issues are that of *sati*,

child marriage, widow remarriage and caste discrimination. It is not that attempts were not made to fight social discrimination in pre-colonial India. They were central to Buddhism. They were central to *Bhakti* and *Sufi* movements. What marked these 19th century social reform attempts was the modern context and mix of ideas. It was a creative combination of modern ideas of western liberalism and a new look on traditional literature.

The mix of ideas**Box 2.1**

- Ram Mohun Roy attacked the practice of *sati* on the basis of both appeals to humanitarian and natural rights doctrines as well as Hindu *shastras*.
- Ranade's writings entitled *The Texts of the Hindu Law on the Lawfulness of the Remarriage of Widows and Vedic Authorities for Widow Marriage* elaborated the *shastric* sanction for remarriage of widows.
- The content of new education was modernising and liberal. The literary content of the courses in the humanities and social sciences was drawn from the literature of the European Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment. Its themes were humanistic, secular and liberal.
- Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan's interpretation of Islam emphasised the validity of free enquiry (*jihad*) and the alleged similarities between Koranic revelations and the laws of nature discovered by modern science.
- Kandukuri Viresalingam's *The Sources of Knowledge* reflected his familiarity with *navya-nyaya* logic. At the same time he translated Julius Huxley.

Sociologist Satish Saberwal elaborates upon the modern context by sketching three aspects to the modern framework of change in colonial India:

- modes of communication
- forms of organisation, and
- the nature of ideas

New technologies speeded up various forms of communication. The printing press, telegraph, and later the microphone, movement of people and goods through steamship and railways helped quick movement of new ideas. Within India, social reformers from Punjab and Bengal exchanged ideas with reformers from Madras and Maharashtra. Keshav Chandra Sen of Bengal visited Madras in 1864. Pandita Ramabai travelled to different corners of the country. Some of them went to other countries. Christian missionaries reached remote corners of present day Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya.



New technologies and organisations that speeded up various forms of communication



Viresalingam



Vidyasagar



Jotiba Phule

Modern social organisations like the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal and Arya Samaj in Punjab were set up. The All-India Muslim Ladies Conference (*Anjuman-E-Khawatn-E-Islam*) was founded in 1914. Indian reformers debated not just in public meetings but through public media like newspapers and journals. Translations of writings of social reformers from one Indian language to another took place. For instance, Vishnu Shastri published a Marathi translation of Vidyasagar's book in *Indu Prakash* in 1868.

New ideas of liberalism and freedom, new ideas of homemaking and marriage, new roles for mothers and daughters, new ideas of self-conscious pride in culture and tradition emerged. The value of education became very important. It was seen as very crucial for a nation to become modern but also retain its ancient heritage. The idea of female education was debated intensely. Significantly, it was the social reformer Jotiba Phule who opened the first school for women in Pune. Reformers argued that for a society to progress women have to be educated. Some of them believed that in pre-modern India, women were educated. Others contested this on the grounds that this was so only of a privileged few. Thus attempts to justify female education were made by recourse to both modern and traditional ideas. They actively debated the meanings of tradition and modernity. Jotiba Phule thus recalled the glory of pre-Aryan age while others like Bal Gangadhar Tilak emphasised the glory of the Aryan period. In other words 19th century reform initiated a period of questioning, reinterpretations and both intellectual and social growth.

The varied social reform movements did have common themes. Yet there were also significant differences. For some the concerns were confined to the problems that the upper caste, middle class women and men faced. For others the injustices suffered by the discriminated castes were central questions. For some social evils had emerged because of a decline of the

true spirit of Hinduism. For others caste and gender oppression was intrinsic to the religion. Likewise Muslim social reformers actively debated the meaning of polygamy and purdah. For example, a resolution against the evils of polygamy was proposed by Jahanara Shah Nawas at the All India Muslim Ladies Conference. She argued:

...the kind of polygamy which is practiced by certain sections of the Muslims is against the true spirit of the Quran...and it is the duty of the educated women to exercise their influence among the relations to put an end to this practice.

The resolution condemning polygamy caused considerable debate in the Muslim press. *Tahsib-e-Niswan*, the leading journal for women in the Punjab, came out in favour of the resolve, but others disapproved. (Chaudhuri 1993: 111). Debates within communities were common during this period. For instance, *sati* was opposed by the Brahmo Samaj. Orthodox members of the Hindu community in Bengal formed an organisation called Dharma Sabha and petitioned the British arguing that reformers had no right to interpret sacred texts. Yet another view increasingly voiced by Dalits was a complete rejection of the Hindu fold. For instance, using the tools of modern education, Muktabai, a 13 year old student in Phule's school writes in 1852:

Let that religion
Where only one person is privileged
And the rest are deprived
Perish from this earth
And let it never enter our minds
To be proud of such a religion...

ACTIVITY 2.1

Find out about some of the social reformers mentioned below? What issues did they fight for? How did they conduct their campaign? Was there any opposition?

- Viresalingam
- Pandita Ramabai
- Vidyasagar
- Dayanand Saraswati
- Jyotiba Phule
- Sri Narayan Guru
- Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan
- Any other

2.2 HOW DO WE APPROACH THE STUDY OF SANSKRITISATION, MODERNISATION, SECULARISATION AND WESTERNISATION

In this chapter each of the four concepts, namely sanskritisation, modernisation, secularisation and westernisation, are dealt with in different sections. But as the discussion unfolds, it will become obvious to you that in many ways they overlap and in many situations they co-exist. In many situations they operate very differently. It is not surprising to find the same person being modern in some ways and traditional in another. This co-existence is often seen as natural to India and many other non-western countries.

ACTIVITY 2.2

While you read the way the four processes are used in sociology, it may be interesting to discuss in class what you think the terms mean.

- What kind of behaviour would you define as:
Western
Modern
Secular
Sanskritised
- Why?
- Return to Activity 2.2 after you finish the chapter.
- Did you find any difference between common sense usage of the terms and their sociological meaning?

But you know that sociology does not rest content with naturalist explanation. (Recall the discussion in chapter 1, Book 1 NCERT 2006) As the last chapter has shown colonial modernity had its own paradoxes. Take the example of western education. Colonialism led to the growth of an English educated Indian middle class. They read the thinkers of western enlightenment, philosophers of liberal democracy and dreamt of ushering in a liberal and progressive India. And yet, humiliated by colonial rule they asserted their pride in traditional learning and scholarship. You have already seen this trend in the 19th century reform movements.

As this chapter will show, modernity spelled not merely new ideas but also rethinking and reinterpretation of tradition. Both culture and tradition are living entities. People learn them and in turn modify them. Take the everyday example of how the *sari* or *jain sem* or *sarong* is worn in India today. Traditionally the sari, a loose unstitched piece

of cloth was differently worn in different regions. The standard way that the modern middle class woman wears it was a novel combination of the traditional sari with the western ‘petticoat’ and ‘blouse’.



The mix and match of the traditional and modern

ACTIVITY 2.3

- Think of other instances of the mix and match both from everyday life and from the wider level.

My father's clothes represented his inner life very well. He was a south Indian Brahmin gentleman. He wore neat white turbans, a Sri Vaisnava caste mark ..yet wore Tootal ties, Kromentz buttons and collar studs, and donned English serge jackets over his muslin *dhotis* which he wore draped in traditional Brahmin style.

Source: A.K. Ramanujan in Marriot ed. 1990: 42

India's structural and cultural diversity is self-evident. This diversity shapes the different ways that modernisation or westernisation, sanskritisation or secularisation effects or does not effect different groups of people. The following pages seek to capture these differences. The constraint of space prevents a further detailing out. It is up to you to explore and identify the complex ways modernisation impacts people in different parts of the country. Or impacts different classes and castes in the same region. And even women and men from the same class or community.

We begin with the concept sanskritisation. The reason for doing so is because it refers to a process that pertains to social mobility that existed before the onset of colonialism. And persisted in diverse ways subsequently. The other three changes as we shall shortly see, arose in a context marked by changes that colonialism brought about. This included direct exposure to modern western ideas of freedom and rights. As mentioned earlier this exposure heightened the sense of injustice on the one hand and humiliation on the other. Often this led to a desire to go back to one's traditional past and heritage. It is within this mix that we can understand India's tryst with modernisation, westernisation and secularisation.

2.3 DIFFERENT KINDS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

SANSKRITISATION

The term sanskritisation was coined by M.N. Srinivas. It may be briefly defined as the process by which a 'low' caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, ritual, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a 'twice-born (*dwija*) caste'.

The impact of Sanskritisation is many-sided. Its influence can be seen in language, literature, ideology, music, dance, drama, style of life and ritual.

It is primarily a process that takes place within the Hindu space though Srinivas argued that it was visible even in sects and religious groups outside Hinduism. Studies of different areas, however, show that it operated differently in different parts of the country. In those areas where a highly Sanskritised caste was dominant, the culture of the entire region underwent a certain amount of Sanskritisation. In regions where the non-Sanskritic castes were dominant, it was their influence that was stronger. This can be termed the process of 'de-Sanskritisation'. There were other regional variations too. In Punjab culturally Sanskritic influence was never very strong. For many centuries until the third quarter of the 19th century the Persian influence was the dominant one.

Srinivas argued that, "the Sanskritisation of a group has usually the effect of improving its position in the local caste hierarchy. It normally presupposes

Kumudtai's journey into Sanskrit began with great interest and eagerness with Gokhale Guruji, her teacher at school...At the University, the Head of the Department was a well-known scholar and he took great pleasure in taunting Kumudtai...Despite the adverse comments she successfully completed her Masters in Sanskrit....

Source: Kumud Pawade (1938)

either an improvement in the economic or political position of the group concerned or a higher group self-consciousness resulting from its contact with a source of the 'Great Tradition' of Hinduism such as a pilgrim centre or a monastery or a proselytising sect." But in a highly unequal society such as India there were and still are obstacles to any easy taking over of the customs of the higher castes by the lower. Indeed, traditionally, the dominant caste punished those low castes, which were audacious enough to attempt it. The story below captures the problem.

Kumud Pawade in her autobiography recounts how a Dalit woman became a Sanskrit teacher. As a student she is drawn towards the study of Sanskrit, perhaps

because it is the means through which she can break into a field that was not possible for her to enter on grounds of gender and caste. Perhaps she was drawn towards it because it would enable her to read in the original what the texts have to say about women and the Dalits. As she proceeds with her studies, she meets with varied reactions ranging from surprise to hostility, from guarded acceptance to brutal rejection. As she says:

The result is that although I try to forget my caste, it is impossible to forget. And then I remember an expression I heard somewhere: "What comes by birth, but can't be cast off by dying - that is caste?"

Sanskritisation suggests a process whereby people want to improve their status through adoption of names and customs of culturally high-placed groups. The 'reference model' is usually financially better off. In both, the aspiration or desire to be like the higher placed group occurs only when people become wealthier.

Sanskritisation as a concept has been critiqued at different levels. *One*, it has been criticised for exaggerating social mobility or the scope of 'lower castes' to move up the social ladder. For it leads to no structural change but only positional change of some individuals. In other words inequality continues to persist though some individuals may be able to improve their positions within the unequal structure. *Two*, it has been pointed out that the ideology of sanskritisation accepts the ways of the 'upper caste' as superior and that of the 'lower caste' as inferior. Therefore, the desire to imitate the 'upper caste' is seen as natural and desirable.

Third, 'sanskritisation' seems to justify a model that rests on inequality and exclusion. It appears to suggest that to believe in pollution and purity of groups of people is justifiable or all right. Therefore, to be able to look down on some groups just as the 'upper castes' looked down on the 'lower castes', is a mark of privilege. In society where such a world-view exists, imagining an equal society becomes difficult. The study on the next page shows how the very idea of purity and pollution are valued or seen as worthwhile ideas to have.

Although Goldsmith-castes are people higher than me, our caste rules prohibit our taking food or water from them. We have a belief that Goldsmiths are so greedy that they wash excrement to dig out gold. Although higher in caste, they are therefore, more polluting than we are. We also don't take food from other higher castes who do polluting things: Washermen, who work with dirty clothes, and Oilpressers, who crush and kill seeds to make oil.

It shows how such discriminatory ideas become a way of life. Instead of aspiring for an equal society, the excluded and discriminated seek to give their own meaning to their excluded status. In other words they aspire to be in a position from where they can in turn look down on other people. This reflects an essentially undemocratic vision.

Fourth, since sanskritisation results in the adoption of upper caste rites and rituals it leads to practices of secluding girls and women, adopting dowry practices instead of bride-price and practising caste discrimination against other groups, etc.

Fifth, the effect of such a trend is that the key characteristics of *dalit* culture and society are eroded. For example the very worth of labour which 'lower castes' do is degraded and rendered 'shameful'. Identities based on the basis of work, crafts and artisanal abilities, knowledge forms of medicine, ecology, agriculture, animal husbandry, etc., are regarded useless in the industrial era.

With the growth of the anti-Brahminical movement and the development of regional self-consciousness in the twentieth century there was an attempt in several Indian languages to drop Sanskrit words and phrases. A crucial result of the Backward Classes Movement was to emphasise the role of secular factors in the upward mobility of caste groups and individuals. In the case of the dominant castes, there was no longer any desire to pass for the Vaisyas, Kshatriyas and Brahmins. On the other hand, it was prestigious to be a member of the dominant caste. Recent years have seen likewise assertions of Dalits who now pride their identity as Dalits. However, sometimes as among the poorest and the most marginalised of the dalit caste groups, caste identity seems to compensate their marginality in other domains. In other words they have gained some pride and self-confidence but otherwise remain excluded and discriminated.

WESTERNISATION

You have already read about our western colonial past. You have seen how it often brought about changes that were paradoxical and strange. M.N. Srinivas defines westernisation as "the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, the term subsuming changes occurring at different levels...technology, institutions, ideology and values".

ACTIVITY 2.4

Read the section on Sanskritisation very carefully. Do you think that this process is gendered, i.e., it affects women differently from men. Do you think that even if it does lead to positional change among men, the reverse may be true about women?

Ways of thinking

...John Stuart Mill's essay 'On Liberty' soon after its publication became a text in Indian colleges. Indians came to know about Magna Carta, and the struggle for liberty and equality in Europe and America.

Box 2.2

Ways of living

Devaki recalls that when she was small, in her house boiled eggs were eaten in eggcups and her mother would make the porridge and serve it separately on the table with the hot milk and sugar, to be mixed in each person's bowl. This was distinctly different from other households. Devaki says, where boiled eggs were not eaten in egg cups and where the porridge, milk and sugar were all mixed together, cooked in a pan, and then served.. She remembers asking her mother why they ate porridge like that and her mother saying that this was the way they used to eat porridge in the estate. (Abraham 2006: 146)

(This is drawn from an ethnographic study of the Thiyya community in Kerala)

Box 2.3

There were different kinds of westernisation. One kind refers to the emergence of a westernised sub-cultural pattern through a minority section of Indians who first came in contact with Western culture. This included the sub culture of Indian intellectuals who not only adopted many cognitive patterns, or ways of thinking, and styles of life, but supported its expansion. Many of the early 19th century reformers were of this kind. The boxes show the different kinds of westernisation.

There were, therefore, small sections of people who adopted western life styles or were affected by western ways of thinking. Apart from this there has been also the general spread of Western cultural traits, such as the use of new technology, dress, food, and changes in the habits and styles of people in general. Across the country a very wide section of middle class homes have a television set, a fridge, some kind of sofa set, a dining table and chair in the living room.

Westernisation does involve the imitation of external forms of culture. It does not necessarily mean that people adopt modern values of democracy and equality.

ACTIVITY 2.5

- Can you think of Indians who are very western in their clothes and appearances but who do not have democratic and egalitarian values that are part of modern attitudes. We are giving two examples below. Can you think of other instances from both real and reel life?
We may find people who are western educated but holding very prejudiced views about particular ethnic or religious communities. A family can adopt external forms of western culture like the way the interiors of houses are done up but may have very conservative ideas about women's role in society. The practice of female foeticide combines discriminatory attitude towards women and the use of very modern technology.
- You should also discuss that whether this contradiction is only true for the Indians or non-western societies. Or is it not equally true that racist and discriminatory attitudes exist in western societies.

Apart from ways of life and thinking the west influenced Indian art and literature. Artists like Ravi Varma, Abanindranath Tagore, Chandu Menon and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay were all grappling with the colonial encounter. The box below captures the many ways that style, technique and the very theme of an artist like Ravi Varma were shaped by western and indigenous traditions. It discusses the portrait of a family in a matrilineal community of Kerala but one that significantly resembles the very typical patrilineal nuclear family of the modern west consisting of the father, mother and children.



Raja Ravi Varma

You can see the many diverse levels that cultural change, resulting from our colonial encounter with the west, took place. In the contemporary context often conflicts between generations are seen as cultural conflicts resulting from westernisation. The following account in the next page captures this gap. Have you seen this or faced this? Is Westernisation the only reason for generational conflicts? Are conflicts necessarily bad?

In 1870 Ravi Varma received his first paid commission to paint the portrait of Kizhakke Palat Krishna Menon's family. ...This is a transitional work which blends elements of a flatter, two-dimensional style popular within earlier water-colours with the newer techniques of perspective and illusionism, made possible by the use of a medium like oil.

Box 2.4



...Another feature is the technique of spatial organisations of the seated and figures in deference to age and hierarchy, which is once again reminiscent of nineteenth century European portraits of the bourgeois family. ...How strange then this portrait was painted in matrilineal Kerala at a time when most of the Nayars, Krishna Menon's caste, would have been unused to living in patrilocal nuclear families...

Source: G . Arunima "Face value: Ravi Varma's portraiture and the project of colonial modernity". *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 40, 1 (2003) pp. 57 - 80

Often westernisation among the middle class makes generational difference more complex

Box 2.5



...And though they are of my own flesh and blood, they sometimes seem like total strangers to me. I no longer have anything in common with them...neither with their ways of thinking, nor with the way they dress up, talk or behave. They are the new generation. And my mental makeup is such that any sort of mutuality between them and me becomes impossible. Yet I love them with all my heart. I give them whatever they desire, for their happiness is all I want. Rabindranth's words set my heart in a tremulous feeling: "This is your time; for now is the beginning of my end." I have nothing in common with my children Pallav, Kallol and Kingkini. Pallav lives in a different country, in a different culture altogether. We, for instance, had worn the *mekela-chadar* from the age of twelve. But now my daughter Kingkini, a student of Business Management at Gauhati University wears pant and buggy shirts. And Kallol likes to sport a mass of unruly hair on his head. When I feel listening to a Meera-Bhajan, Kallol and Kingkini choose to play their favourite pop numbers by Whitney Houston. At times, when I feel like singing a few lines of Bargeet, Kingkini likes to play western tunes on her guitar.

Source: Anima Dutta 1999 "As Days Roll On" in Women: A Collection of Assamese Short Stories, Diamond Jubilee Volume, (Guwahati, Spectrum Publications)

Srinivas suggested that while 'lower castes' sought to be Sanskritised, 'upper castes' sought to be Westernised. In a diverse country such as India this generalisation is difficult to maintain. For instance, studies of Thiyyas (by no means considered 'upper caste') in Kerala show conscious efforts to westernise. Elite Thiyyas appropriated British culture as a move towards a more cosmopolitan life that critiqued caste. Likewise, Western education often implied opening up to new opportunities for different groups of people in the North-East. Read the following account.

Box 2.6

My grandfather, like most Nagas who had come into close contact with Europeans, was convinced that education was the only way to get ahead in life. He aspired for his children the kind of life he had seen being lived by the British administration and missionaries. He sent my mother away to school first in neighbouring Assam, then as far away as Shimla. My mother was encouraged by one of the more educated men in her village who told her that with an education in these new times, she could even become like the Indian lady who spoke before the world- Vijaylakshmi Pandit, sister of Nehru, who represented India at the UN. My father by dint of his own intelligence and hard work put himself through the local mission school and college in Shillong. All Nagas of my parents' generation who were able to, chose to get educated in English. For them it was more than a gateway to upward mobility. In a region where tribes that live no more than 20 kms apart speak completely different languages, it was a medium through which they could communicate amongst themselves and with the world. They became the voice of their people and made English the official state language. (Ao 2005: 111)

We usually refer to the colonial impact to discuss westernisation. However often we find new forms of westernisation in the contemporary period. Activity 2.6 draws attention to this.

ACTIVITY 2.6

- Observe the many small and big ways that westernisation affects our lives.
- You have already seen how British colonialism affected our lives. How westernisation meant emulating or wanting to be like the British. Increasingly we find westernisation being more Americanisation. Read a recent letter to the editor of a newspaper given below and discuss.

The new Raj

Presumably to set itself apart from the Continent, Britain and Ireland, from where its founders had come, the US chose to partly reverse the date-month-year format and create its own month-date-year one. ...The 11th of September, the day of the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, automatically became "9/11". As this was the shorthand which the US used, the rest of the world used it too, never mind that in most countries the number of a month in a year follows that of a day in a month. How do we explain the fact that the shorthand used in the Mumbai train blasts is "7/11"? We were a British colony, so we mostly use the DD-MM-YY format...

The Hindu August 21, 2006.

At one time many Indians sought to speak English the British way. Has there been a change in this? Is American accent more influential now?

What kind of modernity?

They (upper caste founders of various organisations and conferences) pretend to be modernists as long as they are in the service of the British government. The moment they retire and claim their pensions, they get into their brahmanical 'touch-me-not attire' ...

Jotiba Phule's letter to the Conference of Marathi Authors

MODERNISATION AND SECULARISATION

The term *modernisation* has a long history. From the 19th and more so the 20th century the term began to be associated with positive and desirable values. People and societies wanted to be modern. In the early years, modernisation referred to improvement in technology and production processes. Increasingly, however, the term had a wider usage. It referred to the path of development that much of west Europe or North America has taken. And suggested that other societies both have to and ought to follow the same path of development.

In India the beginnings of capitalism, as we saw in chapter 1, took place within the colonial context. The story of our modernisation and secularisation is, therefore, quite distinct

from their growth in the west. This is evident when we discussed westerisation and the efforts of the 19th century social movements earlier in this chapter. Here we look into the two processes of modernisation and secularisation together for they are linked. They are both part of a set of modern ideas. Sociologists have tries to define what exactly constitutes the modernisation process.

'[M]odernity' assumes that local ties and parochial perspectives give way to universal commitments and cosmopolitan attitudes; that the truths of utility, calculation, and science take precedence over those of the emotions, the sacred, and the non-rational; that the individual rather than the group be the primary unit of society and politics; that the associations in which men live and work be based on choice not birth; that mastery rather than fatalism orient their attitude toward the material and human environment; that identity be chosen and achieved, not ascribed and affirmed; that work be separated from family, residence, and community in bureaucratic organisation....(Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967)

In other words it means that people are influenced not just by local but universal contexts. How you behave, what you think is no longer decided by your family or tribe or caste or community. What job you wish to do is decided not by the job your parent does, but by what you wish to do. Work gets based on choice, not birth. Who you are depends on what you achieve, not by who you are. A scientific attitude gains ground. A rational approach matters. Is this entirely true?

In India often the job we do is not by choice. A scavenger does not choose his/her job. (chapter 5 book 1, NCERT 2007) We often marry within a caste or community. Religious beliefs continue to dominate our

ACTIVITY 2.7

Take any matrimonial column from any newspaper or websites like *shaadi.com* and try and see the pattern. How often is caste or community mentioned? If it is mentioned many times does it mean that caste continues to play the same kind of role as it did traditionally? Or has the role of caste changed? Discuss.

lives. At the same time we do have a scientific tradition. We also have a vibrant secular and democratic political system. At the same time we have caste and community based mobilisation. How do we understand these processes? This chapter has been trying to understand this mix.

It would be simplistic, however, to term the complex combinations just as a mix of tradition and modernity as though tradition and modernity themselves are fixed entities. Or as though India has or had just one set of traditions. We have already seen that both plurality and a tradition of argumentation have been defining features of 'traditions' in India. They are in fact constantly being redefined. We have already observed this with 19th century social reformers. This process, however, persists today. The box below describe such a process in contemporary Arunachal Pradesh.

With the advent of progress and the influences of modernisation, attitudes have changed to religion and to the celebration of the many festivals. Rituals, procedures of ceremonies, taboos associated with these ceremonies, the value and amount of sacrifices to be made, are now all subjects of constant change, especially in the mushrooming urban areas.

Box 2.7

These new pressures on the concept of tribal identity have meant that traditional practices and their preservation have become almost a necessary expression of being tribal. Festivals have emerged as an emphatic projection of that sense of a unified tribe identity. It is as if the collective celebration of the festival has become a fitting response to the clarion call of "Loss of Culture, Loss of Identity" that is doing the rounds in today's tribal society.

It is currently a common practice for Festival Celebration Committees to be formed in place of the Traditionally loose-knit work gang for the celebration of the festival. Traditionally, seasonal cycles determined the days of the celebration; now dates for the celebration have been formalised with each marked on the official government calendar.

At these festival celebrations, flags of no definite design, chief guests and speeches, and Miss Festival contests have become the new necessities. With rational concepts and worldviews infiltrating the minds of the tribal people, the practice and performance of the old faith is under due and undue scrutiny.

In the modern west, *secularisation* has usually meant a process of decline in the influence of religion. It has been an assumption of all theorists of modernisation that modern societies become increasingly secular. Indicators of secularisation have referred to levels of involvement with religious organisations (such as rates of church attendance), the social and material influence of religious organisations, and the degree to which people hold religious beliefs. Recent years have, however, seen an unprecedented growth of religious consciousness and conflict world over.

However even in the past, a view that assumed that modern ways would necessarily lead to decline in religious ways has not been entirely true. You will recall how western and modern forms of communication, organisation and ideas led to the emergence of new kinds of religious reform organisations. Furthermore, a considerable part of ritual in India has direct reference to the pursuit of secular ends.

Connecting to God

By Raja Simhan T.E.

Are you distressed because your planned trip to the Meenakshi Amman temple in Madurai on your wedding anniversary will not materialise! Stop worrying. You are just a mouse click away from ordering an online puja on the Web and getting the blessings of the deity.... .com offers puja service in over 600 temples spread all over the country. People all over the world can order for a puja to be performed at a temple of their choice, in Kanyakumari or in Uttar Pradesh, to their favourite deity... The puja is performed as per the browser's requirement through a network of franchisees (mostly temple priests) spread across the country, and the 'prasaadham' is delivered to anywhere in the world, within 5-7 days....For residents of India who cannot pay through credit cards.com performs the puja and collects the payment through cheque or demand draft....The online puja service costs anywhere from \$9.75 for a basic puja performed at any temple that you wish to a \$75 for combination pujas.

Source: The Business Line, Financial Daily from The Hindu group of publications (Wednesday, September 20, 2000)

ACTIVITY 2.8

Observe advertisements during traditional festivals such as Diwali, Durga Puja, Ganesh Puja, Dusserah, Karwa Chauth, Id, Christmas. Collect different advertisements from the print media. Watch the electronic media also. Note what the messages of these advertisements are about.

Rituals have also secular dimensions as distinct from secular goals. They provide men and women with occasions for socialising with their peers and superiors, and for showing off the family's wealth, clothing and jewellery. During the last few decades in particular, the economic, political and status dimensions of ritual have become increasingly conspicuous, and the number of cars lined up outside a wedding house and the VIPs who attended the wedding, provide the index to the household's standing in the local community.

There has also been considerable debate about what is seen by some as secularisation of caste. What does this mean? In traditional India caste system operated within a religious framework. Belief systems of purity and pollution were central to its practice. Today it often functions as political pressure groups. Contemporary India has seen

such formation of caste associations and caste political parties. They seek to press upon the state their demands. Such a changed role of caste has been described as secularisation of caste. The box below illustrates this process.

Box 2.8

Everyone recognises that the traditional social system in India was organised around caste structures and caste identities. In dealing with the relationship between caste and politics, however the doctrinaire moderniser suffers from a serious xenophobia. He begins with the questions: is caste disappearing? Now, surely no social system disappears like that. A more useful point of departure would be: *what form is caste taking under the impact of modern politics, and what form is politics taking in a caste-oriented society?*

Those in India who complain of 'casteism in politics' are really looking for a sort of politics, which has no basis in society. ... Politics is a competitive enterprise, its purpose is the acquisition of power for the realisation of certain goals, and its process is one of identifying and manipulating existing and emerging allegiances in order to mobilise and consolidate positions. The important thing is organisation and articulation of support, and where politics is mass-based the point is to articulate support through the organisations in which the masses are to be found. It follows that *where the caste structure provides one of the principal organisational clusters along which the bulk of the population is found to live, politics must strive to organise through such a structure.*

Politicians mobilise caste groupings and identities in order to organise their power. ... Where there are other types of groups and other bases of association, politicians approach them as well. And as they everywhere change the form of such organisations, they change the form of caste as well.

(Kothari 1977: 57-70)

EXERCISE FOR Box 2.8

Read the text above carefully. Look at the italicised sentences. Summarise the central argument being made. Give examples of your own.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to show the distinct ways that social change has taken place in India. The colonial experience had lasting consequences. Many of these were unintended and paradoxical. Western ideas of modernity shaped the imagination of Indian nationalists. It also prompted a fresh look at traditional texts by some. It also led to a rejection of these by others. Western cultural forms found their place in spheres ranging from how families lived to what codes of conduct should men, women and children have to artistic expressions. The ideas of equality and democracy made a huge impact as evident in both the reform movements and the nationalist movement. This led not just to adoption of western ideas, but also an active questioning and reinterpretation of tradition. The next chapter on the India's experience with democracy will again show how a Constitution based on radical ideas of equality and social justice functioned in a society that is deeply unequal. It will further show the complex ways that both tradition and modernity constantly got and is getting redefined.

Questions

1. Write a critical essay on sanskritisation.
2. Westernisation is often just about adoption of western attire and life style. Are there other aspects to being westernised? Or is that about modernisation? Discuss.
3. Write short notes on:
 - Rites and secularisation
 - Caste and secularisation
 - Gender and sanskritisation

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Panchayati Raj Ministry prepares software to aid transfer of funds



India was a major

amounts of total grain



3 The Story of Indian Democracy



We are all familiar with the idea that democracy is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Democracies fall into two basic categories, direct and representative. In a direct democracy, all citizens, without the intermediary of elected or appointed officials, can participate in making public decisions. Such a system is clearly only practical with relatively small numbers of people – in a community organisation or tribal council, for example, or the local unit of a trade union, where members can meet in a single room to discuss issues and arrive at decisions by consensus or majority vote.

Modern society, with its size and complexity, offers few opportunities for direct democracy. Today, the most common form of democracy, whether for a town of 50,000 or nations of 1 billion, is representative democracy, in which citizens elect officials to make political decisions, formulate laws, and administer programmes for the public good. Ours is a representative democracy. Every citizen has the important right to vote her/his representative. People elect their representatives to all levels from Panchayats, Municipal Boards, State Assemblies and Parliament. There has increasingly been a

feeling that democracy ought to involve people more regularly and should not just mean casting a vote every five years. Both the concepts of *participatory democracy* and *decentralised governance* have thus become popular. Participatory democracy is a system of democracy in which the members of a group or community participate collectively in the taking of major decisions. This chapter will discuss the *panchayati raj* system as an example of a major initiative towards decentralised and grassroots democracy.

Both the procedures as well as the values that inform Indian democracy have developed over the long years of India's anti-colonial struggle. In the last sixty years, since independence, the success of Indian democracy has been seen as a remarkable feat for a country with such great diversity as well as inequality. This chapter cannot possibly provide a comprehensive account of its rich and complex past and present.

In this chapter we, therefore, try and provide only a synoptic view of democracy in India. We *first* look at the Indian Constitution, the bedrock of Indian democracy. We focus on its key values, briefly look at the making of the Constitution, drawing upon some snippets of the debates representing different views. *Second* we look at the grassroots level of functioning democracy, namely the Panchayat Raj system. In both expositions you will notice that there are



different groups of people representing competing interest and often also different political parties. This is an essential part of any functioning democracy. The third part of this chapter seeks to discuss how competing interests function, what the terms interest groups and political parties mean and what their role is in a democratic system such as ours.

3.1 THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

THE CORE VALUES OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY

Like so many other features of modern India we need to begin the story about modern Indian democracy from the colonial period. You have just read about the many structural and cultural changes that British colonialism brought about deliberately. Some of the changes that came about happened in an unintended fashion. The British did not intend to introduce them. For instance, they sought to introduce western education to create a western educated Indian middle class that would help the colonial rulers to continue their rule. A western educated section of Indians did emerge. But, instead of aiding British rule, they used western liberal ideas of democracy, social justice and nationalism to challenge colonial rule.

This should not, however, suggest that democratic values and democratic institutions are purely western. Our ancient epics, our diverse folk tales from one corner of the country to another are full of dialogues, discussions and contrasting positions. Think of any folk tale, riddles, folk song or any story from any epic that reveals different viewpoints? We just draw from one example from the epic *Mahabharata*.

However, as we saw in chapter 1 and 2 social change in modern India is not just about Indian or western ideas. It is a combination as well as reinterpretation of western and Indian ideas. We saw that in the case of the social reformers. We saw the use of both modern ideas of equality and traditional ideas of justice. Democracy is no exception. In colonial India the undemocratic and discriminatory administrative practice of British colonialism contrasted sharply with the vision of freedom which western theories of democracy espoused and which the western educated Indians read about. The scale of poverty and

The tradition of questioning

When, in the *Mahabharata*, Bhrigu tells Bharadvaja that caste division relates to differences in physical attributes of different human beings, reflected in skin colour, Bharadvaja responds not only by pointing to the considerable variations in skin colour within every caste ('if different colours indicate different castes, then all castes are mixed castes'), but also by the more profound questions: "We all seem to be affected by desire, anger, fear, sorrow, worry, hunger and labour; how do we have caste differences then?"

Box 3.1

(Sen 2005:10-11)

intensity of social discrimination within India also led to deeper *questioning of the meaning of democracy*. Is democracy just about political freedom? Or is it also about economic freedom and social justice? Is it also about equal rights to all irrespective of caste, creed, race and gender? And if that is so how can such equality be realised in an unequal society?

Society has been aiming to lay a new foundation as was summarised by the French revolution in three words, fraternity, liberty and equality. The French Revolution was welcomed because of this slogan. It failed to produce equality. We welcomed the Russian revolution because it aims to produce equality. But it cannot be too much emphasised that in producing equality, society cannot afford to sacrifice fraternity or liberty. Equality will be of no value without fraternity or liberty. It seems that the three can coexist only if one follows the way of the Buddha...

Box 3.2

(Ambedkar 1992)

EXERCISE FOR Box 3.2

Read the text above and discuss how diverse intellectual ideas from the west and from India were being used to interrogate and construct new models of democracy. Can you think of other reformers and nationalists who were trying to do the same?

Many of these issues were thought of much before India became free. Even as India fought for its independence from British colonialism a vision of what Indian democracy ought to look like emerged. As far back as in 1928, Motilal Nehru and eight other Congress leaders drafted a constitution for India. In 1931, the resolution at the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress dwelt on how independent India's constitution should look like. The Karachi Resolution reflects a vision of democracy that meant not just formal holding of elections but a substantive reworking of the Indian social structure in order to have a genuine democratic society.

The Karachi Resolution clearly spells out the vision of democracy that the nationalist movement in India had. It articulates the values that were further given full expression in the Indian Constitution. You will notice how the Preamble of the Indian Constitution seeks to ensure not just political justice but also social and economic justice. You will likewise notice that equality is not just about equal political rights but also of status and opportunity.

Appendix No. 6

What Swaraj will Include

Karachi Congress Resolution, 1931

Swaraj as conceived by the Congress should include real economic freedom of the masses.

The Congress declares that no constitution will be acceptable to it unless it provides or enables the Swaraj Government to provide for:

1. Freedom of expression, association and meeting.
2. Freedom of religion.
3. Protection of all cultures and languages.
4. All citizens shall be equal before the law.
5. No disability in employment or trade or profession on account of religion, caste or sex.
6. Equal rights and duties for all in regard to public wells, schools, etc.
7. All to have right to bear arms in accordance with regulations.
8. No person to be deprived of property or liberty except in accordance with law.
9. Religious neutrality of State.
10. Adult Suffrage.
11. Free compulsory primary education.
12. No titles to be conferred.
13. Capital punishment to be abolished.
14. Freedom of movement for every citizen of India and right to settle and acquire property in any part thereof, and equal protection of law.
15. Proper standard of life for industrial workers and suitable machinery for settlement of disputes between employers and workers and protection against old age, sickness, etc.
16. All labour to be free from conditions of serfdom.
17. Special protection of women workers.
18. Children not to be employed in mines and factories.
19. Rights of peasants and workers to form unions.
20. Reform of system of land revenue and tenure and rent, exempting rent and revenue for uneconomical holdings and reduction of dues payable for smaller holdings.
21. Inheritance tax on graduated scale.
22. Reduction of military expenditure by at least half.
23. No servant of State ordinarily to be paid above Rs 500 per month.
24. Abolition of Salt tax.
25. Protection of indigenous cloth against competition of foreign cloth.
26. Total prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs.
27. Currency and exchange in national interest.
28. Nationalisation of key industries and services, railways, etc.
29. Relief of agricultural indebtedness and control of usury.
30. Military training for citizens.

Box 3.3

Karachi resolution condensed to be printed on membership forms.

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a '[SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC] and to secure to all its citizens:
JUSTICE, social, economic and political;
LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
EQUALITY of status and opportunity;
And to promote among them all
FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the {unity and integrity of the Nation}'
IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT
AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

Box 3.4

EXERCISE FOR BOXES 3.3 AND 3.4

Read both the Karachi Resolution and the Preamble carefully. Identify the key ideas that exist in it.



Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan addressing the Constituent Assembly

Democracy works at many levels. In this chapter we began with the vision of the Indian Constitution for this is the bedrock upon which democracy rests in India. Significantly, the Constitution emerged from intense and open discussions within the Constituent Assembly. Thus, its vision or ideological content as well as the process or procedure by which it was formed was democratic. The next section briefly looks at some of the debates.

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DEBATES: A HISTORY

In 1939, Gandhiji wrote an article in the 'Harijan' called 'The Only Way' in which he said "... the Constituent Assembly alone can produce a constitution indigenous to the country and truly and fully representing the will of the people" one based on "unadulterated adult franchise for both men and women". The popular demand in 1939 for a Constituent Assembly was, after several ups and downs conceded by Imperialist Britain in 1945. In July 1946, the elections were held. In August 1946, The Indian National Congress' Expert Committee moved a resolution in the Constituent Assembly. This contained the declaration that India shall be a Republic where the declared social, economic and political justice will be guaranteed to all the people of India.

On matters of social justice, there were lively debates on whether government functions should be prescribed and the state should be bound down to them. Issues debated ranged from right to employment, to social security, land reforms to property rights, to the organisation of panchayats. Here are some snippets from the debates:

Snippets from the debates

- K.T. Shah said that *the right to useful employment* could and should be made real by a categoric obligation on the part of the state to provide useful work to every citizen who was able and qualified.
- B. Das spoke against classifying the functions of the government as justiciable and non justiciable, "I think it is *the primary duty of Government to remove hunger and render social justice to every citizen and to secure social security.....*". The teeming millions do not find any hope that the Union Constitution.... will ensure them freedom from hunger, will secure them social justice, will ensure them a minimum standard of living and a minimum standard of public health"
- Ambedkar's answer was as follows: " The Draft Constitution as framed only provides a machinery for the government of the country. It is not a contrivance to install any particular party in power as has been done in some countries. Who should be in power is left to be determined by the people, as it must be, if the system is to satisfy the tests of democracy. But whoever captures power will not be free to do what he likes with it. In the exercise of it, he will have to respect these Instruments of Instructions which are called Directive Principles. He cannot ignore them. He may not have to answer for their breach in a court of law. But he will certainly have to answer for them before the electorate at election time. What great value these directive principles possess will be realised better when the forces of right contrive to capture power."
- On *land reform* Nehru said, that the social forces were such that law could not stand in the way of reform, an interesting reflection on the dynamics between the two. "If law and Parliaments do not fit themselves into the changing picture, they cannot control the situation".
- On the protection of the *tribal people* and their interests, leaders like Jaipal Singh were assured by Nehru in the following words during the Constituent Assembly debates: "It is our intention and our fixed desire to help them as possible; in as efficient a way as possible to protect them from possibly their rapacious neighbours occasionally and to make them advance"
- Even as the Constituent Assembly adopted the title Directive Principles of State Policy to the rights that courts could not enforce, additional principles were added with unanimous acceptance. These included K. Santhanam's clause that the state shall organise *village panchayats and endow them with the powers and authority to be effective units of local self government*.
- T. A. Ramalingam Chettiar added the clause for promotion of *cottage industries on co-operative lines in rural areas*. Veteran parliamentarian Thakurdas Bhargava added that the state should *organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern lines*.

Box 3.5

EXERCISE FOR Box 3.5

Read the above snippets of the debates carefully. Discuss how different concerns were being expressed and debated. How relevant are these issues today?

COMPETING INTERESTS: THE CONSTITUTION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

India exists at so many levels. The multi-religious and multicultural composition of the population with distinct streams of tribal culture is one aspect of the plurality. Many divides classify the Indian people. The impact that culture, religion, and caste have on the urban-rural divide, rich-poor divide and the literate-illiterate divide is varied. Deeply stratified by caste and poverty, there are groupings and sub-groupings among the rural poor. The urban working class comprises a very wide range. Then, there is the well-organised domestic business class as also the professional and commercial class. The urban professional class is highly vocal. Competing interests operate on the Indian social scene and clamour for control of the State's resources.

However, there are some basic objectives laid down in the Constitution and which are generally agreed in the Indian political world as being obviously just. These would be empowerment of the poor and marginalised, poverty alleviation, ending of caste and positive steps to treat all groups equally.

Competing interests do not always reflect a clear class divide. Take the issue of the close down of a factory because it emits toxic waste and affects the health of those around. This is a matter of life, which the Constitution protects. The flipside is that the closure will render people jobless. Livelihood again, is a matter of life that the Constitution protects. It is interesting that at the time of drawing up the Constitution, the Constituent Assembly was fully aware of this complexity and plurality but was intent on securing social justice as a guarantee.

How SAIL got a life

Madhya Pradesh tribals protest against Wildlife Protection Act

Ban on employing children

The 'merit' fallacy

HRD to discuss bill on quota implementation

Protest against inclusion of creamy layer of OBC in the Bill



Ban on child labour welcome, but these kids have a question

By Shashi Shekhar | 10 Dec 2012

"Satyagrah" in support of tribals

A massive rally
protesting the
amendment to the
Wildlife Protection
Act

CONTINUOUS

Madhya Pradesh tribals protest
against Wildlife Protection Act

Thousands turn out in Chhindwara



CONTINUOUS
EXPLORATION

Is it a neckmate?



Green light for more SEZ prop

R.M. Balaraman
New Delhi Bureau

Central government allows 100% foreign investment in Special Economic Zones for setting up industrial units.

CONSTITUTIONAL NORMS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: INTERPRETATION TO AID SOCIAL JUSTICE

It is useful to understand that there is a difference between law and justice. The essence of law is its force. Law is law because it carries the means to coerce or force obedience. The power of the state is behind it. The essence of justice is fairness. Any system of laws functions through a hierarchy of authorities. The basic norm from which all other rules and authorities flow is called the Constitution. It is the document that constitutes a nation's tenets. The Indian Constitution is India's basic norm. All other laws are made as per the procedures the Constitution prescribes. These laws are made and implemented by the authorities specified by the Constitution. A hierarchy of courts (which too are authorities created by the Constitution) interpret the laws when there is a dispute. The Supreme Court is the highest court and the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court has enhanced the substance of Fundamental Rights in the Constitution in many important ways. The Box below illustrates a few instances.

Box 3.6

- A Fundamental Right includes all that is incidental to it. The terse words of Article 21 recognising *the right to life and liberty* have been interpreted as including all that goes into a life of quality, including livelihood, health, shelter, education and dignity. In various pronouncements different attributes of 'life' have been expanded and 'life' has been explained to mean more than mere animal existence. These interpretations have been used to provide relief to prisoners subjected to torture and deprivation, release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers, against environmentally degrading activities, to provide primary health care and primary education.
In 1993 the Supreme Court held that Right to Information is part of and incidental to the Right to Expression under Article 19(1) (a).
- *Reading Directive Principles into the content of Fundamental Rights.* The Supreme Court read the Directive Principle of "equal pay for equal work" into the Fundamental Right to Equality under Article 14 and has provided relief to many plantation and agricultural labourers and to others.

The Constitution is not just a ready referencer of do's and don'ts for social justice. It has the potential for the meaning of social justice to be extended. Social movements have also aided the Courts and authorities to interpret the contents of rights and principles in keeping with the contemporary understanding on social justice. Law and Courts are sites where competing views are debated. The Constitution remains a means to channelise and civilise political power towards social welfare.

You will realise that the Constitution has the capacity to help people because it is based on basic norms of social justice. For instance, the Directive Principle on village panchayats was moved as an amendment in the Constituent Assembly by K. Santhanam. After forty odd years it became a Constitutional imperative after the 73rd Amendment in 1992. You shall be dealing with this in the next section.

3.2 THE PANCHAYATI RAJ AND THE CHALLENGES OF RURAL SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

IDEALS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

Panchayati Raj translates literally to 'Governance by five individuals'. The idea is to ensure at the village or grass root level a functioning and vibrant democracy. While the idea of grassroots democracy is not an alien import to our country, in a society where there are sharp inequalities democratic participation is hindered on grounds of gender, caste and class. Furthermore, as you shall see in the newspaper reports later in the chapter, traditionally there have been caste panchayats in villages. But they have usually represented dominant groups. Furthermore, they often held conservative views and often have, and continue to take decisions that go against both democratic norms and procedures.

When the constitution was being drafted panchayats did not find a mention in it. At this juncture, a number of members expressed their sorrow, anger and disappointment over this issue. At the same time, drawing on his own rural experience Dr. Ambedkar argued that local elites and upper castes were so well entrenched in society that local self-government only meant a continuing exploitation of the downtrodden masses of Indian society. The upper castes would no doubt silence this segment of the population further. The concept of local government was dear to Gandhiji too. He envisaged each village as a self-sufficient unit conducting its own affairs and saw *gram-swarajya* to be an ideal model to be continued after independence.

It was, however, only in 1992 that grassroots democracy or decentralised governance was ushered in by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. This act provided constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). It is compulsory now for local self-government bodies in rural and municipal areas to be elected every five years. More

The three tier system of Panchayati Raj Institution

Box 3.7

- The structure is like a pyramid. At the base of the structure stands the unit of democracy or *Gram Sabha*. This consists of the entire body of citizens in a village or *grama*. It is this general body that elects the local government and charges it with specific responsibilities. The Gram Sabhas ideally ought to provide an open forum for discussions and village-level development activities and play a crucial role in ensuring inclusion of the weaker sections in the decision-making processes.
- The 73rd Amendment provided a three-tier system of Panchayati Raj for all states having a population of over twenty lakhs.
- It became mandatory that election to these bodies be conducted every five years.
- It provided reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and thirty three percent seats for women.
- It constituted District Planning Committee to prepare drafts and develop plans for the district as a whole.



New deal for part-time workers

He was a good man, but he had a bad temper. He would get angry easily and say things he didn't mean. His wife tried to help him, but it was hard because he didn't listen to her. They had three children: a son named Tom, a daughter named Mary, and a baby girl. Tom was a good boy who always tried his best at school. Mary was a sweet girl who loved to play with her dolls. The baby girl was still very young, but she was already learning to crawl and smile.

importantly, control of local resources is given to the elected local bodies.

The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution ensured the reservation of one third of the total seats for women in all elected offices of local bodies in both the rural and urban areas. Out of this, 17 per cent seats are reserved for women belonging to the scheduled castes and tribes. This amendment is significant as for the first time it brought women into elected bodies which also bestowed on them decision making powers. One third of the seats in local bodies, gram panchayats, village panchayats, municipalities, city corporations and district boards are reserved for women. The 1993-94 elections, soon after the 73rd amendment brought in 800,000 women into the political processes in a single election. That was a big step indeed in enfranchising women. A constitutional amendment prescribed a three-tier system of local self-governance (read Box 3.7 on the last page) for the entire country, effective since 1992-93.

POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PANCHAYATS

According to the Constitution, Panchayats should be given powers and authority to function as institutions of self-government. It, thus, requires all state governments to revitalise local representative institutions.

The following powers and responsibility were delegated to the Panchayats:

- to prepare plans and schemes for economic development
 - to promote schemes that will enhance social justice
 - to levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees
 - help in the devolution of governmental responsibilities, especially that of finances to local authorities

Social welfare responsibilities of the Panchayats include the maintenance of burning and burial grounds, recording statistics of births and deaths, establishment of child welfare and maternity centres, control of cattle

Panchayati Raj Ministry prepares software to aid transfer of funds

pounds, propagation of family planning and promotion of agricultural activities. The development activities include the construction of roads, public buildings, wells, tanks and schools. They also promote small cottage industries and take care of minor irrigation works. Many government schemes like the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) are monitored by members of the panchayat.

The main income of the Panchayats is from tax levied on property, profession, animals, vehicles, cess on land revenue and rentals. The resources are further increased by the grants received through the Zilla Panchayat. It is also considered compulsory for Panchayat offices to put up boards outside their offices, listing the break up of funds received, and utilisation of the financial aid received. This exercise was taken up to ensure that people at the grassroot level should have the 'right to information' – opening all functioning to the public eye. People had the right to scrutinise allocation of money. And ask reasons for decisions that were taken for the welfare and development activities of the village.

Nyaya Panchayats have been constituted in some states. They possess the authority to hear some petty, civil and criminal cases. They can impose fines but cannot award a sentence. These village courts have often been successful in bringing about an agreement amongst contending parties. They have been particularly effective in punishing men who harass women for dowry and perpetrate violence against them.

PANCHAYATI RAJ IN TRIBAL AREAS

Kalavati, a Dalit by caste was apprehensive about standing for elections. She is a Panchayat member and realises that her confidence and self-esteem has grown ever since she became a member of the panchayat. Most importantly 'she has a name'. Before she became a member of the panchayat she was only called as 'Ramu's mother' or 'Hiralal's wife'. If she lost the election for the post of the Pradhan she felt '*sakhiyan ki nak kat jaye*' (her friends would lose face).

Box 3.8

Source: This was recorded by Mahila Samakhya, an NGO working towards Rural Womens' Empowerment.

Van Panchayats**Box 3.9**

In Uttarakhand women do most of the work since the men are often posted far away in the defence services. Most of the villagers are still dependent on firewood for cooking. As you may know, deforestation is a big problem in the mountainous regions. Women sometimes walk many miles to collect firewood and fodder for their animals. To overcome this problem women have set up *van-panchayats*. Members of the *van-panchayats* develop nurseries and nurture tree saplings for planting on the hill slopes. Members also police nearby forests to keep an eye on illegal felling of trees. The Chipko movement – where women hugged trees to prevent them from being cut had its beginnings in this area.

Panchayati Raj training for illiterate women**Box 3.10**

Innovative modes of communicating the strength of the Panchayat Raj system The story of two villages, Sukhipur and Dhukipur are unravelled through a cloth '*phad*' or a scroll (a traditional folk medium of story telling). Village Dhukipur (sad village) has a corrupt Pradhan (Bimla), who has spent the money received from the panchayat for building a school, on constructing a house for herself and her family. The rest of the village are sad and poor. On the other hand Sukhipur (happy village) has a content populace as the Pradhan (Najma) has invested rural reconstruction money in developing good infrastructure for her village. Here the primary health centre is functioning, it has a 'pucca' building and also has a good road so that buses can reach the village.

Pictorial pictures on the '*phad*', accompanied with folk music were useful tools to convey the message for able governance and participation. This innovative method of story telling was very affective in bringing awareness to unlettered women. Most importantly the campaign conveyed the message, that it was not enough to merely vote, or to stand for election, or to win. But important to know why one is voting for a particular person, what are the traits to look for, and what does he or she stand for .The value for integrity is also emphasised through the story and song media of the '*phad*'.



This training programme was conducted by Mahila Samakhya an NGO working towards Rural Womens Empowerment.

Many tribal areas have had a rich tradition of grassroot democratic functioning. We give an illustrative example from Meghalaya. All the three major ethnic tribal groups, namely, the Khasis, Jaintias and the Garos have their own traditional political institutions that have existed for hundreds of years. These political institutions were fairly well-developed and functioned at various tiers, such as the village level, clan level and state level. For instance, in the traditional political system of the Khasis each clan had its own council known as the 'Durbar Kur' which was presided over by the clan headman. Though there is a long tradition of grassroot political institutions in Meghalaya, a large chunk of tribal areas lie outside the provisions of the 73rd Amendment. This may be because the concerned policy makers did not wish to interfere with the traditional tribal institutions.

However, as sociologist Tiplut Nongbri remarks that tribal institutions in themselves need not necessarily be democratic in its structure and functioning. Commenting on the Bhuria Committee Report that went into this issue Nongbri remarks that while the Committee's concern for the traditional tribal institutions is appreciable, it fails to take stock of the complexity of the situation. For notwithstanding the strong egalitarian ethos that characterised tribal societies the element of stratification is not altogether absent. Tribal political institutions are not only marked by open intolerance to women but the process of social change has also introduced sharp distortions in the system, making it difficult to identify which is traditional and which is not. (Nongbri 2003: 220) This again brings you back to the changing nature of tradition that we discussed in chapter 1 and 2.

DEMOCRATISATION AND INEQUALITY

It will be clear to you that democratisation is not easy in a society that has had a long history of inequality based on caste, community and gender. You have dealt with the different kinds of inequality in the earlier book. In chapter 4 you will get a fuller sense of rural Indian structure. Given this unequal and undemocratic social structure, it is not surprising that in many cases, certain members belonging to particular groups, communities, castes of the village are not included or informed about meetings and activities of the village. The Gram Sabha members are often controlled by a small coterie of rich landlords usually hailing from the upper castes or landed peasantry. They make decisions on development activities, allocate funds, leaving the silent majority as mere onlookers.

The reports in the boxes below show different kind of experiences at the grassroot level. One shows how traditional panchayats are being used. Another reports on how the new institution of Panchayati Raj, in some cases, are truly bringing in radical changes. Yet another on how democratic measures do not often work out in practice because interest groups resist change and money matters.

Bound by Honour

Box 3.11

Caste panchayats are reasserting themselves as guardians of village morality....The first case that hit the headlines was in October 2004, when the *Rathi khapp* panchayat in Asanda village of Jhajjar district ordered Sonia, who had already been married a year by then, to dissolve her marriage with Ram Pal, abort her unborn child and accept her husband as a brother if she wanted to stay in the village. The couple's fault: sharing the same *gotra* even though the Hindu Marriage Act recognises such unions. Sonia and Ram Pal could live together again only after the high court directed the Haryana government to provide them security.

...One such *jaati* panchayat of Ansaris in Muzafarnagar decided in June last year that Imrana's rape by her father-in-law had made her a mother to her husband. Another in a Meerut village ruled that Gudiya, pregnant with the child of her second husband, should return to her first who had reappeared after five years.

Source: *Sunday Times of India, New Delhi, October 29th 2006*

Role of wealth and privilege? Role of villagers?

Box 3.12

This time around, Soompa sarpanch seat fell within the quota reserved for women. Nevertheless panchayat residents considered this as a contest between the candidates' husbands and a face-off among 'equals'. On one hand was the incumbent sarpanch, Ram Rai Mewada who owns a liquor shop in Kekri and on the other Chand Singh Thakur, a rich landowner from the same village. Interestingly, Mewada had been exposed by the village residents for faking muster rolls in the drought relief works during 2002-03.

Although no action was taken against him, the villagers were determined to see him out of office this time and thus put up the *thakur* for a stiff competition. The residents of Sooma unanimously decided that the *thakur* was best suited to oppose Mewada...

Role of social movements and organisations for greater participation and information

Box 3.13

One such meeting took place on January 24 in Dhorela village (Kushalpura panchayat). The meeting was publicised by going from door-to-door and through announcements by gathering children, teaching them slogans where a worker from a very well reputed NGO led them around the village as they urged people to come to the *chaupa*/for the meeting. ...Tara's (the local NGO supported candidate) *ghoshana patra* (manifesto) was read out and she made a short speech. Her *ghoshana patra*, ...included not just taking of bribes as *sarpanch*, not spending more than Rs. 2,000 on campaigning, etc. ...

Distribution of alcohol and gur, and the use of jeeps are frequently used means of buying votes and contribute to campaign expenditure. ...The entire chain of corruption is explained to the gathered villagers: low cost elections not only allow the poor to participate, they also make corruption-free panchayats possible.

EXERCISE FOR BOXES 3.11, 3.12 AND 3.13

Read the boxes above carefully and discuss:

- The role of wealth
- The role of people
- The role of women

3.3 POLITICAL PARTIES, PRESSURE GROUPS AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

You will recall that this chapter began with the oft quoted definition of democracy as a form of government that is of the people, by the people and for the people. As the chapter unfolded you would have noticed how this definition captures the spirit of democracy but conceals the many divisions between one group of people and another. You have seen how interests and concerns are different. We have seen in section II on the Indian Constitution how different groups sought to represent their interests within the Constituent Assembly. We also saw in the story of Indian democracy the contending interests of different groups. A look at the newspaper every morning will show you many instances where different groups seek to make their voices heard. And draw the attention of the government to their grievances.

The question, however, arises whether all interest groups are comparable. Can an illiterate peasant or literate worker make her case to the government as coherently and convincingly as an industrialist? Neither the industrialist nor the peasant or worker, however, represents their case as individuals. Industrialists form associations such as Federation of Indian Chambers and Commerce (FICCI) and Association of Chambers of Commerce (ASSOCHAM). Workers form trade unions such as the Indian Trade Union Congress (INTUC) or the Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU). Farmers form agricultural unions such as Shetkari Sangathan. Agricultural labourers have their own unions. You will read about other kinds of organisations and social movements like tribal and environmental movements in the last chapter.

In a democratic form of government political parties are key actors. A political party may be defined as an organisation oriented towards achieving legitimate control of government through an electoral process. Political Party is an organisation established with the aim of achieving governmental power and using that power to pursue a specific programme. Political parties are based on certain understanding of society and how it ought to be. In a democratic system the interests of different groups are also represented by political parties, who take up their case. Different interest groups will work towards influencing political parties. When

ACTIVITY 3.1

- Follow any one newspaper or magazine for a week. Note down the many instances where there is a clash of interests.
- Identify the issue over which the dispute occurs.
- Identify the way the groups concerned take up their cause.
- Is it a formal delegation of a political party to meet the Prime Minister or any other functionary?
- Is it a protest on the streets?
- Is it through writing or providing information in newspapers?
- Is it through public meetings?
- Identify the instances whether a political party, a professional association, a non governmental organisation or any other body takes up an issue.
- Discuss the many actors in the story of Indian democracy.

certain groups feel that their interests are not being taken up, they may move to form an alternative party. Or they form pressure groups who lobby with the government. Interest Groups are organised to pursue specific interests in the political arena, operating primarily by lobbying the members of legislative bodies. In some situations, there may be political organisations which seek to achieve power but are denied the opportunity to do so through standard means. These organisations are best regarded as movements until they achieve recognition.

Every year at the tail end of February the Finance Minister of the Government of India presents the Budget to the Parliament. Prior to this there are reports every day in the newspaper of the meetings that the various confederation of Indian industrialists, of trade unions, farmers, and more recently womens' groups had with the Ministry of Finance.

Box 3.14

EXERCISE FOR Box 3.14

Can they be understood as pressure groups?

It is obvious that all groups will not have the same access or the same ability to pressurise the government. Some, therefore, argue that the concept of pressure groups underestimate the power that dominant social groups such as class or caste or gender have in society. They feel that it would be more accurate to suggest that dominant class or classes control the state. This does not negate the fact that social movements and pressure groups also continue to play a very important role in a democracy. Chapter 8 shows this.

Max Weber on Parties

Whereas the genuine place of classes is within the economic order, the place of status groups is within the social order...But parties live in a house of power...

Party actions are always directed towards a goal which is striven for in a planned manner. The goal may be a 'cause' (the party may aim at realising a program for ideal or material purposes), or the goal may be 'personal' (sinecures, power, and from these, honour for the leader and followers of the party).

(Weber 1948: 194)

Box 3.15

EXERCISE FOR Box 3.16

- Read the box on the next page carefully. You can also draw from other similar events in other towns and cities.
- Identify the interests of the poor, the serving class, the middle class and the rich.
- How do the different groups see the role of the street?
- Discuss what you think is the role of the government?
 - What is the role of consultancy firms like McKinsey? Whose interests do they represent?
 - What is the role of political parties?
- Do you think the poor can influence political parties more than they can influence consultancy firms? Is it because political parties are accountable to the people that is i.e., they can be voted out?

We illustrate how these contending interests function through the concrete example of developments in the city of Mumbai.

Recent years have seen a great focus on making Indian cities global cities. The prime minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh addressing the media on his first visit to Mumbai after taking over as the prime minister said that it was his dream to see Mumbai transformed into a city like Shanghai. ...

Box 3.16

For urban planners and dreamers, Mumbai urgently needs north-south and east-west connectivity. Towards this, they argue for the need to construct an 'express ring freeway' to circle the city 'such that a freeway can be accessed from any point in the city in less than 10 minutes'. 'Quick entry and exit', and 'efficient traffic dispersal' are seen as critical to the smooth functioning of the city....

For the less privileged the streets have a different role to play. They are more than freeways of connectivity. Streets, for good or bad, all too often become effectively bazaars, and melas combining the different purposes of pilgrimage, recreation (transportation) and economic exchange. As people blur the boundaries between public and private space by living on the street, buying and selling, eating, drinking tea, playing cricket or even just standing, urban planners point to how these activities impeded traffic and cause congestion.

In order to decongest, poor people are shifted to the outskirts. In the *Vision Mumbai* document prepared by the private consultancy from McKinsey...mass housing for the poor is being planned in the salt pan lands outside the city. What happens to their livelihood? The long quote below captures the voice of the poor.

"We are in fact human earthmovers and tractors. We levelled the land first. We have contributed to the city. We carry your shit out of the city. I don't see citizens' groups dredging sewers and digging roads. The city is not for the rich only. We need each other. I don't beg. I wash your clothes. Women can go to work because we are there to look after their children. The staff in Mantralay, the collectorate, the BMC, even the police live in slums. Because we are there, women can walk safely at night....Groups such as Bombay First talk about Mumbai a world class city. How can it be a world-class city without a place for its poor? (Anand 2006: 3422)

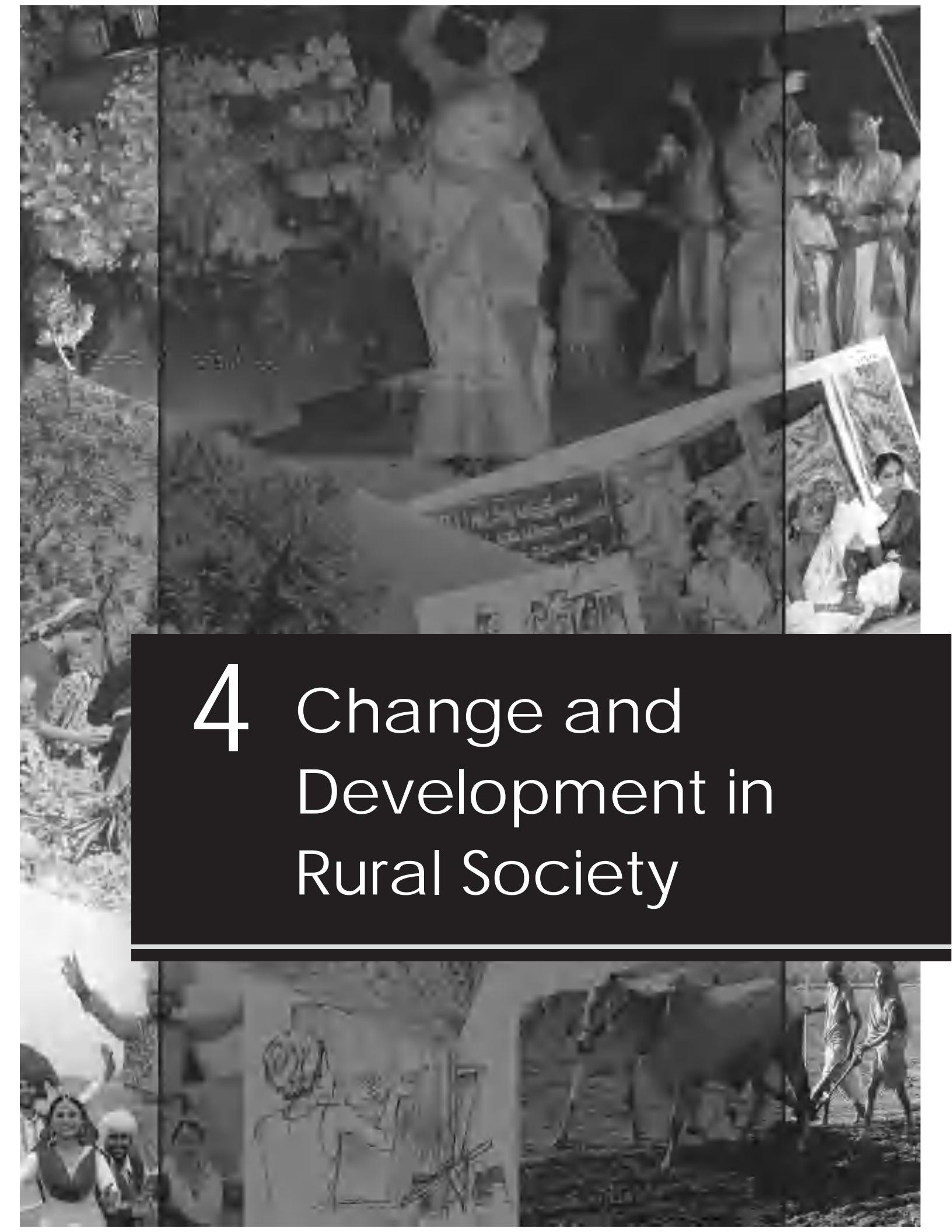


Questions

1. Interest groups are part and parcel of a functioning democracy. Discuss.
2. Read the snippets from the debates held in the Constituent Assembly. Identify the interest groups. Discuss what kind of interest groups exist in contemporary India. How do they function?
3. Create a 'phad' or a scroll with your own mandate when standing for school election. (this could be done in small groups of 5, like a panchayat)
4. Have you heard of Bal Panchayats and Mazdoor Kissan Sanghathan? If not, find out and write a note about them in about 200 words.
5. The 73rd amendment has been monumental in bringing a voice to the people in the villages. Discuss.
5. Write an essay on the ways that the Indian Constitution touches peoples' everyday life, drawing upon different examples.

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4 Change and Development in Rural Society

Indian society is primarily a rural society though urbanisation is growing. The majority of India's people live in rural areas (67 per cent, according to the 2001 Census). They make their living from agriculture or related occupations. This means that agricultural land is the most important productive resource for a great many Indians. Land is also the most important form of property. But land is not just a 'means of production' nor just a 'form of property'. Nor is agriculture just a form of livelihood. It is also a way of life. Many of our cultural practices and patterns can be traced to our agrarian backgrounds. You will recall from the earlier chapters how closely interrelated structural and cultural changes are. For example, most of the New Year festivals in different regions of India – such as Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Bihu in Assam, Baisakhi in Punjab and Ugadi in Karnataka to name just a few – actually celebrate the main harvest season and herald the beginning of a new agricultural season. Find out about other harvest festivals.



There is a close connection between agriculture and culture. The nature and practice of agriculture varies greatly across the different regions of the country. These variations are reflected in the different regional cultures. One can say that both the culture and social structure in rural India are closely bound up with agricultural and the agrarian way of life.

Agriculture is the single most important source of livelihood for the majority of the rural population. But the rural is not just agriculture. Many activities that support agriculture and village life are also sources of livelihood for people in rural India. For example, a large number of artisans such as potters, carpenters, weavers, ironsmiths, and goldsmiths are found in rural areas. They were once part and parcel of the village economy. Their numbers have been steadily lessening since the colonial period. You have already read in Chapter 1 how the influx of manufactured goods replaced hand-made products.

Rural life also supported many other specialists and crafts persons as story-tellers, astrologers, priests, water-distributors, and oil-pressers. The diversity

of occupations in rural India was reflected in the caste system, which in most regions included specialist and ‘service’ castes such as Washermen, Potters, and Goldsmiths. Some of these traditional occupations have declined. But increasing interconnection of the rural and urban economies have led to many diverse occupations. Many people living in rural areas are employed in, or have livelihoods based in, rural non-farm activities. For instance, there are rural residents employed in government services such as the Postal and Education Departments, factory workers, or in the army, who earn their living through non-agricultural activities.

ACTIVITY 4.1

- Think of an important festival that is celebrated in your region that has its roots in agrarian society. What is the significance of the various practices or rituals that are associated with that festival, and how are they linked to agriculture?
- Most towns and cities in India have grown and encompassed surrounding villages. Can you identify an area of the city or town where you live that used to be a village, or areas that were once agricultural land? How do you think this growth takes place, and what happens to the people who used to make a living from that land?



The Diversity of Occupations

4.1 AGRARIAN STRUCTURE: CASTE AND CLASS IN RURAL INDIA

Agricultural land is the single most important resource and form of property in rural society. But it is not equally distributed among people living in a particular village or region. Nor does everyone have access to land. In fact, the distribution of landholdings in most regions is highly unequal among households. In some parts of India the majority of rural households own at least some land – usually very small plots. In other areas as much as 40 to 50 per cent of families do not own any land at all. This means that they are dependent on agricultural labour or other kinds of work for their livelihoods. This of course means that a few families are well-to-do. The majority live just above or below the poverty line.

In most regions of India, women are usually excluded from ownership of land, because of the prevailing patrilineal kinship system and mode of inheritance. By law women are supposed to have an equal share of family property. In reality they only have limited rights and some access to land only as part of a household headed by a man.

The term agrarian structure is often used to refer to the structure or distribution of landholding. Because agricultural land is the most important productive resource in rural areas, access to land shapes the rural class structure. Access to land largely determines what role one plays in the process of agricultural production. *Medium and large landowners* are usually able to earn sufficient or even large incomes from cultivation (although this depends on agricultural prices, which can fluctuate greatly, as well as other factors such as the monsoon). But *agricultural labourers* are more often than not paid below the statutory minimum wage and earn very little. Their incomes are low. Their employment is insecure. Most agricultural labourers are daily-wage workers. And do not have work for many days of the year. This is known as underemployment. Similarly, *tenants* (cultivators who lease their land from landowners) have lower incomes than owner-cultivators. Because they have to pay a substantial rent to the landowner – often as much as 50 to 75 per cent of the income from the crop.

Agrarian society, therefore, can be understood in terms of its class structure. But we must also remember it is also structured through the caste system. In rural areas, there is a complex relationship between caste and class. This relationship is not always straightforward. We might expect that the higher castes have more land and higher incomes. And that there is a correspondence between caste and class as one moves down the hierarchy. In many areas this is broadly true but not exactly. For instance, in most areas the highest caste, the Brahmins, are not major landowners, and so they fall outside the agrarian structure although they are a part of rural society. In most regions of India,

the major landowning groups belong to castes that belong to the 'Shudra' or 'Kshatriya' varnas. In each region, there are usually just one or two major landowning castes, who are also numerically very important. Such groups were termed by the sociologist M.N. Srinivas as dominant castes. In each region, the dominant caste is the most powerful group, economically and politically, and dominates local society. Examples of dominant landowning groups are the Jats and Rajputs of U.P., the Vokkaligas and Lingayats in Karnataka, Kammas and Reddis in Andhra Pradesh, and Jat Sikhs in Punjab.

While dominant landowning groups are usually middle or high ranked castes, most of the marginal farmers and landless belong to lower caste groups. In official classification they belong to the Scheduled Castes or Tribes (SC/STs) or Other Backward Classes (OBCs). In many regions of India, the former 'Untouchable' or *dalit* castes were not allowed to own land and they provided most of the agricultural labour for the dominant landowning groups. This also created a labour force that allowed the landowners to cultivate the land intensively and get higher returns.

The rough correspondence between caste and class means that typically the upper and middle castes also had the best access to land and resources, and hence to power and privilege. This had important implications for the rural economy and society. In most regions of the country, a 'proprietary caste' group owns most of the resources and can command labour to work for them. Until recently, practices such as *begar* or free labour were prevalent in many parts of northern

There is a direct correspondence between agricultural productivity and the agrarian structure. In areas of assured irrigation, those with plentiful rainfall or artificial irrigation works (such as rice-growing regions in river deltas, for instance the Kaveri basin in Tamil Nadu) more labour was needed for intensive cultivation. Here the most unequal agrarian structures developed. The agrarian structure of these regions was characterised by a large proportion of landless labourers, who were often 'bonded' workers belonging to the lowest castes. (Kumar 1998).

Box 4.1

ACTIVITY 4.2

- Think about what you have learned about the caste system. Outline the various linkages between the agrarian or rural class structure and caste. Discuss in terms of different access to resources, labour, occupation.

India. Members of low ranked caste groups had to provide labour for a fixed number of days per year to the village *zamindar* or landlord. Similarly, lack of resources, and dependence on the landed class for economic, social, and political support, meant that many of the working poor were tied to landowners in 'hereditary' labour relationships (bonded labour), such as the *halpati* system in Gujarat (Breman, 1974) and the *jeeta* system in Karnataka. Although such practices have been abolished legally, they continue to exist in many areas. In a village of northern Bihar, the majority of the landowners are Bhumihars, who are also the dominant caste.

4.2 THE IMPACT OF LAND REFORMS

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

There are historical reasons why each region of India came to be dominated by just one or two major groups. But it is important to realise that this agrarian structure has changed enormously over time, from the pre-colonial to the colonial and after independence. While the same dominant castes were probably also cultivating castes in the pre-colonial period, they were not the direct owners of land. Instead, ruling groups such as the local kings or zamindars (landlords who were also politically powerful in their areas, and usually belonged to Kshatriya or other high castes) controlled the land. The peasants or cultivators who worked the land had to hand over a substantial portion of the produce to them. When the British colonised India, in many areas they ruled through these local zamindars. They also granted property rights to the zamindars. Under the British, the zamindars were given more control over land than they had before. Since the colonisers also imposed heavy land revenue (taxes) on agriculture, the zamindars extracted as much produce or money as they could out of the cultivators. One result of this zamindari system was that agricultural production stagnated or declined during much of the period of British rule. For peasants fled from oppressive landlords and frequent famines and wars decimated the population.

Many districts of colonial India were administered through the zamindari system. In other areas that were under direct British rule had what was called the *raiyatwari* system of land settlement (*raiyat* means cultivator in Telugu). In this system, the 'actual cultivators' (who were themselves often landlords and not cultivators) rather than the zamindars were responsible for paying the tax. Because the colonial government dealt directly with the farmers or landlords, rather than through the overlords, the burden of taxation was less and cultivators had more incentive to invest in agriculture. As a result, these areas became relatively more productive and prosperous.

This background about land revenue administration in colonial India – much of which you have learned in your history books – is important to keep in mind when studying the agrarian structure of present-day India. This is because it is through a series of changes starting in this period that the current structure evolved.

INDEPENDENT INDIA

After India became independent, Nehru and his policy advisors embarked on a programme of planned development that focused on agrarian reform as well as industrialisation. The policy makers were responding to the dismal agricultural situation in India at that time. This was marked by low productivity, dependence on imported food grains, and the intense poverty of a large section of the rural

population. They felt that a major reform in the agrarian structure, and especially in the landholding system and the distribution of land, was necessary if agriculture were to progress. From the 1950s to the 1970s, a series of land reform laws were passed – at the national level as well as in the states – that were intended to bring about these changes.

The first important legislation was the abolition of the zamindari system, which removed the layer of intermediaries that stood between the cultivators and the state. Of all the land reform laws that were passed, this was probably the most effective, for in most areas it succeeded in taking away the superior rights of the zamindars over the land and weakening their economic and political power. This did not happen without a struggle, of course, but ultimately the effect was to strengthen the position of the actual landholders and cultivators at the local level. However, zamindari abolition did not wipe out landlordism or the tenancy or sharecropping systems, which continued in many areas. It only removed the top layer of landlords in the multi-layered agrarian structure.

Among the other major land reform laws that were introduced were the tenancy abolition and regulation acts. They attempted either to outlaw tenancy altogether or to regulate rents to give some security to the tenants. In most of the states, these laws were never implemented very effectively. In West Bengal and Kerala, there was a radical restructuring of the agrarian structure that gave land rights to the tenants.

The third major category of land reform laws were the *Land Ceiling Acts*. These laws imposed an upper limit on the amount of land that can be owned by a particular family. The ceiling varies from region to region, depending on the kind of land, its productivity, and other such factors. Very productive land has a low ceiling while unproductive dry land has a higher ceiling limit. According to these acts, the state is supposed to identify and take possession of surplus land (above the ceiling limit) held by each household, and redistribute it to landless families and households in other specified categories, such as SCs and STs. But in most of the states these acts proved to be toothless. There were many loopholes and other strategies through which most landowners were able to escape from having their surplus land taken over by the state. While some very large estates were broken up, in most cases landowners managed to divide the land among relatives and others, including servants, in so-called '*benami* transfers' – which allowed them to keep control over the land (in fact if not in name). In some places, some rich farmers actually divorced their wives (but continued to live with them) in order to avoid the provisions of the Land Ceiling Act, which allowed a separate share for unmarried women but not for wives.

The agrarian structure varies greatly across India, and the progress of land reforms has also been uneven across the states. On the whole, however, it can

ACTIVITY 4.3

- Find out about the Bhoojan movement
- Find out about Operation Barga.
- Discuss

be said that the agrarian structure, although it has changed substantially from colonial times to the present, remains highly unequal. This structure puts constraints on agricultural productivity. Land reforms are necessary not only to boost agricultural growth but also to eradicate poverty in rural areas and bring about social justice.

4.3 THE GREEN REVOLUTION AND ITS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

We saw that land reforms have had only a limited impact on rural society and the agrarian structure in most regions. In contrast the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s brought about significant changes in the areas where it took place. The Green Revolution, as you know, was a government programme of agricultural modernisation. It was largely funded by international agencies that was based on providing high-yielding variety(HYV) or hybrid seeds along with pesticides, fertilisers, and other inputs, to farmers. Green Revolution programmes were introduced only in areas that had assured irrigation, because sufficient water was necessary for the new seeds and methods of cultivation. It was also targeted mainly at the wheat and rice-growing areas. As a result, only certain regions such as the Punjab, western U.P., coastal Andhra Pradesh, and parts of Tamil Nadu, received the first wave of the Green Revolution package. The rapid social and economic transformations that were seen in these areas stimulated a spate of studies by social scientists, and vigorous debates about the impact of the Green Revolution.

Agricultural productivity increased sharply because of the new technology. India was able to become self-sufficient in foodgrain production for the first time in decades. The Green Revolution has been considered a major achievement of the government and of the scientists who contributed to the effort. However, there were certain negative social effects that were pointed out by sociologists who studied the Green Revolution areas, as well as adverse environmental impacts.

In most of the Green Revolution areas, *it was primarily the medium and large farmers who were able to benefit from the new technology.* This was because inputs were expensive, and small and marginal farmers could not afford to spend as much as large farmers to purchase these inputs. When agriculturists produce primarily for themselves and are unable to produce for the market, it is known as 'subsistence agriculture' and they are usually termed 'peasants'. Agriculturists or farmers are those who are able to produce surplus, over and above the needs of the family, and so are linked to the market. It was *the farmers who were able to produce a surplus for the market who were able to reap the most benefits* from the Green Revolution and from the commercialisation of agriculture that followed.

Thus, in the first phase of the Green Revolution, in the 1960s and 1970s, the introduction of new technology seemed to be *increasing inequalities in rural society*. Green Revolution crops were highly profitable, mainly because they yielded more produce. Well-to-do farmers who had access to land, capital, technology, and know-how, and those who could invest in the new seeds and fertilisers, could increase their production and earn more money. However, in many cases it led to the displacement of tenant-cultivators. For landowners began to take back land from their tenants and cultivate it directly because cultivation was becoming more profitable. This made the rich farmers better off, and worsened the condition of the landless and marginal holders.

In addition, the introduction of machinery such as tillers, tractors, threshers, and harvesters (in areas such as Punjab and parts of Madhya Pradesh) led to *the displacement of the service caste groups* who used to carry out these agriculture-related activities. This process of displacement also increased the pace of rural-urban migration.

The ultimate outcome of the Green Revolution was a process of 'differentiation', in which the rich grew richer and many of the poor stagnated or grew poorer. It should be noted that *employment and wages for agricultural workers did increase in many areas, because the demand for labour increased*. Moreover, rising prices and a shift in the mode of payment of agricultural workers from payment in kind (grain) to cash, actually worsened the economic condition of most rural workers.

Following the first phase of the Green Revolution, the second phase is currently being introduced in the dry and semi-arid regions of India. In these areas there has been a significant shift from dry to wet (irrigated) cultivation, along with changes in the cropping pattern and type of crops grown. Increasing commercialisation and dependence on the market in these areas (for instance, where cotton cultivation has been promoted) has increased rather than reduced livelihood insecurity, as farmers who once grew food for consumption now depend on the market for the incomes. *In market-oriented cultivation, especially where a single crop is grown, a fall in prices or a bad crop can spell financial ruin for farmers*. In most of the Green Revolution areas, farmers have switched from a multi-crop system, which allowed them to spread risks, to a mono-crop regime, which means that there is nothing to fall back on in case of crop failure.

Another negative outcome of the Green Revolution strategy was *the worsening of regional inequalities*. The areas that underwent this technological transformation became more developed while other areas stagnated. For instance, the Green Revolution was promoted more in the western and southern parts of the country, and in Punjab, Haryana, and western U.P., than in the eastern parts of the country (Das, 1999). As a result, we find agriculture in states such as Bihar and in eastern U.P., and in dry regions such as Telengana, to be relatively undeveloped. These are also the regions that continue to have an entrenched 'feudal' agrarian structure, in which the landed castes and

landlords maintain power over the lower castes, landless workers and small cultivators. The sharp caste and class inequalities, together with exploitative labour relations, in these regions has *given rise to various kinds of violence* (including inter-caste violence) in recent years.

Box 4.2

Local commentary increasingly contrasts the *sampurna* (wholeness) of the organic produce with that of the hybrid produce. An elderly woman, Bhargawa Hugar, in the village of Madbhavi, said:

What...they used to grow some wheat, red sorghum...plant a few tubers, chilli plants...cotton. Now there's only *hibrad* (hybrid)...where's the *jvari* (organic/local)? Hybrid seeds...hybrid crops...even the children are hybrid. Hybrid seeds are sown on the earth...the children born are also hybrid. (Vasavi 1994: 295-96)

Often it is thought that imparting knowledge of 'scientific' farming methods will improve the conditions of Indian farmers. We should remember that Indian farmers have been cultivating the land for centuries, much before the advent of the Green Revolution. They have very deep and extensive traditional knowledge about the land they till and the crops they sow. Much of this knowledge, like the many traditional varieties of seeds that were developed over the centuries by farmers, is being lost as hybrid,

high-yielding, and genetically modified varieties of seeds are being promoted as more productive and 'scientific' (Gupta 1998; Vasavi 1999b). In view of the negative environmental and social impact of modern methods of cultivation that has been observed, a number of scientists as well as farmers' movements now suggest a return to traditional, more organic seeds and methods of cultivation. Many rural people themselves believe that hybrid varieties are less healthy than the traditional ones.

4.4 TRANSFORMATIONS IN RURAL SOCIETY AFTER INDEPENDENCE

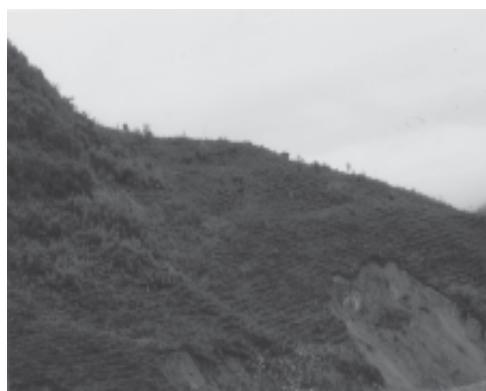
Several profound transformations in the nature of social relations in rural areas took place in the post-Independence period, especially in those regions that underwent the Green Revolution. These included:

- an increase in the use of agricultural labour as cultivation became more intensive;
- a shift from payment in kind (grain) to payment in cash;
- a loosening of traditional bonds or hereditary relationships between farmers or landowners and agricultural workers (known as bonded labour);
- and the rise of a class of 'free' wage labourers'.

The change in the nature of the relationship between landlords (who usually belonged to the dominant castes) and agricultural workers (usually low caste), was described by the sociologist Jan Breman as a shift from 'patronage to

Change and Development in Rural Society

exploitation' (Breman, 1974). Such changes took place in many areas where agriculture was becoming more commercialised, that is, where crops were being grown primarily for sale in the market. The transformation in labour relations is regarded by some scholars as indicative of a transition to capitalist agriculture. Because the capitalist mode of production is based on the separation of the workers from the means of production (in this case, land), and the use of 'free' wage labour. In general, it is true that farmers in the more developed regions were becoming more oriented to the market. As cultivation became more commercialised these rural areas were also becoming integrated into the wider economy. This process increased the flow of money into villages and expanding opportunities for business and employment. But we should remember that this process of transformation in the rural economy in fact began during the colonial period. In many regions in the 19th century large tracts of land in Maharashtra were given over to cotton cultivation, and cotton farmers became directly linked to the world market. However, the pace and spread of change rapidly increased after Independence, as the government promoted modern methods of cultivation and attempted to modernise the rural economy through other strategies. The state invested in the development of rural infrastructure, such as irrigation facilities, roads, and electricity, and on the provision of agricultural inputs, including credit through banks and cooperatives. The overall outcome of these efforts at 'rural development' was not only to transform the rural economy and agriculture, but also the agrarian structure and rural society itself.



Cultivation in different parts of the country



Changing technologies in agriculture

One way in which rural social structure was altered by agricultural development in the 1960s and 1970s was through the enrichment of the medium and large farmers who adopted the new technologies, discussed in the previous section. In several agriculturally rich regions, such as coastal Andhra Pradesh, western Uttar Pradesh, and central Gujarat, well-to-do farmers belonging to the dominant castes began to invest their profits from agriculture in other types of business ventures. This process of diversification gave rise to new entrepreneurial groups that moved out of rural areas and into the growing towns of these developing regions, giving rise to new regional elites that became economically as well as politically dominant (Rutten 1995). Along with this change in the class structure, the spread of higher education, especially private professional colleges, in rural and semi-urban areas, allowed the new rural elites to educate their children – many of whom then joined professional or white collar occupations or started businesses, feeding into the expansion of the urban middle classes.

Thus, in areas of rapid agricultural development there has been a consolidation of the old landed or cultivating groups, who have transformed themselves into a dynamic entrepreneurial, rural-urban dominant class. But in other regions such as eastern U.P. and Bihar, the lack of effective land reforms, political mobilisation, and redistributive measures has meant that there have been relatively few changes in the agrarian structure and hence in the life conditions of most people. In contrast, states such as Kerala have

undergone a different process of development, in which political mobilisation, redistributive measures, and linkages to an external economy (primarily the Gulf countries) have brought about a substantial transformation of the rural countryside. Far from the rural being primarily agrarian, the rural in Kerala is a mixed economy that integrates some agriculture with a wide network of retail sales and services, and where a large number of families are dependent on remittances from abroad.



Look at this house 'Sukrutham' in a village in Kerala. It is located in Yakkar Village, 3 kilometres from Palakkad district town

4.5 CIRCULATION OF LABOUR

Another significant change in rural society that is linked to the commercialisation of agriculture has been the growth of migrant agricultural labour. As 'traditional' bonds of patronage between labourers or tenants and landlords broke down, and as the seasonal demand for agricultural labour increased in prosperous Green Revolution regions such as the Punjab, a pattern of seasonal migration emerged in which thousands of workers circulate between their home villages and more prosperous areas where there is more demand for labour and higher wages. Labourers migrate also due to the increasing inequalities in rural areas from the mid-1990s, which have forced many households to combine multiple occupations to sustain themselves. As a livelihood strategy, men migrate out periodically in search of work and better wages, while women and children are often left behind in their villages with elderly grandparents. Migrant workers come mainly from drought-prone and less productive regions, and they go to work for part of the year on farms in the Punjab and Haryana, or on brick kilns in U.P., or construction sites in cities such as New Delhi or Bangalore. These migrant workers have been termed 'footloose labour' by Jan Breman, but this does not imply freedom. Breman's (1985) study shows, to the contrary, that landless workers do not have many rights, for instance, they are usually not paid the minimum wage. It should be noted here that wealthy farmers often prefer to employ migrant workers for harvesting and other such intensive operations, rather than the local working class, because migrants are more easily exploited and can be paid lower wages. This preference has produced a peculiar pattern in some areas where the local landless labourers move out of the home villages in search of work during the peak agricultural seasons, while migrant workers are brought in from other areas to work on the local farms. This pattern is found especially in sugarcane growing areas. Migration and lack of job security create very poor working and living conditions for these workers.

The largescale circulation of labour has had several significant effects on rural society, in both the receiving and the supplying regions. For instance, in poor areas where male family members spend much of the year working outside of their villages, cultivation has become primarily a female task. Women are also emerging as the main source of agricultural labour, leading to the 'feminisation of agricultural labour force. The insecurity of women is greater because they earn lower wages than men for similar work. Until recently, women were hardly visible in official statistics as earners and workers. While women toil on the land as landless labourers and as cultivators, the prevailing patrilineal kinship system, and other cultural practices that privilege male rights, largely exclude women from land ownership.

4.6 GLOBALISATION, LIBERALISATION, AND RURAL SOCIETY



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Retail in rural areas

The policy of liberalisation that India has been following since the late 1980s have had a very significant impact on agriculture and rural society. The policy entails participation in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which aims to bring about a more free international trading system and requires the opening up of Indian markets to imports. After decades of state support and protected markets, Indian farmers have been exposed to competition from the global market. For instance, we have all seen imported fruits and other food items on the shelves of our local stores – items that were not available a few years ago because of import barriers. Recently, India has also decided to import wheat, a controversial decision that reverses the earlier policy of self-reliance in foodgrains. And brings back bitter memories of dependence on American foodgrains in the early years after Independence.

These are indicators of the process of globalisation of agriculture, or the incorporation of agriculture into the larger global market – a process that has had direct effects on farmers and rural society. For instance, in some regions such as Punjab and Karnataka, farmers enter into contracts with multinational companies (such as PepsiCo) to grow certain crops (such

as tomatoes and potatoes), which the companies then buy from them for processing or export. In such 'contract farming' systems, the company identifies the crop to be grown, provides the seeds and other inputs, as well as the know-how and often also the working capital. In return, the farmer is assured of a market because the company guarantees that it will purchase the produce at a predetermined fixed price. Contract farming is very common now in the production of specialised items such as cut flowers, fruits such as grapes, figs and pomegranates, cotton, and oilseeds. While contract farming appears to provide financial security to farmers, it can also lead to greater insecurity as farmers become dependent on these companies for their livelihoods. Contract farming of export-oriented products such as flowers and gherkins also means that agricultural land is diverted away from food grain production. Contract farming has sociological significance in that it disengages many people from the production process and makes their own indigenous knowledge of agriculture irrelevant. In addition, contract farming caters primarily to the production of elite items, and because it usually requires high doses of fertilisers and pesticides, it is often not ecologically sustainable.



Farming of Flowers

Another, and more widespread aspect of the globalisation of agriculture is the entry of multinationals into this sector as sellers of agricultural inputs such as seeds, pesticides, and fertilisers. Over the last decade or so, the government has scaled down its agricultural development programmes, and 'agricultural extension' agents have been replaced in the villages by agents of seed, fertiliser, and pesticide companies. These agents are often the sole source of information for farmers about new seeds or cultivation practices, and of course they have an interest in selling their products. This has led to the increased dependence of farmers on expensive fertilisers and pesticides, which has reduced their profits, put many farmers into debt, and also created an ecological crisis in rural areas.



Farmers' suicides

Box 4.3

The spate of farmers' suicides that has been occurring in the different parts of the country since 1997-98 can be linked to the 'agrarian distress' caused by structural changes in agriculture and changes in economic and agricultural policies. These include: the changed pattern of landholdings; changing cropping patterns especially due to the shift to cash crops; liberalisation policies that have exposed Indian agriculture to the forces of globalisation; heavy dependence on high-cost inputs; the withdrawal of the state from agricultural extension activities to be replaced by multinational seed and fertiliser companies; decline in state support for agriculture; and individualisation of agricultural operations. According to official statistics, there have been 8,900 suicides by farmers between 2001 and 2006 in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra (*Suri 2006:1523*).

While farmers in India for centuries have periodically faced distress due to drought, crop failures, or debt, the phenomenon of farmers' suicides appears to be new. Sociologists have attempted to explain this phenomenon by looking at the structural and social changes that have been occurring in agriculture and agrarian society. Such suicides have become 'matrix events', that is, a range of factors coalesce together to form an event. Many of the farmers who have committed suicides were marginal farmers who were attempting to increase their productivity, primarily by practising green revolution methods. However, undertaking such production meant facing several risks: the cost of production has increased tremendously due to a decrease in agricultural subsidies, the markets are not stable, and many farmers borrow heavily in order to invest in expensive inputs and improve their production. The loss of either the crop (due to spread of disease or pests, excessive rainfall, or drought), and in some cases the lack of an adequate support or market price, means that farmers are unable to bear the debt burden or sustain their families. Such distress is compounded by the changing culture in rural areas in which increased incomes are required for marriages, dowries, and to sustain new activities and expenses such as education and medical care (Vasavi 1999a).

ACTIVITY 4.4

Read the newspaper carefully. Listen to the television or radio news. How often are rural areas covered? What kind of issues are usually reported?

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The pattern of farmers' suicides point to the significant crises that the rural areas are experiencing. Agriculture for many is becoming untenable, and state support for agriculture has declined substantially. In addition, agricultural issues are no longer key public issues, and lack of mobilisation means that agriculturists are unable to form powerful pressure groups that can influence policy making in their favour.

Change and Development in Rural Society

1. Read the passage given and answer the questions:

The harsh working conditions suffered by labourers in Aghanbigha were an outcome of the combined effect of the economic power of the maliks as a class and their overwhelming power as members of a dominant caste. A significant aspect of the social power of the maliks was their ability to secure the intervention of various arms of the state to advance their interests. Thus, political factors decisively contributed to widening the gulf between the dominant class and the underclass.

- i. Why do you think the *maliks* were able to use the power of the state to advance their own interests?
ii. Why did labourers have harsh working conditions?
2. What measures do you think the government has taken, or should take, to protect the rights of landless agricultural labourers and migrant workers?
3. There are direct linkages between the situation of agricultural workers and their lack of upward socio-economic mobility. Name some of them.
4. What are the different factors that have enabled certain groups to transform themselves into new wealthy, entrepreneurial, dominant classes? Can you think of an example of this transformation in your state?
5. Hindi and regional language films were often set in rural areas. Think of a film set in rural India and describe the agrarian society and culture that is shown in it. How realistic do you think the portrayal is? Have you seen any recent film set in rural areas? If not how would you explain it?
6. Visit a construction site in your neighbourhood, a brickyard, or other such place where you are likely to find migrant workers. Find out where the workers come from. How are they recruited from their home villages, who is the '*mukadam*'? If they are from rural areas, find out about their lives in their villages and why they have to migrate to find work.
7. Visit your local fruit-seller, and ask her/him about the fruits she/he sells, where they come from, and their prices. Find out what has happened to the prices of local products after fruits began to be imported from outside of India (such as apples from Australia). Are there any imported fruits that are cheaper than Indian fruits.
8. Collect information and write a report on the environmental situation in rural India. Examples of topics: pesticides; declining water table; impact of prawn farming in coastal areas; salination of soil and waterlogging in canal irrigated areas; loss of biodiversity. Possible source: State of India's Environment Reports: Reports from Centre for Science and Development *Down to Earth*.

Questions

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5 Change and Development in Industrial Society



Which was the last film you saw? We are sure you can tell us the name of the hero and heroine but can you remember the name of the sound and light technicians, the make up artists or the dance choreographers? Some people like the carpenters who make the sets are not even mentioned in the credits. Yet, without all these people, the film could not be made. Bollywood may be a place of dreams for you and me, but for many, it is their place of work. Like any industry, the workers there are part of unions. For instance, the dancers, stunt artists and the extras are all part of a junior artists association, whose demands include 8 hours shifts, proper wages and safe working conditions. The products of this industry are advertised and marketed through film distributors and cinema hall owners or through shops in the form of music cassettes and videos. And the people who work in this industry, as in any other, live in the same city, but depending on who they are and how much they earn, they do very different things in that city. Film stars and textile mill owners live in places like Juhu, while extras and textile workers may live in places like Girangaon. Some go to five star hotels and eat Japanese *sushi* and some eat *vada pav* from the local handcart. The residents of Bombay are divided by where they live, what they eat and how much their clothes cost. But they are also united by certain common things that a city provides – they watch the same films and cricket matches, they suffer from the same air pollution and they all have aspirations for their children to do well.

How and where people work and what kind of jobs they have is an important part of who they are. In this chapter, we will see how changes in technology or the kind of work that is available has changed social relations in India. On the other hand, social institutions like caste, kinship networks, gender and region also influence the way that work is organised or the way in which products are marketed. This is a major area of research for sociologists.

For instance, why do we find more women in certain jobs like nursing or teaching than in other sectors like engineering? Is this just a coincidence or is it because society thinks that women are suited for caring and nurturing work as against jobs which are seen as ‘tough’ and masculine? Yet nursing is physically much harder work than designing a bridge. If more women move into engineering, how will that affect the profession? Ask yourself why some coffee advertisements in India display two cups on the package whereas in America they show one cup? The answer is that for many Indians drinking coffee is not an individual wake up activity, but an occasion to socialise with others. Sociologists are interested in the questions of who produces what, who works where, who sells to whom and how. These are not individual choices, but outcomes of social patterns. In turn, the choices that people make influences how society works.

5.1 IMAGES OF INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim associated a number of social features with industry, such as urbanisation, the loss of face-to-face relationships that were found in rural areas where people worked on their own farms or for a landlord they knew, and their substitution by anonymous professional relationships in modern factories and workplaces. Industrialisation involves a detailed division of labour. People often do not see the end result of their work because they are producing only one small part of a product. The work is often repetitive and exhausting. Yet, even this is better than having no work at all, i.e., being unemployed. Marx called this situation alienation, when people do not enjoy work, and see it as something they have to do only in order to survive, and even that survival depends on whether the technology has room for any human labour.

Industrialisation leads to greater equality, at least in some spheres. For example, caste distinctions do not matter any more on trains, buses or in cyber cafes. On the other hand, older forms of discrimination may persist even in new factory or workplace settings. And even as social inequalities are reducing, economic or income inequality is growing in the world. Often social inequality and income inequality overlap, for example, in the domination of upper caste men in well-paying professions like medicine, law or journalism. Women often get paid less than men for similar work.

While the early sociologists saw industrialisation as both positive and negative, by the mid 20th century, under the influence of modernisation theory, industrialisation came to be seen as inevitable and positive. Modernisation theory argues that societies are at different stages on the road to modernisation, but they are all heading in the same direction. Modern society, for these theorists, is represented by the West.

ACTIVITY 5.1

According to the **convergence thesis** put forward by modernisation theorist Clark Kerr, an industrialised India of the 21st century shares more features with China or the United States in the 21st century than it shares with 19th century India. Do you think this is true? Do culture, language and tradition disappear with new technology or does culture influence the way people adapt to new products? Write a page of your own reflections on these issues, giving examples.

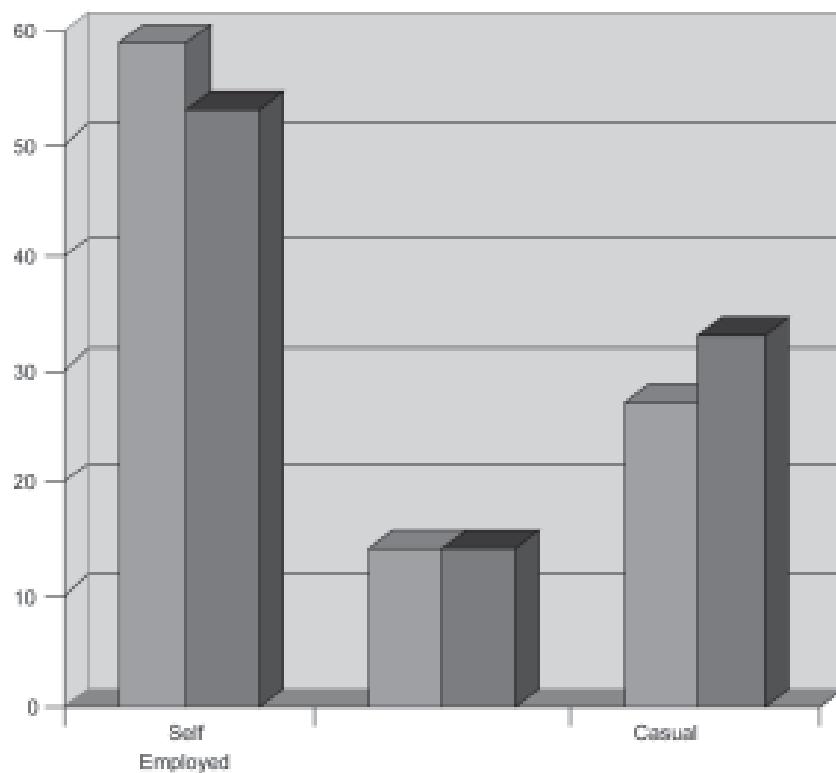
5.2 INDUSTRIALISATION IN INDIA

THE SPECIFICITY OF INDIAN INDUSTRIALISATION

The experience of industrialisation in India is in many ways similar to the western model and in many ways different. Comparative analysis of different countries suggests that there is no standard model of industrial capitalism. Let us start with one point of difference, relating to what kind of work people are doing. In developed countries, the majority of people are in the services sector, followed by industry and less than 10% are in agriculture (ILO figures). In India, in

1999-2000, nearly 60% were employed in the primary sector (agriculture and mining), 17% in the secondary sector (manufacturing, construction and utilities), and 23% in the tertiary sector (trade, transport, financial services etc.) However, if we look at the contribution of these sectors to economic growth, the share of agriculture has declined sharply, and services contribute approximately half. This is a very serious situation because it means that the sector where the maximum people are employed is not able to generate much income for them. (Government of India, Economic Survey 2001-2002).

■ 1977-1978
■ 1999-2000



Another major difference between developing and developed countries is the number of people in regular salaried employment. In developed countries, the majority are formally employed. In India, over 50% of the population is self-employed, only about 14% are in regular salaried employment, while approximately 30% are in casual labour (Anant 2005: 239). The adjacent chart shows the changes between 1977-78 and 1999-2000.

Economists and others often make a distinction between the organised or formal and unorganised or informal sector. There is a

debate over how to define these sectors. According to one definition, the organised sector consists of all units employing ten or more people throughout the year. These have to be registered with the government to ensure that their employees get proper salaries or wages, pension and other benefits. In India, over 90% of the work, whether it is in agriculture, industry or services is in the unorganised or informal sector. What are the social implications of this small size of the organised sector?

First, it means that very few people have the experience of employment in large firms where they get to meet people from other regions and backgrounds. Urban settings do provide some corrective to this – your neighbours in a city may be from a different place – but by and large, work for most Indians is still in smallscale workplaces. Here personal relationships determine many aspects of work. If the employer likes you, you may get a salary raise, and if you have a fight with him or her, you may lose your job. This is different from a large

organisation with well-defined rules, where recruitment is more transparent and there are mechanisms for complaints and redressal if you disagree with your immediate superior. Second, very few Indians have access to secure jobs with benefits. Of those who do, two-thirds work for the government. This is why government jobs are so popular. The rest are forced to depend on their children in their old age. Government employment in India has played a major role in overcoming boundaries of caste, religion and region. One sociologist has argued that the reason why there have never been communal riots in a place like Bhilai is because the public sector Bhilai Steel Plant employs people from all over India who work together. Others may question this. Third, since very few people are members of unions, a feature of the organised sector, they do not have the experience of collectively fighting for proper wages and safe working conditions. The government has laws to monitor conditions in the unorganised sector, but in practice they are left to the whims and fancies of the employer or contractor.

INDUSTRIALISATION IN THE EARLY YEARS OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

The first modern industries in India were cotton, jute, coal mines and railways. At independence, the government took over the 'commanding heights of the economy.' This involved defence, transport and communication, power, mining and other projects which only government had the power to do, and which was necessary for private industry also to flourish. In India's mixed economy policy, some sectors were reserved for government, while others were open to the private sector. But within that, the government tried to ensure, through its licensing policy, that industries were spread over different regions. Before independence, industries were located mainly in the port cities like Madras, Bombay, Calcutta. But since then, we see that places like Baroda, Coimbatore, Bangalore, Pune, Faridabad and Rajkot have become important industrial centres. The government also tried to encourage the small-scale sector through special incentives and assistance. Many items like paper and wood products, stationery, glass and ceramics were reserved for the small-scale sector. In 1991, large-scale industry employed only 28 per cent of the total workforce engaged in manufacture, while the small-scale and traditional industry employed 72 per cent (Roy 2001:11).

GLOBALISATION, LIBERALISATION AND CHANGE IN INDIAN INDUSTRY

Since the 1990s, however, the government has followed a policy of liberalisation. Private companies, especially foreign firms, are encouraged to invest in sectors earlier reserved for the government, including telecom, civil aviation, power etc. Licenses are no longer required to open industries. Foreign products are now easily available in Indian shops. As a result of liberalisation, many Indian companies have been bought over by multinationals. At the same time some Indian companies are becoming multinational companies. An instance of the first is when, Parle drinks was bought by Coca Cola. Parle's annual turnover was Rs. 250 crores, while Coca Cola's advertising budget alone was Rs. 400 crores.

This level of advertising has naturally increased the consumption of coke across India replacing many traditional drinks. The next major area of liberalisation may be in retail. Do you think that Indians will prefer to shop in departmental stores, or will they go out of business?

Retail chains scramble to enter Indian market

Box 5.1

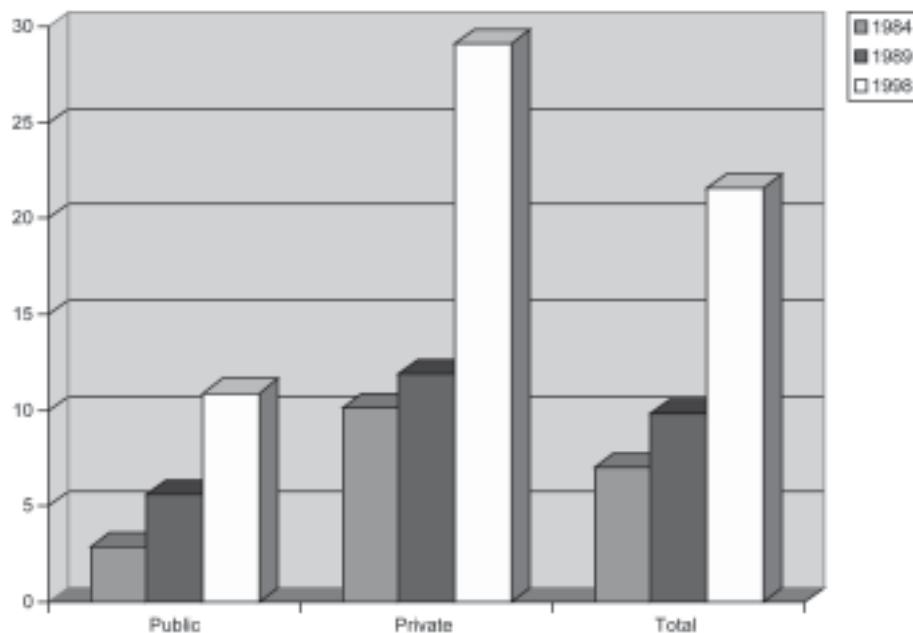
Clamoring to enter India's red-hot retail sector, the world's largest chains, including Wal-Mart Stores, Carrefour and Tesco, are seeking the best way to enter the country, despite a government ban on foreign direct investment in the market. Recent large investments by major Indian businesses, like Reliance Industries and Bharti Airtel, have increased the sense of urgency for foreign retailers.....Last week, Bharti Airtel indicated that it was in talks with Wal-Mart, Carrefour and Tesco to set up a retailing joint venture....India's retail sector is attractive not only because of its fast growth, but because family-run street corner stores have 97% of the nation's business. But this industry trait is precisely why the government makes it hard for foreigners to enter the market. Politicians frequently argue that global retailers would destroy thousands of small local players and fledgling domestic chains.

Source: International Herald Tribune, 3 August 2006

The government is trying to sell its share in several public sector companies, a process which is known as disinvestment. Many government workers are scared that after disinvestment, they will lose their jobs. In Modern Foods, which was set up by the government to make healthy bread available at cheap prices, and which was the first company to be privatised, 60% of the workers were forced to retire in the first five years.

Let us see how this fits in with worldwide trends. More and more companies are reducing the number of permanent employees and outsourcing their work to smaller companies or even to homes. For multinational companies, this outsourcing is done across the globe, with developing countries like India providing cheap labour. Because small companies have to compete for orders from the big companies, they keep wages low, and working conditions are often poor. It is more difficult for trade unions to organise in smaller firms. Almost all companies, even government ones, now practice some form of outsourcing and contracting. But the trend is especially visible in the private sector.

To summarise, India is still largely an agricultural country. The service sector – shops, banks, the IT industry, hotels and other services are employing more people and the urban middle class is growing, along with urban middle class values like those we see in television serials and films. But we also see that very few people in India have access to secure jobs, with even the small number in regular salaried employment becoming more insecure due to the rise in contract labour. So far, employment by the government was a major avenue for increasing the well-being of the population, but now even that is coming down. Some economists debate this, but liberalisation and privatisation worldwide appear to be associated with rising income inequality. You will be reading more about this in the next chapter on globalisation.



At the same time as secure employment in large industry is declining, the government is embarking on a policy of land acquisition for industry. These industries do not necessarily provide employment to the people of the surrounding areas, but they cause major pollution. Many farmers, especially adivasis, who constitute approximately 40% of those displaced, are protesting at the low rates of compensation and the fact that they will be forced to become casual labour living and working on the footpaths of India's big cities. You will recall the discussion on competing interests in chapter 3. (11)

In the following sections, we will look at how people find work, what they actually do in their workplaces and what kind of working conditions they face.

5.3 HOW PEOPLE FIND JOBS

If you open the *Times of India* on a Wednesday morning, you will find a section called *Times Ascent*. Here, jobs are advertised, and tips are given about how to motivate yourself or your workers to perform better.

Box 5.2 on the next page shows an example of a public sector job. The person will get benefits like house rent allowance (HRA). The qualifications required for the job are specified in great detail. In such jobs there are clear avenues for promotions, and you can expect that seniority will matter.

Let us look at a private sector job in Box 5.3 on the next page. This is also regular salaried employment and the employer is a well-known hotel. But here the salary and qualifications required are flexible, and the job is likely to be on contract. Look at the language used in this advertisement, such as *loyalty program*. Each organisation tries to create its own work culture.

Dyal Singh College
(Delhi University Maintained College)
Lodi Road, New Delhi 110003

Box 5.2

Applications are invited for the post of PRINCIPAL in the scale of pay Rs. 16,400-22400 (with a minimum of Rs. 17,300 p.m.) plus D.A., CCA, H.R.A., T.A. and other benefits as permissible under the rules of the University of Delhi.

QUALIFICATIONS

- (i) A Master's Degree in a relevant subject with at least 55% marks or an equivalent grade of 'B' in the seven point scale with letter grade O, A, B, C, D, E & F.
- (ii) Ph.D. or equivalent degree
- (iii) Total experience of fifteen years of teaching and/or post-doctoral research in Universities/Colleges and other institution of higher education.

Applications stating full details of qualifications, experience, age, etc. with all the supporting documents should reach "The Chairman, Governing Body, Dyal Singh College, Lodi Road, New Delhi – 110 003" in a sealed cover within 15 days from the date of publication of this advertisement.

Chairman
Governing Body

Radisson Hotel Delhi has immediate openings for their loyalty program.

Box 5.3

Customer Service Executives
Senior Tele-sales Executives

Candidates with a good command over English and a flair for sales may apply.
Prior experience preferred.

We offer a 5 star work environment, ongoing development and training, motivating atmosphere, day time jobs and good salary/incentives.
Part time & full time options available.

Please call between 9.30 am to 6.30 pm
30th- 31st August & 1st September, 2006
Ph: 66407361/66407351/66407353
Or Fax your CV to 26779062
Or Email: memberhelpdesk@radisssondel.com

But only a small percentage of people get jobs through advertisements or through the employment exchange. People who are self-employed like plumbers, electricians and carpenters at one end and teachers who give private tuitions, architects and free-lance photographers at the other end, all rely on personal contacts. They hope that their work will be an advertisement for them. Mobile phones have made life much easier for plumbers and others who can now cater to a wider circle of people.

Job recruitment as a factory worker takes a different pattern. In the past, many workers got their jobs through contractors or jobbers. In the Kanpur textile mills, these jobbers were known as *mistris*, and were themselves workers. They came from the same regions and communities as the workers, but because they had the owner's backing they bossed over the workers. On the other hand, the *mistri* also put community related pressures on the worker. Nowadays, the importance of the jobber has come down, and both management and unions play a role in recruiting their own people. Many workers also expect that they

can pass on their jobs to their children. Many factories employ badli workers who substitute for regular permanent workers who are on leave. Many of these badli workers have actually worked for many years for the same company but are not given the same status and security. This is what is called contract work in the organised sector.

However, the contractor system is most visible in the hiring of casual labour for work on construction sites, brickyards and so on. The contractor goes to villages and asks if people want work. He will loan them some money. This loan includes the cost of transport of the worksite. The loaned money is treated as an advance wage and the worker works without wages until the loan is repaid. In the past, agricultural labourers were tied to their landlord by debt. Now, however, by moving to casual industrial work, while they are still in debt, they are not bound by other social obligations to the contractor. In that sense, they are more free in an industrial society. They can break the contract and find another employer. Sometimes, whole families migrate and the children help their parents.

Labour gangs in the brickyards of South Gujarat

Box 5.4



Approximately 30,000-40,000 workers are employed here on a seasonal basis. The brickyards are owned by upper castes like Parsis or Desais. Members of the potter caste are also acquiring brickyards as an extension of their traditional work with mud. The workers are usually local or migrants dalits. They are employed by contractors and

work in gangs of nine to eleven members. While the men knead the mud and mould the brick, the little children carry each brick to the place where they are dried. A gang of women and girls then carry the bricks to the kiln where they are fired by men, and from there again to the trucks where the bricks are loaded.

Each gang makes 2500-3000 bricks a day. A quick gang can finish this number in ten hours while a slow gang will take 14 hours. From the age of six, children are woken during the night to carry the fresh bricks made by their father. While wet, those bricks weigh roughly three kilos. The little children run with one brick each, away from the base plate and into the darkness. When they reach the age of about nine, they are promoted to carrying two bricks. Sometimes, says the sociologist Jan Breman, their parents wake them up crying from the rags that form their beds.

5.4 How is WORK CARRIED OUT?

In this section, we will explore how work actually takes place. How are all the products we see around us manufactured? What is the relationship between managers and workers in a factory or in an office? In India, there is a whole range of work settings from large companies where work is automated to small home-based production.

The basic task of a manager is to control workers and get more work out of them. There are two main ways of making workers produce more. One is to extend the working hours. The other is to increase the amount that is produced within a given time period. Machinery helps to increase production, but it also creates the danger that eventually machines will replace workers. Both Marx and Mahatma Gandhi saw mechanisation as a danger to employment.

ACTIVITY 5.2

Gandhi on Machinery, in *Hind Swaraj* 1924:
“What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on ‘saving labour’ till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of the few, but in the hands of all.”

1934: “When as a nation we adopt the spinning-wheel, we not only solve the question of unemployment but we declare that we have no intention of exploiting any nation, and we also end the exploitation of the poor by the rich.”

Give an example of how machinery creates a problem for workers. What alternative did Gandhi have in mind? How does adopting the spinning wheel prevent exploitation?



Another way of increasing output is by organising work. An American called Frederick Winslow Taylor invented a new system in the 1890s, which he called ‘Scientific Management’. It is also known as Taylorism or industrial engineering. Under his system, all work was broken down into its smallest repetitive elements, and divided between workers. Workers were timed with the help of stopwatches

and had to fulfil a certain target every day. Production was further speeded up by the introduction of the assembly line. Each worker sat along a conveyor belt and assembled only one part of the final product. The speed of work could be set by adjusting the speed of the conveyor belt. In the 1980s, there was an attempt to shift from this system of direct control to indirect control, where workers are supposed to motivate and monitor themselves. But often we find that the old Taylorist processes survive.

Workers in textile mills, which is one of the oldest industries in India, often described themselves as extensions of the machine. Ramcharan, a weaver who had worked in the Kanpur cotton mills since the 1940s, said:

You need energy. The eyes move, the neck, the legs and the hands, each part moves. Weaving is done under a continuous gaze - one cannot go anywhere, the focus must be on the machine. When four machines run all four must move together, they must not stop. (Joshi 2003)

The more mechanised an industry gets, the fewer people are employed, but they too have to work at the pace of the machine. In Maruti Udyog Ltd. two cars roll off the assembly line every minute. Workers get only 45 minutes rest in the entire day - two tea breaks of 7.5 minutes each and one lunch break of half an hour. Most of them are exhausted by the age of 40 and take voluntary retirement. While production has gone up, the number of permanent jobs in the factory has gone down. The firm has outsourced all services like cleaning, and security, as well as the manufacture of parts. The parts suppliers are located around the factory and send the parts every two hours or just-in-time. Outsourcing and just-in-time keeps costs low for the company, but the workers are very tense, because if the supplies fail to arrive, their production targets get delayed, and when they do arrive they have to run to keep up. No wonder they get exhausted.

Now let us look at the services sector. Software professionals are middle class and well educated. Their work is supposed to be self-motivated and creative. But, as we see from the box, their work is also subject to Taylorist labour processes.



'Time Slavery' in the IT Sector

Box 5.5

10-12 hours is an average workday, and it is not uncommon for employees to stay overnight in the office (known as a 'night out'), when faced with a project deadline. Long working hours are central to the industry's 'work culture'. In part this is due to the time difference between India and the client site, such that conference calls tend to take place in the evening when the working day in the U.S. begins. Another reason is that overwork is built into the structure of outsourced projects: project costs and timelines are usually under-estimated in terms of mandays, and because mandays are based on an eight-hour day, engineers have to put in extra hours and days in order to meet the deadlines. Extended working hours are legitimised by the common management practice of 'flexi-time', which in theory gives the employee freedom to choose his or her working hours (within limits) but which in practice means that they have to work as long as necessary to finish the task at hand. But even when there is no real work pressure, they tend to stay late in office either due to peer pressure or because they want to show the boss that they are working hard.

(Carol Upadhyaya, *Forthcoming*)

As a result of these working hours, in places like Bangalore, Hyderabad and Gurgaon, where many IT firms or call centres are located, shops and restaurants have also changed their opening hours, and are open late. If both husband and wife work, then children have to be put in crèches. The joint family, which was supposed to have disappeared with industrialisation, seems to have re-emerged, as grandparents are roped in to help with children.

One important debate in sociology is whether industrialisation and the shift to services and knowledge-based work like IT leads to greater skills in society. We often hear the phrase 'knowledge economy' to describe the growth of IT in India. But how do you compare the skills of a farmer who knows how to grow many hundreds of crops relying on his or her understanding of the weather, the soil and the seeds, with the knowledge of a software professional? Both are skilled but in different ways. The famous sociologist Harry Braverman argues that the use of machinery actually deskills workers. For example, whereas earlier architects and engineers had to be skilled draughtsmen, now the computer does a lot of the work for them.

5.5 WORKING CONDITIONS

We all want power, a solid house, clothes and other goods, but we should remember that these come to us because someone is working to produce them, often in very bad conditions. The government has passed a number of laws to regulate working conditions. Let us look at mining where a number of people are employed. Coal mines alone employ 5.5 lakh workers. The Mines Act 1952 specifies the maximum number of hours a person can be made to work in a week, the need to pay overtime for any extra hours worked and safety rules. These rules may be followed in the big companies, but not in smaller mines and

quarries. Moreover, sub-contracting is widespread. Many contractors do not maintain proper registers of workers, thus avoiding any responsibility for accidents and benefits. After mining has finished in an area, the company is supposed to cover up the open holes and restore the area to its earlier condition. But they don't do this.

Workers in underground mines face very dangerous conditions, due to flooding, fire, the collapse of roofs and sides, the emission of gases and ventilation failures. Many workers develop breathing problems and diseases like tuberculosis and silicosis. Those working in overground mines have to work in both hot sun and rain, and face injuries due to mine blasting, falling objects etc. The rate of mining accidents in India is very high compared to other countries.



Time running out for 54 trapped miners in Jharkhand

IANS, September 7, 2006

Box 5.6

54 miners at the Bhatdih colliery of Nagada were trapped Wednesday night following a blast due to the accumulation of gases. It was about 8 p.m. when the explosion, caused by the pressure due to the accumulation of methane and carbon monoxide, shook the colliery belonging to the Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL). The intensity was so high that a one-tonne trolley in inclination number 17 was thrown out.

Four rescue teams have been constituted. But they don't have adequate number of oxygen masks to enter the deep mine where the incident occurred.

Most of the trapped miners are between the ages of 20 and 30.

Family members and union leaders have blamed the BCCL management for the incident. 'This is one of the BCCL's poisonous mines. No safety measures have been adopted by the management. Water sprinkling facilities and gas testing machines should be available in the colliery. But no such arrangements have been made here,' said a union member.

In many industries, the workers are migrants. The fish processing plants along the coastline employ mostly single young women from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. Ten-twelve of them are housed in small rooms, and sometimes one shift has to make way for another. Young women are seen as submissive workers. Many men also migrate singly, either unmarried or leaving

their families in the village. In 1992, 85% of the 2 lakh Oriya migrants in Surat were single. These migrants have little time to socialise and whatever little time and money they can spend is with other migrant workers. From a nation of interfering joint families, the nature of work in a globalised economy is taking people in the direction of loneliness and vulnerability. Yet for many young women, it also represents some independence and economic autonomy.

5.6 HOME-BASED WORK

Home-based work is an important part of the economy. This includes the manufacture of lace, zari or brocade, carpets, bidis, agarbattis and many such products. This work is mainly done by women and children. An agent provides raw materials and also picks up the finished product. Home workers are paid on a piece-rate basis, depending on the number of pieces they make.

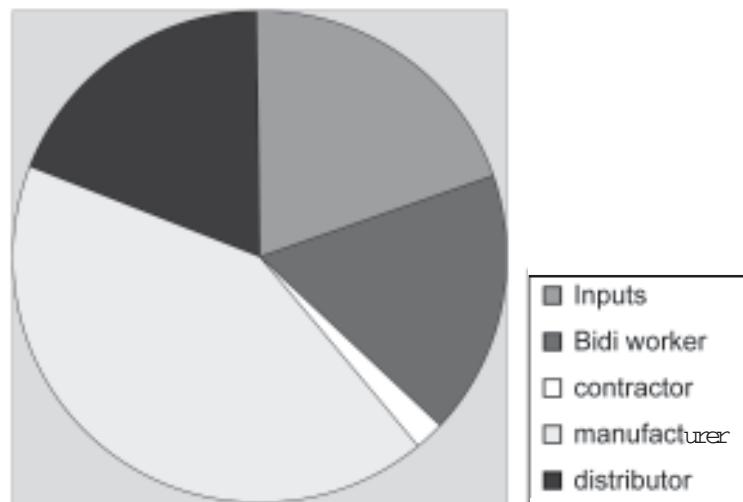


Let us look at the bidi industry. The process of making bidis starts in forested villages where villagers pluck *tendu* leaves and sell it to the forest department or a private contractor who in turn sells it to the forest department. On average a person can collect 100 bundles (of 50 leaves each) a day. The government then auctions the leaves to bidi factory owners who give it to the contractors. The contractor in turn supplies tobacco and leaves to home-based workers. These workers, mostly women, roll the bidis – first dampening the leaves, then cutting them, filling in tobacco evenly and then tying them with thread. The contractor picks up these bidis and sells them to the manufacturer who roasts them, and puts on his own brand label. The manufacturer then sells them to a distributor who distributes the packed bidis to wholesalers who in turn sell to your neighbourhood pan shops.

ACTIVITY 5.3

Find out how tobacco is grown, cured and how it reaches the bidi worker.

Let us see from the following pie diagram how the value of the finished bidi is distributed (Bhandari 2005: 410). The manufacturer gets the maximum amount, because of the image of the brand, showing the power of images.



Life history of a bidi worker

Box 5.7

Madhu is a 15-year old school dropout. She stopped going to school after failing in Class VIII. Her father, a tailor, expired last year. He was suffering from tuberculosis. This made it necessary for the children and mother to work. Her elder brother aged 17 works in a grocery shop and the younger one aged 14 is engaged in chocolate packaging. Madhu and her mother roll bidis. Madhu started rolling bidis at an early age and she enjoys it as it provides her the opportunity to sit close to her mother and other women and listen to them chat. She fills tobacco into the rolled tendu leaves. She spends most of her time in this activity apart from the time spent doing household chores. Due to long hours of sitting in the same posture daily, she suffers from backache. Madhu wants to restart her schooling. (Bhandari 2005: 406)

5.7 STRIKES AND UNIONS

Many workers are part of trade unions. Trade unions in India have to overcome a number of problems such as regionalism and casteism. Datta Iswalkar, a mill worker described how caste had been overcome but not entirely in the Bombay mills:

They would sit and chew paan with him (Vishnu, a Mahar worker in Modern Mills) but they would not drink water from his hands! They never treated him badly, they were friends with him, but they would never go to his house. Or eat out of a lunchbox bought by any of the Mahars. The funny thing is the Marathi workers were unable to judge the caste of the North Indian workers. So they could not practice untouchability with them!

(Menon and Aadarkar, 2004: 113)

In response to harsh working conditions, sometimes workers went on strike. In a strike, workers do not go to work, in a lock-out the management shuts the gate and prevents workers from coming. To call a strike is a difficult decision as managers may try to use substitute labour. Workers also find it hard to sustain themselves without wages.

Let us look at one famous strike, the Bombay Textile strike of 1982, which was led by the trade union leader, Dr. Datta Samant, and affected nearly a quarter of a million workers and their families. The strike lasted nearly two years. The workers wanted better wages and also wanted the right to form their own union. According to the Bombay Industrial Relations Act (BIRA), a union had to be 'approved' and the only way it could be 'approved' was if it gave up the idea of strikes. The Congress-led Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS) was the only approved union and it helped to break the strike by bringing in other workers. The Government also refused to listen to the worker's demands. Slowly after two years, people started going back to work because they were desperate. Nearly one lakh workers lost their jobs, and went back to their villages or took up casual labour, others moved to smaller towns like Bhiwandi, Malegaon and Ichalkaranji, to work in the powerloom sector. Mill owners did not invest in machinery and modernisation. Today, they are trying to sell off the mill land to real estate dealers to build luxury apartments, leading to a battle over who will define the future of Bombay – the workers who built it or the mill owners and real estate agents.

Jayprakash Bhilare, ex-millworker, General Secretary of the Maharashtra Girni Kamgar Union:

Textile workers were getting only their basic wage and DA, and no other allowance. We were getting only five days Casual Leave. Other workers in other industries had started getting allowances for travelling, health benefits etc. and 10-12 days Casual Leave. This agitated the textile workers. ...On 22 October 1981, the workers of Standard Mills marched to the house of Dr. Datta Samant to ask him to lead them. At first Samant declined, saying the industry was covered by the BIRA and he did not know enough of the textile industry. These workers were in no mood to take no for an answer. They kept a night-long vigil outside his home and in the morning Samant finally relented.

Box 5.8

Lakshmi Bhatkar, participant in the strike: I supported the strike. We would sit outside the gate every day and discuss what was to be done. We would go for the morchas that were organised from time to time....the morchas were huge – we never looted or hurt anybody. I was asked to speak sometimes but I was not able to make speeches. My legs would shake too much! Besides I was afraid of my children – what would they say? They would think here we are starving at home and she has her face printed in the newspapers.....There was a morcha to Century Mills showroom once. We were arrested and taken to Borivali. I was thinking about my children. I could not eat. I thought to myself that we are not criminals, we were millworkers. Fighting for the wages of our blood.

Kisan Salunke, ex-millworker, Spring Mills: Century Mills was opened by the RMMS barely a month-and-a-half after the strike began. They could do this because they had the full backing of the state and the government. They brought outsiders into the mill and they kept them inside without letting them out at all.... Bhonsle (Chief Minister of Maharashtra then) offered a 30-rupee raise. Datta Samant called a meeting to discuss this. All the leading activists were there. We said, 'No, we don't want this. If there is no dignity, if there is no discussion with the strike leaders, we will not be able to go back to work without any harassment."

Datta Iswalkar, President of the Mill Chawls Tenant Association: The Congress brought all the goondas out of jail to break the strike like Babu Reshim, Rama Naik and Arun Gawli. They started to threaten the workers. We had no alternative but to beat up strikebreakers. It was a matter of life and death for us.

Bhai Bhonsle, General Secretary of the RMMS during 1982 strike: We started getting people to work in the mills after three months of the strike...Our point was, if people want to go to work let them, in fact they should be helped. ...About the mafia gangs being involved, I was responsible for that...These Datta Samant people would wait at convenient locations and lie in wait for those going to work. We set up counter groups in Parel and other places. Naturally there were some clashes, some bloodshed...When Rama Naik died, Bhujbal who was Mayor then, had come in his official car to pay his respects. These forces were used at one time or other by many people in politics.

Kisan Salunke, ex-millworker: Those were very difficult times. We had to sell all our vessels. We were ashamed to go to the market with our vessels so we would wrap them in gunny bags and take them to the shop to sell ..There were days when I had nothing to eat, only water. We bought sawdust and burnt it for fuel. I have three sons. Sometimes when the children had no milk to drink, I could not bear to see them hungry. I would take my umbrella and go out of the house.

Sindu Marhane, ex-millworker: The RMMS and goondas came for me too, to force me back to work. But I refused to go....There were rumours going round as to what happened to women who went to stay and work in the mills. There were incidents of rape.

EXERCISE FOR Box 5.8

After reading these accounts of the 1982 strike answer the questions given below.

1. Describe the 1982 textile strike from the different perspectives of those involved.
2. Why did the workers go on strike?
3. How did Datta Samant take up the leadership of the strike?
4. What was the role played by strike-breakers?
5. How did the mafia get a foothold in these areas?
6. How were women affected and what were their concerns during the strike?
7. How did workers and their families survive the period of strike?



1. Choose any occupation you see around you – and describe it along the following lines: a) social composition of the work force – caste, gender, age, region; b) labour process – how the work takes place, c) wages and other benefits, d) working conditions – safety, rest times, working hours etc.

or

2. In the account of brickmaking, bidi rolling, software engineers or mines that are described in the boxes, describe the social composition of the workers. What are the working conditions and facilities available? How do girls like Madhu feel about their work?
3. How has liberalisation affected employment patterns in India?

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Phir bhi dil is Hindustani



Richest one per cent owns 40 per cent

Report by U.N. institute finds the richest 10 per cent of world's adult population owns 40 per cent of global assets. Half the world's adult population, 2.5 billion, live on less than \$2 a day.

6 Globalisation and Social Change

Knee-jerk reactions behind high market volatility

No discussion on social change in the twenty-first century can take place without some reference to globalisation. It is but natural that in this book on social change and development, the terms globalisation and liberalisation have already appeared in your earlier chapters. Recall the section on globalisation, liberalisation, and rural society in chapter 4. Go back and read the section on the Indian government's policy of liberalisation and its impact on Indian industries in chapter 5. It also came up when we discussed *Vision Mumbai* and the new visions for global cities in chapter 3. Other than your school books, you must have come across the term globalisation in newspapers, television programmes or even in everyday conversation.



ACTIVITY 6.1

Read any newspaper regularly for two weeks and note down how the term 'globalisation' is used. Compare your notes with others in the class.

Note down references to the term 'globalisation' and 'global' in different kinds of television programmes. You can focus on news and discussions on political or economic or cultural matters.

Activity 1 will help you notice the various ways the term is used. But we still need to be clear about what exactly does the term means. In this chapter we seek to understand the meaning of globalisation, its different dimensions and their social consequences.

However, this does not mean that there can be only one definition of globalisation and only one way of understanding it. Indeed you will find that different subjects or academic disciplines may focus on different aspects of globalisation. Economics may be dealing more with the economic dimensions such as capital flows. Political science may focus on the changing role of governments. However, the very process of globalisation is so far-reaching that disciplines have to increasingly borrow from each other to understand both the causes and consequences of globalisation. Let us see how sociology seeks to understand globalisation.

You will recall our early discussions on the scope of sociology and the distinctive character of the sociological perspective. We go back a bit in order to focus on the significance of the sociological perspective to understand globalisation.

The scope of sociological study is extremely wide. It can focus its analysis of interactions between individuals such as that of a shopkeeper with a customer, between teachers and students, between two friends or family members. It can likewise focus on national issues such as unemployment or caste conflict or the effect of state policies on forest rights of the tribal population or rural indebtedness. Or examine *global social processes* such as: the impact of new flexible labour regulations on the working class; or that of the electronic media on the young; or the entry of foreign universities on the education system of the country. *What defines the discipline of sociology is therefore not just what it studies (i.e. family or trade unions or villages) but how it studies a chosen field.* (NCERT BOOK 1, Class XI 2005)

You read the above paragraph carefully. You will realise that since sociology is not defined by *what* it studies but *how* it studies, it would be not quite right to state that sociology only studies the social or cultural consequences of globalisation. What it does is use the sociological imagination to make sense of the connections between the individual and society, the micro and the macro, the local and the global. How is the peasant affected in a remote village? How is s/he connected to global changes? How has it affected the chances of employment for the middle class? How has it affected the possibilities of big Indian corporations becoming transnational corporations? What does it mean to the neighbourhood grocer if the retail sector is opened up to big transnational companies? Why are there so many shopping malls in our cities and towns today? How has it changed the way young people spend their leisure time? These are just few examples of the wide ranging and different kinds of changes that globalisation is bringing about. You will find many more instances whereby global developments are affecting the lives of people. And thereby affecting the way sociology has to study society.

With the opening up of the market and removal of restrictions to the import of many products we have many more products from different corners of the world in our neighbourhood shops. Since April 1, 2001, all types of quantitative restrictions (QR) on imports were withdrawn. It is no surprise now to find a Chinese pear, an Australian apple vying for attention in the local fruit stall. The neighbourhood store also has Australian orange juice and ready to fry chips in frozen packets. What we eat and drink at home with our family and friends slowly changes. The same set of policy changes affects consumers and producers differently. What may mean greater choices for the urban, affluent consumer may mean a crisis of livelihood for a farmer. These changes are personal because they affect individuals' lives and lifestyles. They are obviously also linked to public policies adopted by the government and its agreement with the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Likewise macro policy changes have meant that instead of one television channel we have literally scores today. The dramatic changes in the media are perhaps the most visible effect of globalisation. We will be discussing this in greater detail in the next chapter. These are just few random examples but they may help you to appreciate the close interconnection that exists between your personal lives and the apparently remote policies of globalisation. As mentioned earlier the sociological imagination enables to make this connection between the micro and the macro, between the personal and public.

Sociology has been often defined as the discipline that studies 'society'. You would remember from your discussions in Book 1, Class XI that the boundaries of 'society' are not easy to draw. A study of a village not only meant study of different social groups and their 'societies' but would also have to take into account, the ways the village society was linked to the outside world. This linkage is more valid today than ever before. The sociologist or social anthropologist cannot study society as though it was an isolated entity. The compression of space and time has changed this. Sociologists have to study villages, families, movements, child rearing practices, work and leisure, bureaucratic organisations or castes taking this global interconnection into account. Studies will have to take into account the impact of WTO rules on agriculture and therefore on the farmer.

The effect of globalisation is far reaching. It affects us all but affects us differently. Thus, while for some it may mean new opportunities, for others the loss of livelihood. Women silk spinners and twisters of Bihar lost their jobs once the Chinese and Korean silk yarn entered the market. Weavers and consumers prefer this yarn as it is somewhat cheaper and has a shine. Similar displacements have come with the entry of large fishing vessels into Indian waters. These vessels take away the fish that used to be earlier collected by Indian fishing vessels. The livelihood of women fish sorters, dryers, vendors and net makers thereby get affected. In Gujarat, women gum collectors, who were picking from the '*julifera*' (Baval trees), lost their employment due to the import of cheaper gum from Sudan. In almost all cities of India, the rag pickers lost some of their employment due to import of waste paper from developed countries. We will see later in the chapter how traditional entertainers are affected.

It is obvious that globalisation is of great social significance. But as you saw its impact on different sections of society is very different. There are, therefore, sharply divided views about the impact of globalisation regarding its effect. Some believe that it is necessary to herald a better world. Others fear that the impact of globalisation on different sections of people is vastly different. They argue that while many in the more privileged section may benefit, the condition of a large section of the already excluded population worsens. There are yet others who argue that globalisation is not a new development at all. In the next two sections we look at these issues. We find out a bit more about the kind of global inter-connections that India had in the past. We also examine whether indeed globalisation has some distinctive features and if so what is it.

6.1 ARE GLOBAL INTERCONNECTIONS NEW TO WORLD AND TO INDIA

If globalisation is about global interconnections we can ask whether this is really a new phenomenon. Was India or the different parts of the world not interacting with each other in earlier times?

THE EARLY YEARS

India was not isolated from the world even two thousand years ago. We have read in our history textbooks about the famous Silk route, which centuries ago connected India to the great civilisations, which existed in China, Persia, Egypt and Rome. We also know that throughout India's long past, people from different parts came here, sometimes as *traders*, sometimes as *conquerors*, sometimes as *migrants* in search of new lands and settled down here. In remote Indian villages often people 'recall' a time when their ancestors lived elsewhere, from where they came and settled down where they now live.

It is interesting to note that the greatest grammarian in Sanskrit namely Panini, who systematised and transformed Sanskrit grammar and phonetics around the fourth century BCE, was of Afghan origin. ...The seventh-century Chinese scholar Yi Jing learned his Sanskrit in Java (in the city of Shri Vijaya) on his way from China to India. The influence of interactions is well reflected in languages and vocabularies throughout Asia from Thailand to Malaya to Indo-China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Korea and Japan. ...

Box 6.1

We can find a warning against isolationism in a parable about a well-frog- the '*kupamanduka*'- that persistently recurs in several old Sanskrit texts...The *kupamanduka* is a frog that lives its whole life within a well, knows nothing else, and is suspicious of everything outside it. It talks to no one, and argues with no one on anything. It merely harbours the deepest suspicion of the outside world. The scientific, cultural and economic history of the world would have been very limited indeed had we lived like well-frogs. (Sen 2005: 84-86)

Global interactions or even a global outlook are thus not novel developments unique to the modern period or unique to modern India.

COLONIALISM AND THE GLOBAL CONNECTION

We began our story of social and development in modern India from the colonial period. You will recall from chapter 1 that modern capitalism had a global dimension from its very inception. Colonialism was part of the system that required new sources of capital, raw materials, energy, markets and a global network that sustained it. Often globalisation today identifies large-scale movement of people or *migration* as a defining feature. You know, however, that perhaps the greatest movement of people was the migration of European people who settled down in the Americas and Australia. You will remember how indentured labourers were taken away in ships from India to work in distant parts of Asia, Africa and Americas. And the slave trade that carted thousands of Africans away to distant shores.

INDEPENDENT INDIA AND THE WORLD

Independent India retained a *global outlook*. In many senses this was inherited from the Indian nationalist movement. Commitment to liberation struggles throughout the world, solidarity with people from different parts of the world was very much part of this vision. Many Indians travelled overseas for education and work. *Migration* was an ongoing process. Export and import of raw material, goods and technology was very much part of development since independence. Foreign firms did operate in India. So we need to ask ourselves whether the current process of change is radically different from anything we have seen in the past.

6.2 UNDERSTANDING GLOBALISATION

We have seen that India had significant links with the global world from very early times. We are also aware that western capitalism as it emerged in Europe was both built upon and maintained by global control over resources of other countries as in colonialism. The important question is, however, whether globalisation is just about global interconnections. Or is it about some significant changes in the capitalist system of production and communication, organisation of labour and capital, technological innovations and cultural experiences, ways of governance and social movements? These changes are significant even if some of the patterns were already evident in the early stages of capitalism. Some of the changes such as those flowing from the communication revolution have in a myriad ways transformed the way we work and live.

We seek to spell out some of the distinctive features of globalisation below. As you go through them you will realise why a simple definition of global interconnection does not capture the intensity and complexity of globalisation.

Globalisation refers to the growing interdependence between different peoples, regions and countries in the world *as social and economic relationships come to stretch world-wide*. Although *economic forces* are an integral part of globalisation, it would be wrong to suggest that they alone produce it. It has been driven forward above all by the development of *information and communication technologies* that have intensified the speed and scope of interaction between people all over the world. Moreover, as we shall see, there was a political context within which it grew. Let us look at the different dimensions of globalisation. To facilitate our discussion we deal with the economic, political and cultural aspects separately. However, you will soon realise how closely connected and interconnected they are.

THE DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF GLOBALISATION

THE ECONOMIC

In India we often use the terms liberalisation and globalisation. They are indeed related but are not the same. In India we have seen how the state decided bring some changes in its economic policy in 1991. These changes are termed as liberalisation policies.

a. *The Economic Policy of Liberalisation*

Globalisation involves a stretching of social and economic relationships throughout the world. This stretching is pushed by certain economic policies. Very broadly this process in India is termed liberalisation. The term liberalisation refers to a range of policy decisions that the Indian state took since 1991 to open up the Indian economy to the world market. This marked a break with an earlier stated policy of the government to have a greater control over the economy. The state after independence had put in place a large number of laws that ensured that the Indian market and Indian indigenous business were protected from competition of the wider world. The underlying assumption of such a policy was that an erstwhile colonial country would be at a disadvantage in a free market situation. You have already read about the economic impact of colonialism in chapter 1. The state also believed that the market alone would not be able to look after all the welfare of the people, particularly its disadvantaged sections. It felt that the state had an important role to play for the welfare of the people. You will recall from chapter 3 how important the issues of social justice were for the makers of the Indian Constitution.

Liberalisation of the economy meant the steady removal of the rules that regulated Indian trade and finance regulations. These measures are also described as *economic reforms*. What are these reforms? Since July 1991, the Indian economy has witnessed a series of reforms in all major sectors of the economy (agriculture, industry, trade, foreign investment and technology, public sector, financial institutions etc). The basic assumption was that greater integration into the global market would be beneficial to Indian economy.

The process of liberalisation also involved the taking of loans from international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These loans are given on certain conditions. The government makes commitments to pursue certain kind of economic measures that involve a policy of structural adjustments. These adjustments usually mean cuts in state expenditure on the social sector such as health, education and social security. There is also a greater say by international institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO).



b. The transnational corporations

Among the many economic factors driving globalisation, the role of transnational corporations (TNCs) is particularly important. TNCs are companies that produce goods or market services in more than one country. These may be relatively small firms with one or two factories outside the country in which they are based. They could also be gigantic international ones whose operations criss-cross the globe. Some of the biggest TNCs are companies known all around the world: Coca Cola, General Motors, Colgate-Palmolive, Kodak, Mitsubishi and many others. They are oriented to the global markets and global profits even if they have a clear national base. Some Indian corporations are also becoming transnational. We are, however, not sure at this point of time, what this trend may mean to the people of India as a whole.

c. The electronic economy

The 'electronic economy' is another factor that underpins economic globalisation. Banks, corporations, fund managers and individual investors are able to shift funds internationally with the click of a mouse. This new ability to move 'electronic money' instantaneously carries it with great risks however. In India often this is discussed with reference to rising stock markets and also sudden dips because of foreign investors buying stocks, making a profit and then selling them off. Such transactions can happen only because of the communication revolution, which we discuss later.



d. The Weightless Economy or Knowledge Economy

In contrast to previous eras, the global economy is no longer primarily agricultural or industrial in its basis. The weightless economy is one in which products have their base in information, as in the case with computer software, media and entertainment products and internet-based services. A knowledge economy is one in which much of the workforce is involved not in the physical production or distribution of material goods, but in their design, development, technology, marketing, sale and servicing. It can range from the neighbourhood catering service to large organisations involved in providing a host of services for both professional meets like conferences to family events like weddings. We have a host of new occupations that was unheard of a few decades ago, for instance event managers. Have you heard of them? What do they do? Find out about other such new service.

ACTIVITY 6.2

Make a list of products that you either use or have seen in the market or seen advertised which are produced by transnational corporations. You can make a list of products such as:

- Shoes
- Cameras
- Computers
- Televisions
- Cars
- Music Systems
- Cosmetics like soaps or shampoos
- Clothes
- Processed Food
- Tea
- Coffee
- Milk Powder

Most of us make our money from thin air: we produce nothing that can be weighed, touched or easily measured. Our output is not stockpiled at harbours, stored in warehouses or shipped in railway cars. Most of us earn our livings providing service, judgement, information and analysis, whether in a telephone call centre, a lawyer's office, a government department or a scientific laboratory. We are all in the thin-air business.

Box 6.2

Source: Charles Leadbeater 1999 Living on Thin Air: The New Economy (London: Viking)

EXERCISE FOR Box 6.2

1. Find out from your immediate neighbourhood the kind of jobs young adults do. List them. How many do you think is engaged in some form of service providing? Discuss.
2. Find out from your class the kind of future plans that your classmates have. Discuss with reference to the idea of a weightless economy.

ACTIVITY 6.3

- Count the number of channels on television that are business channels and provide updates on stock markets, flows of foreign direct investments, financial reports of various companies etc. You can choose whether you wish to focus on an Indian language channel or English channels.
- Find out the names of some financial newspapers.
- Do you see any focus on global trends? Discuss.
- How do you think these trends have affected our lives.

e. Globalisation of finance

It should also be noted that for the first time, mainly due to the information technology revolution, there has been a globalisation of finance. Globally integrated financial markets undertake billions of dollars worth transactions within seconds in the electronic circuits. There is a 24-hour trading in capital and security markets. Cities such as New York, Tokyo and London are the key centers for financial trading. Within India, Mumbai is known as the financial capital of the country.

GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

Important advances in technology and the world's telecommunications infrastructure has led to revolutionary changes in global communication. Some homes and many offices now have multiple links to the outside world, including telephones (land lines and mobiles), fax machines, digital and cable television, electronic mail and the internet.

Some of you may find many such places. Some of you may not. This is indicative of what is often termed as the digital divide in our country. Despite this digital divide these forms of technology do facilitate the 'compression' of time and space. Two individuals located on opposite sides of the planet – in

Flying high

With new airports being built and air travel increasing, there's a thought for the future: Is India's infrastructure development and the availability of flights in sync?

By Rakesh Kapoor



A THOUGHT FOR THE FUTURE
What is the trouble with flying?
You have to return to airports.

HENRY MINZBURG

Dizzying Height

Direct international flights
to more non-metros

Small-town India gearing up
As many as 15 towns in
abroad and the list
Jaipur, Lucknow,
Delhi, Mumbai,
Chennai,
Kolkata



Bangalore and New York – not only can talk, but also send documents and images to one another with the help of satellite technology. You have already seen how outsourcing operates in your earlier chapters.



ACTIVITY 6.4

- Is there an internet café in your neighbourhood?
- Who are its users? What kind of use do they make of the internet?
- Is it on work purpose? Is it a new form of entertainment?
- Is there a STD/ISD telephone booth? Is there any FAX facility in your neighbourhood?

Globally use of the Internet increased phenomenally in the 1990s. In 1998 there were 70 million Internet users world-wide. Of these USA and Canada accounted for 62% while Asia had 12%. By 2000 the number of Internet users had risen to 325 million. India had 3 million Internet subscribers and 15 million users by 2000, thanks to the proliferation of cyber cafes all over the country. (*Singhal and Rogers 2001: 235*)

Box 6.3

According to a CNN-IBN poll broadcast on August 15, 2006, about 7% of the country's youth had access to the Internet while only 3% had computers at home. The figures themselves indicate the digital divide that continues to prevail in the country despite the rapid spread of computers. Cyber connectivity had largely remained an urban phenomenon but widely accessible through the cybercafes. But the rural areas with their erratic power supply, widespread illiteracy and lack of infrastructure like telephone connections still remain largely unconnected.

India's Telecommunications Expansion

Box 6.4

When India gained independence in 1947, the new nation had 84,000 telephone lines for its population of 350 million. Thirty three years later, by 1980, India's telephone service was still bad with only 2.5 million telephones and 12,000 public phones for a population of 700 million; only 3 percent of India's 600,000 villages had telephones. However, in the late 1990s, a sea change occurred in the telecommunication scenario: by 1999, India had installed network of over 25 million telephone lines, spread across 300 cities, 4,869 towns, and 310,897 villages, making India's telecommunication network the ninth largest in the world.

...Between 1988 and 1998, the number of villages with some kind of telephone facility increased from 27,316 to 300,000 villages (half of all villages in India). By 2000, some 650,000 public call offices (PCOs) provided reliable telephone service, where people can simply walk in, make a call, and pay the

metered charges, had mushroomed all over India, including the remote, rural, hilly, and tribal areas.

The emergence of PCOs satisfies the strong Indian socio-cultural need of keeping in touch with family members. Much like train travel in India which is often undertaken to celebrate marriages, visit relatives, or attend funerals, the telephone is also viewed as a way of maintaining close family ties. Not surprisingly, most advertisement for telephony service show mothers talking to their sons and daughters, or grandparents talking to grandchildren. Telephone expansion in India thus serves a strong socio-cultural function for its users, in addition to a commercial one. (*Singhal and Rogers 2001: 188-89*)

EXERCISE FOR Box 6.2

Write an essay on personal relationships and telecommunications.

Cellular telephony has also grown enormously and cell phones are part of the self for most urban-based middle class youth. This has been a tremendous growth in the usage of cell phones and a marked change in how its use is seen. The 3 boxes below mark out that shift.

In 1988, the Indian Home Ministry banned the open sale of pre-paid cash cards for mobile telephones, arguing that a number of criminals were using these pre-paid cash cards so as to leave investigators with no way of tracing them. While the use of telephone cards by criminals is a minuscule part of overall numbers, telephone operators have been mandated to verify the name and address of a customer before retailing a cash card. Private operators believe that they are loosing almost 50 percent of their business because of this needless verification.

...New subscription to mobile telephony services dropped by about 50 percent in 1998 when the Indian Income tax Department decreed that anyone owning a mobile telephone must submit their income tax. This decree was premised on the notion that if an individual could afford a "luxury" item such as a mobile telephone, the individual earned enough to file a tax return. (*Singhal and Rogers: 2001: 203-04*)

Box 6.5

India has become one of the fastest growing mobile markets in the world. The mobile services were commercially launched in August 1995 in India. In the initial 5-6 years the average monthly subscribers additions were around 0.05 to 0.1 million only and the total mobile subscribers base in December 2002 stood at 10.5 millions. Although mobile telephones followed the New Telecom Policy 1994, growth was tardy in the early years because of the high price of hand sets as well as the high tariff structure of mobile telephones. The New Telecom Policy in 1999, the industry heralded several pro consumer initiatives. Mobile subscriber additions started picking up. The number of mobile phones added throughout the country in 2003 was 16 million, followed by 22 millions in 2004 and 32 million in 2005. The only countries with more mobile phones than India with 123.44 million mobile phones (September 2006) are China – 408 million, USA – 170 million, and Russia – 130 million.

Box 6.6

Students send protest letter to Kalam

Box 6.7

A statement by..., the vice chancellor of a University on an NDTV show, has sparked off huge protests among students....

The vice chancellor had defended his decision to impose a dress code and ban cell phones by saying students had welcomed it.

But the students have denied supporting the ban. And in the first organised protest, they are writing to President APJ Abdul Kalam asking him to intervene.

Source: <http://www.ndtv.com> (Thursday, January 19, 2006 (Chennai))

EXERCISE FOR BOXES 6.5, 6.6 AND 6.7

- Carefully read the above 3 boxes.
- What ideas do they convey about the phenomenal growth in cell phones usage?
- Can you see any changes in the attitude and acceptability towards cell phones?

Initially in the late 1980s, cell phones are being looked at with distrust (misused by criminal elements). As late as 1998 they are perceived as luxury items (only the rich can own it and so owners should be taxed). By 2006 we have become the country with the fourth largest usage of cell phones. They have become so much part of our life that students are ready to go on a strike and appeal to the President of the country when denied cell phone usage in colleges.

Try and organise a discussion in the class on the reasons for the amazing growth in cell phones usage in India.

- Has it happened because of clever marketing and media campaign? Is it still a status symbol?
- Or is there a strong need for remaining 'connected', communicating with friends and near and dear ones?
- Are parents encouraging its usage in order to lessen their anxieties about children's whereabouts?
- Try and find out the different reasons why the youth strongly feel the need for cell phones

ACTIVITY 6.5



GLOBALISATION AND LABOUR

GLOBALISATION AND A NEW INTERNATIONAL DIVISION OF LABOUR

A new international division of labour has emerged in which more and more routine manufacturing production and employment is done in the Third World cities. You have already dealt with outsourcing in chapter 4 and contract farming in chapter 5. Here we simply draw upon the example of Nike company to illustrate how this works.

Nike grew enormously from its inception in the 1960s. Nike grew as an importer of shoes. The founder Phil Knight imported shoes from Japan and sold them at athletics meetings. The company grew to a multinational enterprise, a transnational corporation. Its headquarters are in Beaverton, just outside Portland, Oregon. Only two US factories ever made shoes for Nike. In the 1960s they were made in Japan. As costs increased production shifted to South Korea in mid-1970s. Labour costs grew in South Korea, so in the 1980s production widened to Thailand and Indonesia. In the 1990s we in India produce Nike. However, if labour is cheaper elsewhere production centres will move somewhere else. This entire process makes the labouring population very vulnerable and insecure. This flexibility of labour often works in favour of the producers. Instead of mass production of goods at a centralised location (Fordism), we have moved to a system of flexible production at dispersed locations (post-Fordism).



General Motors produces an ostensibly American car such as Pontiac Le Mans. Of the showroom price of \$20,000, only \$7,600 goes to Americans (workers and management in Detroit, lawyers and bankers in New York, lobbyists in Washington, and General Motors shareholders all over the country).

Box 6.8

Of the rest:

- 48 per cent goes to South Korea for labour and assembly.
- 28 per cent to Japan for advanced components such as engines and electronics.
- 12 per cent to Germany for styling and design engineering.
- 7 per cent to Taiwan and Singapore for small components.
- 4 per cent to the United Kingdom for marketing, and about
- 1 per cent to Barbados or Ireland for data processing

(Reich 1991)

"The largest number of poor people lives in South Asia. The poverty rate is particularly high in India, Nepal and Bangladesh," states an ILO report "Labour and Social Trends in Asia and the Pacific 2005"... The study provides a stark analysis of a growing 'employment gap' in the Asia region. It states that the creation of new jobs has failed to keep pace with the region's impressive economic growth. Between 2003 and 2004, employment in Asia and the Pacific increased by a 'disappointing' 1.6 per cent, or by 25 million jobs, to a total of 1.588 billion jobs, compared to the strong economic growth rate of over 7 per cent.

"Job Growth Remains Disappointing- ILO" Labour File September - October 2005 p.54.

Box 6.9

GLOBALISATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Another key issue regarding globalisation and labour is the relationship between employment and globalisation. Here too we see the uneven impact of globalisation. For the middle class youth from urban centers, globalisation and the IT revolution has opened up new career opportunities. Instead of routinely picking up BSc/BA/BCom degree from colleges, they are learning computer languages at computer institutes or taking up jobs at call centers or Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies. They are working as sales persons in shopping malls or picking up jobs at the various restaurants that have opened up. Yet as the box 6.9 shows broader trends of employment are disappointing.

GLOBALISATION AND POLITICAL CHANGES

In many ways it was a major political change, namely, *the collapse of the erstwhile socialist world* that hastened globalisation. And also gave a specific economic and political approach to the economic policies that underpin globalisation. These changes are often termed as neo-liberal economic measures. We have already seen what concrete steps the liberalisation policy took in India. Broadly these policies reflect a political vision of free enterprise which believes that a free reign to market forces will be both efficient and fair. It is, therefore, critical of both state regulation and state subsidies. The existing process of globalisation in this sense does have a political vision as much as an economic vision. However, the possibilities that there can be a globalisation which is different do exist. We, thus have the concept of an inclusive globalisation, that is one, which includes all sections of society.

Another significant political development which is accompanying globalisation is the *growth of international and regional mechanisms for political collaboration*. The European Union (EU), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Regional Conference (SARC) and more recently South Asian Federation of Trade Association (SAFTA) are just some of the examples that indicate the greater role of regional associations.

The other political dimension has been the rise of International Governmental Organisations. (IGOs) and International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs). An intergovernmental organisation is a body that is established by participating governments and given responsibility for regulating, or overseeing a particular domain of activity that is transnational in scope. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) for instance increasingly has a major say in the rules that govern trade practices.

As the name suggests, INGOs differ from intergovernmental organisations in that they are not affiliated with government institutions. Rather they are independent organisations, which make policy decisions and address international issues. Some of the best known INGOs are Greenpeace (see chapter 8, The Red Cross and Amnesty International, Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders). Find out more about them.

GLOBALISATION AND CULTURE

There are many ways that globalisation affects culture. We saw earlier that over the ages India has had an open approach to cultural influences and have been enriched because of this. The last decade has seen major cultural changes leading to fears that our local cultures would be overtaken. We saw earlier that our cultural tradition has been wary of the *kupamanduka*, the frog that lives its whole life within a well, knows nothing else, and is suspicious of everything outside it. It talks to no one, and argues with no one on anything. It merely harbours the deepest suspicion of the outside world. Fortunately for us we retain our 'traditional' open-ended attitude to this day. Thus there are heated debates in our society not just about political and economic issues but also about changes in clothes, styles, music, films, languages, body language. You will recall from chapter 1 and 2 how the 19th century reformers and early nationalists also debated on culture and tradition. The issues today are in some ways the same, in some ways different. What is perhaps different is the scale and intensity of change.

HOMOGENISATION VERSUS GLOCALISATION OF CULTURE

A central contention is that all cultures will become similar, that is homogeneous. Others argue that there is an increasing tendency towards glocalisation of culture. Glocalisation refers to the mixing of the global with the local. It is not entirely spontaneous. Nor is it entirely delinked from the commercial interests of globalisation.

It is a strategy often adopted by foreign firms while dealing with local traditions in order to enhance their marketability. In India, we find that all the foreign television channels like Star, MTV, Channel V and Cartoon Network use Indian languages. Even McDonald sells only vegetarian and chicken products in India and not its beef products, which are popular abroad. McDonald's goes vegetarian during the Navaratri festival. In the field of music, one can see the growth of popularity of 'Bhangra pop', 'Indi pop', fusion music and even remixes.

ACTIVITY 6.6

- Identify other instances of glocalisation. Discuss.
- Have you noticed any changes in films produced by Bollywood. While at one time there were scenes shot in foreign countries, the stories remained local. Then there were stories where characters returned to India even if part of the story was set abroad. Now there are stories set entirely outside India. Discuss.

We have already seen how the strength of Indian culture has been its open ended approach. We also saw how through the modern period our reformers and nationalists actively debated tradition and culture. Culture cannot be seen as an unchanging fixed entity that can either collapse or remain the same when faced with social change. What is more likely even today is that globalisation will lead to the creation of not just new local traditions but global ones too.

GENDER AND CULTURE

Very often defenders of a fixed traditional idea of cultural identity defend undemocratic and discriminating practices against women in the name of cultural identity. These could range from a defence of sati to defence of women's exclusion from education and participation in public matters. Globalisation can then be taken as a bogey to defend unjust practices against women. Fortunately for us in India we have been able to retain and develop a democratic tradition and culture that allows us to define culture in a more inclusive and democratic fashion.

CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION

Often when we speak of culture we refer to dresses, music, dances, food. However, culture as we know refers to a whole way of life. There are two uses of culture that any chapter on globalisation should mention. They are the culture of consumption and corporate culture. Look at the crucial role that cultural consumption is playing in the process of globalisation especially in shaping the growth of cities. Till the 1970s the manufacturing industries used to play a major role in the growth of cities. Presently, cultural consumption (of art, food, fashion, music, tourism) shapes to a large extent the growth of cities. This is evident in the spurt in the growth of shopping malls, multiplex cinema halls, amusement parks and 'water world' in every major city in India. Most significantly advertisements and the media in general promote a culture where spending is important. To be careful with money is no longer a virtue. Shopping is a past time actively encouraged.

ACTIVITY 6.7

- Compare the traditional shop and the new departmental stores that have come up.
- Compare the mall with the traditional market. Discuss how it is not just goods that change but how the meaning of shopping changes.
- Discuss the new kinds of food that is now served in eating places.
- Find out about the new fast food restaurants that are global in their operation.

Successive successes in fashion pageants like Miss Universe and Miss World have led to a tremendous growth in industries in the fields of fashion, cosmetics and health. Young girls dream of being an Aishwarya Rai or Sushmita Sen. Popular game shows like *Kaun Banega Crorepati* actually made it seem possible that your fortunes could turn over a few games.



CORPORATE CULTURE

Corporate culture is a branch of management theory that seeks to increase productivity and competitiveness through the creation of a unique organisational culture involving all members of a firm. A dynamic corporate culture - involving company events, rituals and traditions - is thought to enhance employee loyalty and promote group solidarity. It also refers to way of doing things, of promotion and packaging products.

ACTIVITY 6.8

In the last couple of years political parties have often sought assistance from corporations for their political campaign. Advertisement firms were also consulted. Find out more about this trend and discuss.

The spread of multinational companies and the opportunities opened up by the information technology revolution has created in the metropolitan cities in India a class of upwardly mobile professionals working in software firms, multinational banks, chartered accountancy firms, stock markets, travel, fashion designing, entertainment, media and other allied fields. These high-flying professionals have highly stressful work schedules, get exorbitant salaries and are the main clientele of the booming consumer industry.

THREAT TO MANY INDIGENOUS CRAFT AND LITERARY TRADITIONS AND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Yet another link between cultural forms and globalisation is evident from the condition of many indigenous craft and literary traditions and knowledge systems. It is, however, important to remember that modern development even prior to the stage of globalisation did make inroads into traditional cultural forms and occupations based on them. But the sheer scale and intensity of change is enormous. For instance about 30 theatre groups, which were active around the textile mills area of Parel and Girgaum of Mumbai city, have become defunct, as most of the mill workers are out of jobs in these areas. Some years back, there were reports of large number of suicides by the traditional weavers in Sircilla village of Karimnagar district and in Dubakka village in Medak district, both in Andhra Pradesh. These weavers with no means to invest in technology were unable to adapt to the changing consumer tastes and competition from power looms.

Similarly, various forms of traditional knowledge systems especially in the fields of medicine and agriculture have been preserved and passed on from one generation to the other. Recent attempts by some multi-national companies to patent the use of Tulsi, Haldi (turmeric), Rudraksha and Basmati rice has highlighted the need for protecting the base of its indigenous knowledge systems.

The condition of our *dombari* community is very bad. Television and radio have snatched away our means of livelihood. We perform acrobatics but because of the circus and the television, which have reached even in remote corners and villages, nobody is interested in our performances. We do not get even a pittance, however hard we perform. People watch our shows but just for entertainment, they never pay us anything. They never bother about the fact that we are hungry. Our profession is dying.

Box 6.10

(More 1970)

It is no easy task to sum up the diverse and complex ways that globalisation is affecting our lives. One will not even attempt it. One leaves this task to you. We have not discussed the impact of globalisation on industry and agriculture in any detail here in this chapter. You have to draw from chapter 4 and 5 to build up the story of globalisation and social change in India. In the recounting of this story, use your sociological imagination.



1. Choose any topic that is of interest to you and discuss how you think globalisation has affected it. You could choose cinema, work, marriage or any other topic.
2. What are the distinctive features of a globalised economy? Discuss.
3. Briefly discuss the impact of globalisation on culture?
4. What is glocalisation? Is it simply a market strategy adopted by multinational companies or is genuine cultural synthesis taking place? Discuss.

Questions

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Notes

Cell-shocked city suffers silently

For a city prepared to count the 10 million users by mobile phone users, Delhi is woefully wanting in mobile manners. Even the simple courtesy of putting the phone on silent or alert in a conference or meeting, or switching it off while filling petrol is missing

MOBILE MANNERS
Mobile phones have become a part of our lives. But do we use them in a considerate manner? Here's a quick guide to some of the dos and don'ts of mobile phone etiquette.

— RAVI SHARMA



7 Mass Media and Communications



The mass media include a wide variety of forms, including television, newspapers, films, magazines, radio, advertisements, video games and CDs. They are referred to as 'mass' media because they reach mass audiences – audiences comprised of very large numbers of people. They are also sometimes referred to as *mass communications*. For many in your generation it is probably difficult to imagine a world without some form of mass media and communications.



ACTIVITY 7.1

- Imagine a world where there is no television, no cinema, no newspapers, no magazines, no internet, no telephones, no mobile phones.
- Write down your daily activities in a day. Identify the occasions when you used the media in some way or the other.
- Find out from an older generation what life was like without any of these forms of communication. Compare it with your life.
- Discuss the ways work and leisure has changed with developments in communication technologies.

Mass media is part of our everyday life. In many middle class households across the country people wake up only to put on the radio, switch on the television, look for the morning newspaper. The younger children of the same

households may first glance at their mobile phones to check their missed calls. Plumbers, electricians, carpenters, painters and sundry other service providers in many urban centres have a mobile telephone where they can be easily contacted. Many shops in cities increasingly have a small television set. Customers who come in may exchange bits of conversation about the cricket match being telecasted or the film being shown. Indians abroad keep regular touch with friends and families back home over the internet and telephone. Migrants from working class population in the cities are regularly in touch with their families in the villages over the phone. Have you seen the range of advertisements of mobile phones?

Have you noticed the diverse social groups that they are catering to? Are you surprised that the CBSE Board results are available to you on both the internet and over the mobile phone. Indeed this very book is available on the internet.

It is obvious that there has been a phenomenal expansion of mass communication of all kinds in recent years. As students of sociology, there are many aspects to this growth which is of great interest to us. *First*, while we recognise the specificity of the current communication revolution, it is important to go back a little and sketch out the growth of modern mass media in the world and in India. This helps us realise that like any other social institution the structure and content of mass media is shaped by changes in

the economic, political and socio-cultural contexts. For instance, we see how central the state and its vision of development influenced the media in the first decades after independence. And how in the post 1990 period of globalisation the market has a key role to play. *Second*, this help us better appreciate how the relationship between mass media and communication with society is dialectical. Both influence each other. The nature and role of mass media is influenced by the society in which it is located. At the same time the far reaching influence of mass media on society cannot be over-emphasised. We shall see this dialectical relationship when we discuss in this chapter (a) the role of media in colonial India, (b) in the first decades after independence and (c) and finally in the context of globalisation. *Third*, mass communication is different from other means of communication as it requires a formal structural organisation to meet large-scale capital, production and management demands. You will find, therefore, that the state and/or the market have a major role in the structure and functioning of mass media. Mass media functions through very large organisations with major investments and large body of employees. *Fourth*, there are sharp differences between how easily different sections of people can use mass media. You will recall the concept of digital divide from the last chapter.



7.1 THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN MASS MEDIA

The first modern mass media institution began with the development of the printing press. Although the history of print in certain societies dates back to many centuries, the first attempts at printing books using modern technologies began in Europe. This technique was first developed by Johann Gutenberg in 1440. Initial attempts at printing were restricted to religious books.



Visuals of a Printing Press and a TV Newsroom in 21st Century, India

With the Industrial Revolution, the print industry also grew. The first products of the press were restricted to an audience of literate elites. It was only in the mid 19th century, with further development in technologies, transportation and literacy that newspapers began to reach out to a mass audience. People living in different corners of the country found themselves reading or hearing the same news. It has been suggested that this was in many ways responsible for people across a country to



feel connected and develop a sense of belonging or 'we feeling'. The well known scholar Benedict Anderson has thus argued that this helped the growth of nationalism, the feeling that people who did not even know of each other's existence feel like members of a family. It gave people who would never meet each other a sense of togetherness. Anderson thus suggested that we could think of the nation as an 'imagined community'.

You will recall how 19th century social reformers often wrote and debated in newspapers and journals. The growth of Indian nationalism was closely linked to its struggle against colonialism. It emerged in the wake of the institutional changes brought about by British rule in India. Anti colonial public opinion was nurtured and channelised by the nationalist press, which was vocal in its opposition to the oppressive measures of the colonial state. This led the colonial government to clamp down on the nationalist press and impose censorship, for instance during the Ilbert Bill agitation in 1883. Association with the national

movement led some of the nationalist newspapers like *Kesari* (Marathi), *Mathrubhumi* (Malayalam), *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (English) to suffer the displeasure of the colonial state. But that did not prevent them from advocating the nationalist cause and demand an end to colonial rule.

- Though a few newspapers had been started by people before Raja Rammohun Roy, his *Sambad-Kaumudi* in Bengali published in 1821, and *Mirat-Ul-Akbar* in Persian published in 1822, were the first publications in India with a distinct nationalist and democratic approach.
- Fardoonji Murzban was the pioneer of the Gujarati Press in Bombay. It was as early as 1822 that he started the *Bombay Samachar* as a daily.
- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar started the *Shome Prakash* in Bengali in 1858.
- *The Times of India* was founded in Bombay in 1861.
- *The Pioneer* in Allahabad in 1865.
- *The Madras Mail* in 1868.
- *The Statesman* in Calcutta in 1875.
- *The Civil and Military Gazette* in Lahore in 1876.

Box 7.1

(Desai 1948)

Under British rule newspapers and magazines, films and radio comprised the range of mass media. Radio was wholly owned by the state. National views could not be, therefore, expressed. Newspapers and films though autonomous from the state were strictly monitored by the Raj. Newspapers and magazines either in English or vernacular were not very widely circulated as the literate public was limited. Yet their influence far out stripped their circulation as news and information was read and spread by word of mouth from commercial and administrative hubs like markets and trading centers as well as courts and towns. The print media carried a range of opinion, which expressed their ideas of a 'free India'. These variations were carried over to independent India.



7.2 MASS MEDIA IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

THE APPROACH

In independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister, called upon the media to function as the watchdog of democracy. The media was expected to spread the spirit of self-reliance and national development among the people.

ACTIVITY 7.2

Ask anyone you know from a generation that grew up in the first two decades after independence about the documentaries that were routinely shown before the screening of films. Write down their recollections.

You will recall the general thrust of development in the early years of independence in India from your earlier chapters. The media was seen as a means to inform the people of the various developmental efforts. The media was also encouraged to fight against oppressive social practices like untouchability, child marriages, and ostracism of widows, as well as beliefs of witchcraft and faith healing. A rational, scientific ethos was to be promoted for the building of a modern industrial society. The Films Division of the government produced newsreels and documentaries. These were shown before the screening of films in every movie theatre, documenting the development process as directed by the state.

RADIO

Radio broadcasting which commenced in India through amateur 'ham' broadcasting clubs in Kolkata and Chennai in the 1920s matured into a public broadcasting system in the 1940s during the World War II when it became a major instrument of propaganda for Allied forces in South-east Asia. At the time of independence there were only 6 radio stations located in the major cities catering primarily to an urban audience. By 1950 there were 546,200 radio licences all over India.



Amila Roy (Jaffer Mehta)
as disc jockey at All India Radio,
Lucknow, 1944
Amila Mehta (Jaffer Mehta)
joined All India Radio in 1942 for
a couple of years when there were few
women in the radio, later going on to
broadcast with the BBC, CBC, and
other international broadcasting
organizations. She is well known for her
film, radio, and TV performances and
columns in leading newspapers.
Courtesy: Amila Mehta

Since the media was seen as an active partner in the development of the newly free nation the AIR's programmes consisted mainly of news, current affairs, discussions on development. The box below captures the spirit of those times.

Apart from All India Radio (AIR) broadcasts news there was Vividh Bharati, a channel for entertainment that was primarily broadcasting Hindi film songs on listeners request. In 1957 AIR acquired the hugely popular channel Vividh Bharati, which soon began to carry sponsored programmes and advertisements and grew to become a money-spinning channel for AIR.

AIR's broadcasts did make a difference

Box 7.2

In the 1960s, when the high yielding varieties of food crops, as a part of the Green Revolution, were introduced for the first time in the country. It was All India Radio which undertook a major countryside campaign on these crops on a sustained day-to-day basis for over 10 years from 1967.

For this purpose, special programmes on the high yielding varieties were formed in many stations of AIR all over the country. These programme units, manned by subject specialists, undertook field visits and recorded and broadcast first hand accounts of the farmers, who started growing the new varieties of paddy and wheat.

Source: B. R. Kumar "AIR's broadcasts did make a difference". The Hindu December 31st 2006.

Indian film songs and commercials were considered low-culture and not promoted. So Indian listeners tuned their shortwave radio sets to Radio Ceylon (broadcasting from neighbouring Sri Lanka) and to Radio Goa (broadcasting from Goa then under Portuguese rule) in order to enjoy Indian film music, commercials, and other entertainment fare. The popularity of these broadcasts in India spurred radio listening and the sale of radio sets. When purchasing a radio set, the buyer would invariably confirm with the vendor that the set could be tuned to radio Ceylon or Radio Goa. (Bhatt : 1994)

Box 7.3

EXERCISE FOR Box 7.3

Ask your elders about Vividh Bharati programmes. Which is the generation that remembers it. Which part of the country was it more popular? Discuss their experiences. Compare them with your own experiences with listener's request

When India gained independence in 1947, All India Radio had an infrastructure of six radio stations, located in metropolitan cities. The country had 280,000 radio receiver sets for a population of 350 million people. After independence the government gave priority to the expansion of the radio broadcasting infrastructure, especially in state capitals and in border areas. Over the years, AIR has developed a formidable infrastructure for radio broadcasting in India. It operates a three-tiered – national, regional, and local – service to cater to India's geographic, linguistic and cultural diversity.

The major constraint for the popularisation of radio initially was the cost of the radio set. The transistor revolution in the 1960s made the radio more accessible by making it mobile as battery operated sets and reducing the unit

Wars, tragedies and expansion of AIR

Box 7.4

Interestingly wars and tragedies have spurred AIR to expand its activities. The 1962 war with China prompted the launching of a 'talks' unit to put out a daily programme. In August 1971, with the Bangladesh crises looming, the News Service Division introduced news on the hour, from 6 O' clock in the morning to midnight. It took another crises, the tragic assassination of Rajeev Gandhi in 1991, for AIR to take one more step of having bulletins round the clock.

price substantially. In 2000 around 110 million households (two-thirds of all Indian households) were listening to radio broadcasts in 24 languages and 146 dialects. More than a third of them were rural households.

TELEVISION

Television programming was introduced experimentally in India to promote rural development as early as 1959. Later the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) broadcasted directly to community viewers in the rural areas of six states between August 1975 and July 1976. These instructional broadcasts were broadcast to 2,400 TV sets directly for 4 hours daily. Meanwhile, television stations were set up under Doordarshan in 4 cities (Delhi, Mumbai, Srinagar and Amritsar) by 1975. Three more stations in Kolkata, Chennai and Jalandhar were added within a year. Every broadcasting centre had its own mix of programmes comprising news, children's and women's programmes, farmer's programmes as well as entertainment programmes.

As programmes became commercialised and were allowed to carry advertisements of its sponsors, a shift in target audience was evident. Entertainment programmes grew and were directed to the urban consuming class. The advent of colour broadcasting during the 1982 Asian Games in Delhi and the rapid expansion of the national network led to rapid commercialisation

ACTIVITY 7.3

Identify a cross section of people from an older generation. Find out from them what television programmes consisted of in the 1970s and 1980s? Did many of them have access to television?

of television broadcasting. During 1984-85 the number of television transmitters increased all over India covering a large proportion of the population. It was also the time when indigenous soap operas like *Hum Log* (1984-85) and *Buniyaad* (1986-87) were aired. They were hugely popular acclaim and attracted substantial advertising revenue for Doordarshan as did the broadcasting of the epics *Ramayana* (1987-88) and *Mahabharat* (1988-90).

Hum Log: A Turning Point

Hum Log was India's first long-running soap opera.... This pioneering program utilised the entertainment-education strategy by intentionally placing educational content in this entertainment message.

Some 156 episodes of *Hum Log* were broadcast in Hindi for 17 months in 1984-85. The television program promoted such social themes as gender equality, small family size, and national integration. At the end of each 22 minute episode, a famous Indian actor, Ashok Kumar, summarised the educational lessons from the episode in an epilogue of 30 to 40 seconds. Kumar connected the drama to viewers' everyday lives. For instance, he might comment on a negative character who is drunk and beats his wife by asking; "why do you think that people like Basesar Ram drink too much, and then behave badly? Do you know anyone like this? What can be done to reduce incidents of alcoholism? What can you do? (Singhal and Rogers, 1989). A study of *Hum Log*'s audience showed that a high degree of *parasocial*/interaction occurred between the audience members and their favorite *Hum Log* characters. For example, many *Hum Log* viewers reported that they routinely adjusted their daily schedules to 'meet' their favourite character 'in the privacy of their living rooms'. Many other individuals reported talking to their favorite characters through the television sets; for instance, "Don't worry, Badki. Do not give up your dream of making a career."

Hum Log achieved audience ratings of 65 to 90 percent in North India and between 20 and 45 percent in South India. About 50 million individuals watched the average broadcast of *Hum Log*. One unusual aspect of this soap opera was the huge number of letters, over 400,000, that it attracted from viewers; so many that most of them could not be opened by Doordarshan officials. (Singhal and Rogers 2001)

Box 7.5

The advertising carried by *Hum Log* promoted a new consumer product in India, *Maggi* 2-Minute noodles. The public rapidly accepted this new consumer product, suggesting the power of television commercials. Advertisers began to line up to purchase airtime for television advertising, and the commercialisation of Doordarshan began.

Box 7.6

PRINT MEDIA

The beginnings of the print media and its role in both the spread of the social reform movement and the nationalist movement have been noted. After independence, the print media continued to share the general approach of being a partner in the task of nation building by taking up developmental issues as well as giving voice to the widest section of people. The brief extract in the box below will give you a sense of the commitment.

Box 7.7

Journalism in India used to be regarded as a 'calling'. Fired by the spirit of patriotic and social reforming idealism, it was able to draw in outstanding talent as the freedom struggle and movements for social change intensified and as new educational and career opportunities arose in a modernising society. As is often the case with such pursuits, the calling was conspicuously underpaid. The transformation of the calling into a profession took place over a long period, mirroring the change in character of a newspaper like the *Hindu* from a purely societal and public service mission into a business enterprise framed by a societal and public service mission.

Source: Editorial 'Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow', The Hindu, 13 September 2003, quoted in B.P. Sanjay 2006)

The gravest challenge that the media faced was with the declaration of Emergency in 1975 and censorship of the media. Fortunately, the period ended and democracy was restored in 1977. India with its many problems can be justifiably proud of a free media.

At the start of the chapter we had mentioned how mass media is different from other means of communication as it requires a formal structural organisation to meet large scale capital, production and management demands. And also like any other social institution the mass media also varies in structure and content according to different economic, political and socio-cultural context. You will now notice how at different points in time both the content and style of media changes. At some points the state has a greater role to play. At other times the market does. In India this shift is very visible in recent times. This change has also led to debates about what role the media ought to play in a modern democracy. We look at these new developments in the next section.

7.3 GLOBALISATION AND THE MEDIA

We have already read about the far reaching impact of globalisation as well as its close link with the communication revolution in the last chapter. The media have always had international dimensions – such as the gathering of new stories and the distribution of primarily western films overseas. However, until the 1970s most media companies operated within specific domestic markets in accordance with regulations from national governments. The media industry was also differentiated into distinct sectors – for the most part, cinema, print media, radio and television broadcasting all operated independently of one another.

In the past three decades, however, profound transformations have taken place within the media industry. National markets have given way to a fluid global market, while new technologies have led to the fusion of forms of media that were once distinct.

Globalisation and the case of music

Box 7.8

It has been argued that the musical form is one that lends itself to globalisation more efficiently than any other. This is because music is able to reach people who may not know the written and spoken language. The growth of technology - from personal stereo systems to music television (such as the MTV) to the compact disc (CD) - have provided newer, more sophisticated ways for music to be distributed globally.

The fusion of forms of media

Although the music industry is becoming ever more concentrated in the hands of a few international conglomerates, some feel that it is under a great threat. This is because the Internet allows music to be downloaded digitally, rather than purchased in the form of CDs or cassettes from local music stores. The global music industry is currently comprised of a complex network of factories, distribution chains, music shops and sales staff. If the internet removes the need for all these elements by allowing music to be marketed and downloaded directly, what will be left of the music industry?

EXERCISE FOR Box 7.8

Read the texts in the box carefully. Discuss.

1. Find out the names of a few music conglomerates or corporations.
2. Have you thought of the ring tones that people now download for their mobile phones? Is this the fusion of forms of media?
3. Have you watched any of the musical contests on television where the audience is expected to SMS their choice? Is this again an instance of the fusion of forms of media? What forms are involved?
4. Do you enjoy songs whose words you may not understand? What do you feel about the new forms of music where there is a mix not just of musical forms but also of language?
5. Have you heard any fusion music of Rap and Bhangra. Where did the two forms originate?
6. There are probably many other issues that you can think of? Discuss and write a short essay on your discussions.

We began with the case of the music industry and the far reaching consequences that globalisation has had on it. The changes that have taken place in mass media is so immense that this chapter will probably be only able to give you a fragmentary understanding. As a young generation you can build up on the information provided. Let us have a look at the changes that globalisation has brought about on the print media (primarily newspapers and magazines), the electronic media (primarily television), and on the radio.

And the award goes to ...



PRINT MEDIA

We have seen how important newspapers and magazines were for the spread of the freedom movement. It is often believed that with the growth of the television and the internet the print media would be sidelined. However, in India we have seen the circulation of newspapers grow. As the box 7.9 suggests new technologies have helped boost the production and circulation of newspapers. A large number of glossy magazines have also made their entry into the market.

The Indian language newspaper revolution

The most significant happening in the last few decades has been the Indian language newspaper revolution. The beginnings of this growth predated liberalisation. The top two dailies in India are *Dainik Jagran* and *Dainik Bhaskar* with a readership of 21 million and 17 million, respectively. The fastest growing dailies are the Assamese dailies in urban areas (51.8 per cent increase) and the Bengali dailies in rural areas (129 per cent).
Source: National Readership Survey 2002.

Box 7.9

The *Eenadu* story also exemplifies the success of the Indian language press. Ramoji Rao the founder of *Eenadu*, had successfully organised a chit-fund, before launching the paper in 1974. By associating with appropriate causes in the rural areas like the Anti-arrack movement in the mid-1980s, the Telugu newspaper was able to reach into the countryside. This prompted it to launch 'district dailies' in 1989. These were tabloid inserts or sensational features carrying news from particular districts as well as classified advertisements from villages and small towns of the same. By 1998 *Eenadu* was being published from ten towns in Andhra Pradesh and its circulation accounted for 70 per cent of the audited Telugu daily circulation.



As is evident, the reasons for this amazing growth in Indian language newspapers are many. *First*, there is a rise in the number of literate people who are migrating to cities. The Hindi daily *Hindustan* in 2003 printed 64,000 copies of their Delhi edition, which jumped to 425,000 by 2005. The reason was that, of Delhi's population of one crore and forty-seven lakhs, 52 per cent had come from the Hindi belt of the two states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Out of this, 47 per cent have come from a rural background and 60 per cent of them are less than 40 years of age.

Second, the needs of the readers in the small towns and villages are different from that of the cities and the Indian language newspapers cater to those needs. Dominant Indian language newspapers such as *Malayala Manorama* and the *Eenadu* launched the concept of local news in a significant manner by introducing district and whenever necessary, block editions. *Dina Thanthi*, another leading Tamil newspaper, has always used simplified and colloquial language. The Indian language newspapers have adopted advanced printing technologies and also attempted supplements, pullouts, and literary and niche booklets. Marketing strategies have also marked the *Dainik Bhaskar* group's growth as they carry out consumer contact programmes, door-to-door surveys, and research. This also brings back the point that modern mass media has to have a formal structural organisation.

Shift in circulation of Newspapers in India

Box 7.10

According to recently published data of National Readership Study (NRS 2006) the largest growth in readership has been in Hindi belt. Indian language dailies as a whole have grown substantially in the last year from 191 million readers to 203.6 million readers. The readership of English dailies on the other hand, has stagnated at around 21 million. Hindi dailies *Dainik Jagran* (with 21.2 million) and *Dainik Bhaskar* (with 21.0 million) are heading the list, while *The Times of India* is the only English daily with a readership of over five million (7.4 million). Of the 18 dailies which are in 'five million club', six are in Hindi, three in Tamil, two each in Gujarati, Malayalam and Marathi and one each in Bengali, Telugu and English (*The Hindu, Delhi, August 30, 2006*).

While English newspapers, often called 'national dailies', circulate across regions, vernacular newspapers have vastly increased their circulation in the states and the rural hinterland. In order to compete with the electronic media, newspapers, especially English language newspapers have on the one hand reduced prices and on the other hand brought out editions from multiple centres.

ACTIVITY 7.4

- Find out how many places do the newspaper you are most familiar with brought out from?
- Have you noticed how there are supplements that cater to city specific or town specific interests and events?
- Have you noticed the many commercial supplements that accompany many newspapers these days?

Changes in Newspaper Production: The Role of Technology

From the late 1980s and early 1990s, newspapers have become fully automatic – from reporter's desk to final page proof. The use of paper has been completely eliminated with this automated chain. This has become possible because of two technological changes – networking of personal computers (PCs) through LANs (local area networks) and use of newsmaking software like Newsmaker and other customised software.

Changing technology has also changed the role and function of a reporter. The basic tools of a news reporter — a shorthand notebook, pen, typewriter, and plain old telephone has been replaced by new tools — a mini tape recorder, a laptop or a PC, mobile or satellite phone, and other accessories like modem. All these technological changes in news gathering have increased the speed of news and helped newspaper managements to push their deadlines to dawn. They are also able to plan a greater number of editions and provide the latest news to the readers. A number of language newspapers are using the new technologies to bring out separate editions for each of the districts. While print centers are limited, the number of editions has grown manifold.

Newspaper chains like Meerut-based *Amar Ujala* are using new technology for news gathering as well as for improving pictorial coverage. The newspaper has a network of nearly a hundred reporters and staffers and an equal number of photographers, feeding news to all its thirteen editions spread across Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. All the hundred correspondents are equipped with PCs and modems for news transmission, and the photographers carry digital cameras with them. Digital images are sent to the central news desk via modems.

Box 7.11



Many feared that the rise in electronic media would lead to a decline in the circulation of print media. This has not happened. Indeed it has expanded. This process has, however, often involved cuts in prices and increasing dependence on the sponsors of advertisements who in turn have a larger say in the content of newspapers. The box below captures the logic of this practice.

A media managers explains the reasons for this:

The trouble with the print media is the high gestation period for returns and the high cost of production. The newspaper's or magazine's cover price alone doesn't cover these costs. ...If the cost of producing the paper is Rs. 5 and if you are selling it at Rs. 2 then you are selling it at a higher subsidy. Naturally, you have to depend on advertising cost to cover your cost.

The advertiser, thus becomes the primary customer of the print media...So, *I, the print media, am not trying to get readers for my product, but I get customers, who happen to be my readers, for my advertisers....Advertisers like to reach readers who are successful, who celebrate life, who consume, who are early adopters, who believe in experimentation, who are hedonists.*

Box 7.12

The then Director of the Press Institute of India elaborates on the implications of newspapers that cater to potential customers of advertisers.

For several weeks I have been going through mainline English-language newspapers looking specifically for field reports and feature articles on happenings in the rural parts of our country, small towns and growing slum colonies. Some 70 per cent of our people live in these areas which, to my mind, comprise the 'real India'...the national press, presumed to provide the information that moulds the opinions of senior policy makers, politicians, academics and journalists themselves. They are expected to serve as watchdog over the system of governance, a role traditionally described as that of the 'Fourth Estate'.

(Chaudhuri 2005:199-226)

The effort of the newspapers has been to widen their audience and reach out to different groups. It has been argued that newspaper reading habits have changed. While the older people read the newspaper in its entirety, younger readers often have specific interests like sports, entertainment or society gossip and directly move to the pages earmarked for these items. Segmented interest of readers imply that a newspaper must have a plurality of 'stories' to appeal to a wide range of readers with varied interests. This has often led to newspapers advocating infotainment, a combination of information and entertainment to sustain the interest of readers. Production of newspaper is no longer related to a commitment to certain values that embody a tradition. Newspapers have become a consumer product and as long as numbers are big, everything is up for sale.

Box 7.13

EXERCISE FOR Box 7.13

Read the text carefully.

1. Do you think readers have changed or newspapers have changed? Discuss.
2. Discuss the term infotainment. Can you think of examples. What do you think the effect of infotainment will be?

TELEVISION

In 1991 there was one state controlled TV channel Doordarshan in India. By 1998 there were almost 70 channels. Privately run satellite channels have multiplied rapidly since the mid-1990s. While Doordarshan broadcasts over 20 channels there were some 40 private television networks broadcasting in 2000. The staggering growth of private satellite television has been one of the defining developments of contemporary India. In 2002, 134 million individuals watched satellite TV on an average every week. This number went up to 190 million in 2005. The number of homes with access to satellite TV has jumped from 40 million in 2002 to 61 million in 2005. Satellite subscription has now penetrated 56 percent of all TV homes.



The Gulf War of 1991 (which popularised CNN), and the launching of Star-TV in the same year by the Whampoa Hutchinson Group of Hong Kong, signalled the arrival of private satellite Channels in India. In 1992, Zee TV, a Hindi-based satellite entertainment channel, also began beaming programs to cable television viewers in India. By 2000, 40 private cable and satellite channels were available including several that focused exclusively on regional-language broadcasting like Sun-TV, Eenadu-TV, Udaya-TV, Raj-TV, and Asianet. Meanwhile, Zee TV has also launched several regional networks, broadcasting in Marathi, Bengali and other languages.

While Doordarshan was expanding rapidly in the 1980s, the cable television industry was mushrooming in major Indian cities. The VCR greatly multiplied entertainment options for Indian audiences, providing alternatives to Doordarshan's single channel programming. Video viewing at home and in community-based parlours increased rapidly. The video fare consisted mostly of film-based entertainment, both domestic and imported. By 1984, entrepreneurs in cities such as Mumbai and Ahmedabad had begun wiring apartment buildings to transmit several films a day. The number of cable operators exploded from 100 in 1984, to 1200 in 1988, to 15,000 in 1992, and to about 60,000 in 1999.

The coming in of transnational television companies like Star TV, MTV, Channel [V], Sony and others, worried some people on the likely impact on Indian youth and on the Indian cultural identity. But most of the transnational television channels have through research realised that the use of the familiar is

more effective in procuring the diverse groups that constitute Indian audience. The early strategy of Sony International was to broadcast 10 Hindi films a week, gradually decreasing the number as the station produced its own Hindi language content. The majority of the foreign networks have now introduced either a segment of Hindi language programming (MTV India), or an entire new Hindi language channel (STAR Plus). STAR Sports and ESPN have dual commentary or an audio sound track in Hindi. The larger players have launched specific regional channels in languages such as Bengali, Punjabi, Marathi and Gujarati.

Perhaps the most dramatic adoption of localisation was carried out by STAR TV. In October 1996, STAR Plus, initially an all English general entertainment channel originating from Hong Kong, began producing a Hindi language belt of programming between 7 and 9 PM. By February 1999, the channel was converted to a solely Hindi Channel and all English serials shifted to STAR World, the network's English language international channel. Advertising to promote the change included the Hinglish slogan: 'Aapki Boli. Aapka Plus Point' (Your language/speech. Your Plus Point) (Butcher, 2003). Both STAR and Sony continued to dub US programming for younger audience as children appeared to be able to adjust to the peculiarities that arise when the language is one and the setting another. Have you watched a dubbed programme? What do you feel about it?

The Rescue of Prince

Box 7.14

Prince, a 5 yrs old boy had fallen into a 55 ft borewell shaft in Aldeharhi village in Kurukshetra, Haryana and was rescued by the army after a 50 hours ordeal in which a parallel shaft was dug through a well. Along with food, a closed circuit television camera (CCTV) had been lowered into the shaft in which the little boy was trapped. Two news channel ... suspended all other programmes and reporting of all other events and for two days continuous footage of the child bravely fighting off insects, sleeping or crying out to his mother was splashed on the TV screen. They even interviewed many people outside the temples asking them "what do you feel about Prince?" They asked people to send SMS for Prince. (*Prince ke liye aapka sandesh hamein bheje xxx pe*). Thousands of people had descended at the site and several free community kitchens were run for 2 days. It soon created a national hysteria and concern and people were shown praying in temples, mosques, churches and gurudwaras. There are other such instances when the TV is shown to intrude into personal lives of people.

EXERCISE FOR Box 7.14

You may have watched on television the whole rescue operation. If not you can choose from any other event. Organise a debate in class around the following points:

1. What is the likely impact of this competition among television channels to outdo one another in running exclusive live coverage of events for gaining higher viewership.
2. Can we look at this issue as a kind of voyeurism (peep into some other people's private/intimate moments) indulged in by television cameras?
3. Is it an example of the positive role played by television media in highlighting the plight of rural poor?

Most television channels are on throughout the day, 24X7. The format for news is lively and informal. News has been made far more immediate, democratic and intimate. Television has fostered public debate and is expanding its reach every passing year. This brings us to the question whether serious political and economic issues are neglected.

There are a growing number of news channels in Hindi and English, a large number of regional channels and an equally large number of reality shows, talk shows, Bollywood shows, family soaps, interactive shows, game shows and comedy shows. Entertainment television has produced a new cadre of superstars who have become familiar household names, and their private life, rivalry on sets feed the gossip columns of popular magazines and newspapers. Reality shows like *Kaun Banega Crorepati* or *Indian Idol* or *Big Boss* have become increasingly popular. Most of these are modelled along the lines of western programmes. Which of these programmes can be identified as interactive shows, as family soaps, talk shows, reality shows. Discuss.

Soap opera

Soap operas are stories that are serialised. They are continuous. Individual stories may come to an end, and different characters appear and disappear, but the soap itself has no ending until it is taken off the air completely. Soap operas presume a history, which the regular viewer knows – he or she becomes familiar with the characters, with their personalities and their life experiences.

Box 7.15

RADIO

In 2000, AIR's programmes could be heard in two-third of all Indian households in 24 languages and 146 dialects, over some 120 million radio sets. The advent of privately owned FM radio stations in 2002 provided a boost to entertainment programmes over radio. In order to attract audiences these privately run radio stations sought to provide entertainment to its listeners. As privately run FM channels are not permitted to broadcast any political news bulletins, many of these channel specialise in 'particular kinds' of popular music to retain their audiences. One such FM



channel claims that it broadcasts 'All hits all day'! Most of the FM channels which are popular among young urban professionals and students, often belong to media conglomerates. Like 'Radio Mirchi' belongs to the *Times of India* group, *Red FM* is owned by *Living Media* and *Radio City* by the *Star Network*. But independent radio stations engaged in public broadcastings like National Public Radio (USA) or BBC (UK) are missing from our broadcasting landscape.

In the two films: 'Rang de Basanti' and 'Lage Raho Munna Bhai' the radio is used as an active medium of communication although both the movies are set in the contemporary period. In 'Rang de Basanti', the conscientious, angry college youth, inspired by the legend of Bhagat Singh assassinates a minister and then captures All India Radio to reach out to the people and disseminate their message. While in 'Lage Raho Munna Bhai', the heroine is a radio jockey who wakes up the country with her hearty and full-throated "Good Morning Mumbai!" the hero too takes recourse to the radio station to save a girl's life.

The potential for using FM channels is enormous. Further privatisation of radio stations and the emergence of community owned radio stations would lead to the growth of radio stations. The demand for local news is growing. The number of homes listening to FM in India has also reinforced the world wide trend of networks getting replaced by local radio. The box below reveals not only the ingenuity of a village youth but also the need for catering to local cultures.

It may well be the only village FM radio station on the Asian sub-continent.

Box 7.16

The transmission equipment, costing little..., may be the cheapest in the world. But the local people definitely love it. On a balmy morning in India's northern state of Bihar, young Raghav Mahato gets ready to fire up his home-grown FM radio station. Thousands of villagers, living in a 20 km (12 miles) radius of Raghav's small repair shop and radio station ...tune their ... radio sets to catch their favourite station. After the crackle of static, a young, confident voice floats up the radio waves. "Good morning! Welcome to Raghav FM Mansoorpur 1! Now listen to your favourite songs," announces anchor and friend Sambhu into a cello-tape-plastered microphone surrounded by racks of local music tapes. For the next 12 hours, Raghav Mahato's outback FM radio station plays films songs and broadcasts public interest messages on HIV and polio, and even snappy local news, including alerts on missing children and the opening of local shops. Raghav and his friend run the indigenous radio station out of Raghav's thatched-roof Priya Electronics Shop.

The place is a cramped ...rented shack stacked with music tapes and rusty electrical appliances which doubles up as Raghav's radio station and repair shop.

He may not be literate, but Raghav's ingenuous FM station has made him more popular than local politicians. Raghav's love affair with the radio began in 1997 when he started out as a mechanic in a local repair shop. When the shop owner left the area, Raghav, son of a cancer-ridden farm worker, took over the shack with his friend. Sometime in 2003, Raghav, who by now had learned much about radio ...In impoverished Bihar state, where many areas lack power supplies, the cheap battery-powered transistor remains the most popular source of entertainment. "It took a long time to come up with the idea and make the kit which could transmit my programmes at a fixed radio frequency.

The kit cost me 50 rupees, "says Raghav. The transmission kit is fitted on to an antenna attached to a bamboo pole on a neighbouring three-storey hospital. A long wire connects the contraption to a creaky, old homemade stereo cassette player in Raghav's radio shack. Three other rusty, locally made battery-powered tape recorders are connected to it with colourful wires and a cordless microphone.

The shack has some 200 tapes of local Bhojpuri, Bollywood and devotional songs, which Raghav plays for his listeners. Raghav's station is truly a labour of love - he does not earn anything from it. His electronic repair shop work brings him some two thousand rupees a month. The young man, who continues to live in a shack with his family, doesn't know that running a FM station requires a government license. "I don't know about this. I just began this out of curiosity and expanded its area of transmission every year," he says.

So when some people told him sometime ago that his station was illegal, he actually shut it down. But local villagers thronged his shack and persuaded him to resume services again. It hardly matters for the locals that Raghav FM Mansoorpur 1 does not have a government license – they just love it.

"Women listen to my station more than men," he says. "Though Bollywood and local Bhojpuri songs are staple diet, I air devotional songs at dawn and dusk for women and old people." Since there's no phone-in facility, people send their requests for songs through couriers carrying handwritten messages and phone calls to a neighbouring public telephone office. Raghav's fame as the 'promoter' of a radio station has spread far and wide in Bihar. People have written to him, wanting work at his station, and evinced interest in buying his 'technology'.

Source: BBC NEWS: (By Amarnath Tewary) http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/4735642.stm Published: 2006/02/24 11:34:36 GMT © BBC MMV

CONCLUSION

That mass media is an essential part of our personal and public life today cannot be emphasised enough. This chapter in no way can capture your life experience with the media. What it does do is attempt to understand it as an important part of contemporary society. It also seeks to focus on its many dimensions – its link with the state and the market, its social organisation and management, its relationship with readers and audience. In other words it looks at both the constraints within which media operates and the many ways that it affects our lives.



Questions

1. Trace out the changes that have been occurring in the newspaper industry? What is your opinion on these changes?
2. Is radio as a medium of mass communication dying out? Discuss the potential that FM stations have in post-liberalisation India?
3. Trace the changes that have been happening in the medium of television. Discuss.

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Fourth session of the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC), Bombay, 1930
Sarojini Naidu, the Presidents of AIWC, is sitting in the second row, 10th from the right (in a dark sari). To Vidyagauri Nilkanth Bhattacharya, in the same row, to the extreme right (the woman with a hat) is Margaret E. Cousins, an Irish suffragette, theorist, author, and founder member of AWG. In this session she was one of the Vice-Presidents of the organization. The AWG was set up in 1920 and was involved in the freedom struggle of women's education and their right to vote.

Courtesy: Aparna Basu, *Women's Power*

8 Social Movements

A great many students and office-workers around the world go to work only for five or six days. And rest on the weekends. Yet, very few people who relax on their day off realise that this holiday is the outcome of a long struggle by workers. That the work-day should not exceed eight hours, that men and women should be paid equally for doing the same work, that workers are entitled to social security and pension – these and many other rights were gained through social movements. Social movements have shaped the world we live in and continue to do so.

The Right to Vote

Box 8.1

Universal adult franchise, or the right of every adult to vote, is one of the foremost rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. It means that we cannot be governed by anyone other than the people we have ourselves elected to represent us. This right is a radical departure from the days of colonial rule when ordinary people were forced to submit to the authority of colonial officers who represented the interests of the British Crown. However, even in Britain, not everyone was allowed to vote. Voting rights were limited to property-owning men. *Chartism* was a social movement for parliamentary representation in England. In 1839, more than 1.25 million people signed the People's Charter asking for universal male suffrage, voting by ballot, and the right to stand for elections without owning property. In 1842, the movement managed to collect 3.25 million signatures, a huge number for a tiny country. Yet, it was only after World War I, in 1918 that all men over 21, married women, women owning houses, and women university graduates over the age of 30, got the right to vote. When the *suffragettes* (women activists) took up the cause of all adult women's right to vote, they were bitterly opposed and their movement violently crushed.

ACTIVITY 8.1

Compare your life with your grandmother. How is it different from yours? What are the rights you take for granted in your life and which she did not have? Discuss.

We often assume that the rights we enjoy just happened to exist. It is important to recall the struggles of the past, which made these rights possible. You have read about the 19th century social reform movements, of the struggles against caste and gender discrimination and of the nationalist movement in India that brought us independence from colonial rule in 1947. You are familiar also with the many nationalist movements around the world in Asia and Africa and Americas that put an end to colonial rule. The socialist movements world over, the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s that fought for equal rights for Blacks, the anti apartheid struggle in South Africa have all changed the world in fundamental ways. Social movements not

only change societies. They also inspire other social movements. You saw in chapter 3 how the Indian national movement shaped the making of the Indian Constitution. And how in turn the Indian Constitution played a major role in bringing about social change.

ACTIVITY 8.2

Try and think of any example that will show you how society is changed by social movements and also how a social movement can lead to other social movements.

8.1 FEATURES OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

People may damage a bus and attack its driver when the bus has run over a child. This is an isolated incident of protest. Since it flares up and dies down it is not a social movement. A social movement requires *sustained collective action* over time. Such action is often directed against the state and takes the form of demanding changes in state policy or practice. Spontaneous, disorganised protest cannot be called a social movement either. Collective action must be marked by some degree of *organisation*. This organisation may include a *leadership* and a *structure* that defines how members relate to each other, make decisions and carry them out. Those participating in a social movement also have *shared objectives* and *ideologies*. A social movement has a general orientation or way of approaching to bring about (or to prevent) change. These defining features are not constant. They may change over the course of a social movement's life.

Social movements often arise with the *aim of bringing about changes on a public issue*, such as ensuring the right of the tribal population to use the forests or the right of displaced people to settlement and compensation. Think of other issues that social movements have taken up in the past and present. While social movements seek to bring in social change, *counter movements* sometimes arise in defence of status quo. There are many instances of such counter movements. When Raja Rammohun Roy campaigned against sati and formed the Brahmo Samaj, defenders of sati formed Dharma Sabha and petitioned the British not to legislate against sati. When reformers demanded education for girls, many protested that this would be disastrous for society. When reformers campaigned for widow remarriage, they were socially boycotted. When the so called 'lower caste' children enrolled in schools, some so called 'upper caste' children were withdrawn from the schools by their families. Peasant movements have often been brutally suppressed. More recently the social movements of erstwhile excluded groups like the Dalits have often invoked retaliatory action. Likewise proposals for extending reservation in educational institutions have led to counter movements opposing them. Social movements cannot change society easily. Since it goes against both entrenched interests and values, there is bound to be opposition and resistance. But over a period changes do take place.

ACTIVITY 8.3

Make a list of different social movements that you have heard or read of. What changes do they want to bring about? What changes do they want to prevent?

While protest is the most visible form of collective action, a social movement also acts in other, equally important, ways. Social movement activists hold meetings to mobilise people around the issues that concern them. Such activities help *shared understanding*. And prepare for a feeling of agreement or consensus about how to pursue the collective agenda. Social movements also chart out campaigns that include lobbying with the government, media and other important makers of

public opinion. You will recall this discussion from chapter 3. Social movements also *develop distinct modes of protest*. This could be candle and torch light processions, use of black cloth, street theatres, songs, poetry. Gandhi adopted novel ways such as *ahimsa*, *satyagraha* and his use of the *charkha* in the freedom movement. Recall the innovative modes of protest such as picketing and the defying of the colonial ban on producing salt.

The repertoire of satyagraha

Box 8.2

The fusion of foreign power and capital was the focus of social protest during India's nationalist struggle. Mahatma Gandhi wore *khadi*, hand-spun, hand-woven cloth, to support Indian cotton-growers, spinners and weavers whose livelihoods had been destroyed by the government policy of favouring mill-made cloth. The legendary *Dandi March* to make salt was a protest against British taxation policies that placed a huge burden on consumers of basic commodities in order to benefit the empire. Gandhi took items of everyday mass consumption like cloth and salt, and transformed them into symbols of resistance.

Breaking the Salt Laws, 1930
As part of civil disobedience against the British, the Salt Law was nullified. In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi led the first nonviolent protest: women are seen walking down a road carrying their salt pots.



Vimal Dadasaheb More (1970)

Speech by Ankush Kale who was born in a pardhi community at a public meeting

The pardhis are very skilful hunters. Yet society recognises us only as criminals....Our community has to undergo police torture under the charge of theft. Whenever there is a theft in the village, it is we who get arrested. The police exploit our womenfolk and we have to witness their humiliation. Society tries to keep us at a distance because we are called thieves. But have people ever tried to give us a thought? Why do our people steal? It is this society that is responsible for turning us into thieves. They never employ us because we are pardhis.

Source: Sharmila Rege Writing caste/writing gender: narrating dalit women's testimonies (Zubaan/Kali , New Delhi, 2006)

Box 8.3

EXERCISE FOR Box 8.3

Read the narrative below. How is a new shared understanding developing? How is the dominant society's perception being questioned?

DISTINGUISHING SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

It is important to distinguish between *social change* in general and *social movements*. Social change is continuous and ongoing. The broad historical processes of social change are the sum total of countless individual and collective actions gathered across time and space. Social movements are directed towards some specific goals. It involves long and continuous social effort and action by people. To draw from our discussion in chapter 2 we can view sanskritisation and westernisation as social change and see the 19th century social reformers' efforts to change society as social movements.

8.2 SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

WHY THE STUDY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IS IMPORTANT FOR SOCIOLOGY

From the very beginning, the discipline of sociology has been interested in social movements. The French Revolution was the violent culmination of several movements aimed at overthrowing the monarchy and establishing 'liberty, equality and fraternity'. In Britain, the industrial revolution was marked by great social upheaval. Recall our discussion on the emergence of sociology in the west in Book 1 NCERT class XI. Poor labourers and artisans who had left the countryside to find work in the cities protested against the inhuman living conditions into which they were forced. Food riots in England were often suppressed by the government. These protests were perceived by elites as a

major threat to the established order of society. Their anxiety about maintaining social order was reflected in the work of sociologist *Emile Durkheim*. Durkheim's writings about the division of labour in society, forms of religious life, and even suicide, mirror his concern about how social structures enable social integration. Social movements were seen as forces that led to disorder.

Scholars influenced by the ideas of *Karl Marx* offered a different view of violent collective action. Historians like E. P. Thompson showed that the 'crowd' and the 'mob' were not made up of anarchic hooligans out to destroy society. Instead, they too had a 'moral economy'. In other words they have their own shared understanding of right and wrong that informed their actions. Their research showed that poor people in urban areas had good reasons for protesting. They often resorted to public protest because they had no other way of expressing their anger and resentment against deprivation.

THEORIES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

According to the *theory of relative deprivation*, social conflict arises when a social group feels that it is worse off than others around it. Such conflict is likely to result in successful collective protest. This theory emphasises the role of psychological factors such as resentment and rage in inciting social movements. The limitations of this theory are that while perceptions of deprivation may be a necessary condition for collective action, they are not a sufficient reason in themselves. All instances where people feel relatively deprived do not result in social movements. Can you think of any example where people do feel deprived but do not start or join a social movement to redress their grievance?

To mobilise collectively in a sustained and organised manner, grievances have to be discussed and analysed in order to arrive at a shared ideology and strategy. That is, there is no automatic causal relationship between relative deprivation and collective action. There are other factors such as leadership and organisation that are equally important.

ACTIVITY 8.4

Think of the any social movement. You can take the case of the Indian freedom movement, any tribal movement, any anti racist movement and discuss whether people joined them by thinking of the pros and cons of joining it, of calculating rationally what they would gain individually.

Mancur Olson's book *The Logic of Collective Action* argues that a social movement is an aggregation of rational individual actors pursuing their self-interest. A person will join a social movement only if s/he will gain something from it. S/he will participate only if the risks are less than the gains. Olson's theory is based on the notion of the rational, utility-maximising individual. Do you think people always calculate individual costs and benefits before undertaking any action?

McCarthy and Zald's proposed *resource mobilisation theory* rejected Olson's assumption that social movements are made up of individuals pursuing their self-interest. Instead, they argued that a social movement's success depends on its ability to mobilise resources or means of different sorts. If a movement can muster resources such as leadership, organisational capacity, and communication facilities, and can use them within the available political opportunity structure, it is more likely to be effective. Critics argue that a social movement is not limited by existing resources. It can *create* resources such as new symbols and identities. As numerous poor people's movements show, scarcity of resources need not be a constraint. Even with an initial limited material resources and organisational base, a movement can generate resources through the process of struggle. Think of examples from both the past and the contemporary period.

Social conflict does not automatically lead to collective action. For such action to take place, a group must consciously think or identify themselves as oppressed beings. There has to be an organisation, leadership, and a clear ideology. Often, however, social protest does not follow on these lines. People may have a clear idea of how they are exploited, but they are often unable to challenge this through overt political mobilisation and protest. In his book *Weapons of the Weak*, James Scott analysed the lives of peasants and labourers in Malaysia. Protest against injustice took the form of small acts such as being deliberately slow. These kinds of acts have been defined as everyday acts of resistance.

Studies on poor women in South Asia has shown that often they are forced to give their small savings to their husbands who demand it for their drinks. They then devised a way out by hiding their money in two places. When they were forced to give up their hard earned saving, they gave the money from of one of the hiding places. And thereby ensured the safety of the other saving.

Box 8.4

EXERCISE FOR Box 8.4

Is this an act of resistance or a survival strategy, a coping mechanism? Discuss.

8.3 TYPES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

ONE WAY OF CLASSIFYING: REFORMIST, REDEMPTIVE, REVOLUTIONARY

There are different kinds of social movements. They can be classified as: (i) redemptive or transformative; (ii) reformist; and (iii) revolutionary. A *redemptive* social movement aims to bring about a change in the personal consciousness and actions of its individual members. For instance, people in the Ezhava community in Kerala were led by Narayana Guru to change their social practices. *Reformist* social movements strive to change the existing social

ACTIVITY 8.5

Find out about social movements such as the:

- Telangana struggle
- the Tebhaga movement
- the Swadhyaya Parivar movement
- the Santhal Hool
- the Ulgulan led by Birsa Munda
- the campaign against dowry deaths
- the movement to allow Dalits to enter temples
- the movement for separate statehood for Uttarakhand and Jharkhand
- the movement for widow remarriage in Bengal and Maharashtra and others
- any other social movement you have read about.

Can you classify these social movements in terms of the categories given above?

and political arrangements through gradual, incremental steps. The 1960s movement for the reorganisation of Indian states on the basis of language and the recent *Right to Information* campaign are examples of reformist movements. Revolutionary social movements attempt to radically transform social relations, often by capturing state power. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia that deposed the Tsar to create a communist state and the Naxalite movement in India that seeks to remove oppressive landlords and state officials can be described as revolutionary movements.

As you might discover when you try to classify a social movement in terms of this typology, most movements have a mix of redemptive, reformist and revolutionary elements. Or the orientation of a social movement may shift over time such that it starts off with, say, revolutionary objectives and becomes reformist. A movement may start from a phase of mass mobilisation and collective protest to become more institutionalised. Oommer 2004. Social scientists who study the life cycles of social movements call this a move towards '*social movement organisations*'.

How a social movement is perceived and classified is always a matter of interpretation. It differs from one section to another. For instance, what was a 'mutiny' or 'rebellion' for British colonial rulers in 1857 was 'the first war of Independence' for Indian nationalists. A mutiny is an act of defiance against legitimate authority, i.e., the British rule. A struggle for independence is a challenge to the very legitimacy of British rule. This shows how people attach different meanings to social movements.

ANOTHER WAY OF CLASSIFYING: OLD AND NEW

For much of the twentieth century social movements were class based such as working class movements and peasant movements or anti-colonial movements. While anti-colonial movements united entire people into national liberation struggles, class-based movements united classes to fight for their rights.

The most far-reaching social movements of the last century thus have been class-based or based on national liberation struggles. You have read in your history books about the workers' movements in Europe that gave rise to the international communist movement. Besides bringing about the formation of communist and socialist states across the world, most notably in the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, these movements also led to the reform of capitalism.

The creation of welfare states that protected workers' rights and offered universal education, health care and social security in the capitalist nations of Western Europe was partly due to political pressure created by the communist and socialist movements. The movement against colonialism has been as influential as the movement against capitalism. Since capitalism and colonialism have usually been inter-linked through forms of imperialism, social movements have simultaneously targeted both these forms of exploitation. That is, nationalist movements have mobilised against rule by a foreign power as well as against the dominance of foreign capital.



The decades after the Second World War witnessed the end of empire and the formation of new nation-states as a result of nationalist movements in India, Egypt, Indonesia, and many other countries. Since then, another wave of social movements occurred in the 1960s and early 1970s. This was the time of the war in Vietnam where forces led by the United States of America were involved in a bloody conflict in the former French colony against Communist guerrillas. In Europe, Paris was the nucleus of a vibrant students' movement that joined workers' parties in a series of strikes protesting against the war. Across the Atlantic, the United States of America was experiencing a surge of social protest. The civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King had been followed by the Black Power movement led by Malcolm X. The anti-war movement was joined by tens of thousands of students who were being compulsorily drafted by the government to go and fight in Vietnam. The women's movement and the environmental movement also gained strength during this time of social ferment.

It was difficult to classify the members of these so-called '*new social movements*' as belonging to the same class or even nation. Rather than a shared class identity, participants felt that they shared identities as students, women, blacks, or environmentalists. How are the old social movements, often based on class related issues like the trade union or peasant movements different from the new social movements like the environmental or women or tribal movements?

You are already familiar with the many instances of trade union movements and workers' struggles in chapter 5.

DISTINGUISHING THE NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT FROM THE OLD SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

We have already seen that *the historical contexts* were different. That was a period when nationalist movements were overthrowing colonial powers. And working class movements in the capitalist west were wresting better wages, better living conditions, social security, free schooling and health security from the state. That was also a period when socialist movements were establishing new kinds of states and societies. *The old social movements clearly saw reorganisation of power relations as a central goal.*

The *old social movements functioned within the frame of political parties*. The Indian National Congress led the Indian National Movement. The Communist Party of China led the Chinese Revolution. Today some believe that 'old' class-based political action led by trade unions and workers' parties is on the decline. Others argued that in the affluent West with its welfare state, issues of class-based exploitation and inequality were no longer central concerns. So the '*new social movements were not about changing the distribution of power in society but about quality-of-life issues such as having a clean environment.*

In the old social movements, *the role of political parties* was central. Political scientist Rajni Kothari attributes the surge of social movements in India in the 1970s to people's growing dissatisfaction with parliamentary democracy. Kothari argues that the institutions of the state have been captured by elites. Due to this, electoral representation by political parties is no longer an effective way for the poor to get their voices heard. People left out by the formal political system join social movements or *non-party political formations* in order to put pressure on the state from outside. Today, the broader term of civil society is used to refer to both old social movements represented by political parties and trade unions. And to new nongovernmental organisations, women's groups, environmental groups and tribal activists.

As you read about the various dimensions of social change in India you would have been struck by the fact that *globalisation* has been re-shaping peoples' lives in industry and agriculture, culture and media. Often firms are trans-national. Often legal arrangements that are binding are international such as the regulations of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Environmental and

health risks, fears of nuclear warfare are global in nature. Not surprisingly *therefore many of the new social movements are international in scope*. What is significant, however, is that the old and new movements are working together in new alliances such as the World Social Forum that have been raising awareness about the hazards of globalisation.

CAN WE APPLY THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN OLD AND NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT?

India has experienced a whole array of social movements involving women, peasants, dalits, adivasis, and others. Can these movements be understood as 'new social movements'? Gail Omvedt in her book *Reinventing Revolution* points out that concerns about social inequality and the unequal distribution of resources continue to be important elements in these movements. Peasant movements have mobilised for better prices for their produce and protested against the removal of agricultural subsidies. Dalit labourers have acted collectively to ensure that they are not exploited by upper-caste landowners and money-lenders. The women's movement has worked on issues of gender discrimination in diverse spheres like the workplace and within the family.

At the same time, these new social movements are *not just about 'old' issues of economic inequality*. Nor are they organised along class lines alone. *Identity politics, cultural anxieties and aspirations* are essential elements in creating social movements and occur in ways that are difficult to trace to class-based inequality. Often, these social movements unite participants across class boundaries. For instance, the women's movement includes urban, middle-class feminists as well as poor peasant women. The regional movements for separate statehood bring together different groups of people who do not share homogeneous class identities. In a social movement, questions of social inequality can occur alongside other, equally important, issues.

This will be clear when we discuss the Chipko movement later.

8.4 ECOLOGICAL MOVEMENTS

For much of the modern period the greatest emphasis has been laid on development. Over the decades there has been a great deal of concern about the unchecked use of natural resources and a model of development that creates new needs that further demands greater exploitation of the already depleted natural resources. This model of development has also been critiqued for assuming that all sections of people will be beneficiaries of development. Thus big dams displace people from their homes and sources of livelihood. Industries displace agriculturalists from their homes and livelihood. The impact of industrial pollution is yet another story. Here we take just one example of an ecological movement to examine the many issues that are interlinked in an ecological movement.

ACTIVITY 8.6

Find out some instances of environmental pollution from your region. Discuss. You can also have a poster exhibition of all your findings.



Chipko activists gather together on World Environment Day at Saklana in 1986

The Chipko movement, an example of the ecological movement, in the Himalayan foothills is a good example of such intermingled interests and ideologies. According to Ramachandra Guha in his book *Unquiet Woods*, villagers rallied together to save the oak and rhododendron forests near their villages. When government forest contractors came to cut down the trees, villagers, including large numbers of women, stepped forward to hug the trees to prevent their being felled. At stake was the question of villagers' subsistence. All of them relied on the forest to get firewood, fodder and other daily necessities. This conflict placed the livelihood needs of poor villagers against the government's desire to generate revenues from selling timber. The economy of subsistence

was pitted against the economy of profit. Along with this issue of social inequality (villagers versus a government that represented commercial, capitalist interests), the Chipko movement also raised the issue of ecological sustainability. Cutting down natural forests was a form of environmental destruction that had resulted in devastating floods and landslides in the region. For the villagers, these 'red' and 'green' issues were inter-linked. While their survival depended on the survival of the forest, they also valued the forest for its own sake as a form of ecological wealth that benefits all. In addition, the Chipko movement also expressed the resentment of hill villagers against a



Discussing deforestation, Junagadh, Himachal Pradesh

Chipko Movement**Box 8.5**

The unusually heavy monsoon of 1970 precipitated the most devastating flood in living memory. In the Alaknanda valley, water inundated 100 square kilometres of land, washed away 6 metal bridges and 10 kilometres of motor roads, 24 buses and several other vehicles; 366 houses collapsed and 500 acres of standing paddy crops were destroyed. The loss of human and bovine life was considerable.

...The 1970 floods mark a turning-point in the ecological history of the region. Villagers, who bore the brunt of the damage, were beginning to perceive the hitherto tenuous links between deforestation, landslides and floods. It was observed that some of the villages most affected by landslides lay directly below forests where felling operations had taken place....

...The villagers' cause was taken up by the Dashauli Gram Swaraja Sangh (DGSS), a cooperative organisation based in Chamoli district.

...Despite these early protests, the government went ahead with the yearly auction of forests in November. One of the plots scheduled to be assigned was the Reni forest....

...The contractors' men who were travelling to Reni from Joshimath stopped the bus shortly before Reni. Skirting the village, they made for the forest. A small girl who spied the workers with their implements rushed to Gaura Devi, the head of the village Mahila Mandal (Women's Club). Gaura Devi quickly mobilised the other housewives and went to the forest. Pleading with the labourers not to start felling operations, the women initially met with abuse and threats. When the women refused to budge, the men were eventually forced to retire.

EXERCISE FOR Box 8.5

- Is this social movement raising 'old' issues of class-based inequality and resource distribution?
- Or is it raising other concerns such as ecological sustainability and the cultural rights of people?

In our current information age, social movements around the globe are able to join together in huge regional and international networks comprising non-governmental organisations, religious and humanitarian groups, human rights association, consumer protection advocates, environmental activists and others who campaign in the public interest. ...The enormous protests against the World Trade Organisation that took place in Seattle, for example, were organised in part through internet-based network.

Box 8.6**EXERCISE FOR Box 8.6**

Read the text given above and discuss how even social movements get globalised. How does technology help? How does it change the role social movements can play?

8.5 CLASS BASED MOVEMENTS

PEASANT MOVEMENTS

Peasant movements or agrarian struggles have taken place from pre-colonial days. The movements in the period between 1858 and 1914 tended to remain localised, disjointed and confined to particular grievances. Well-known are the Bengal revolt of 1859-62 against the indigo plantation system and the 'Deccan riots' of 1857 against moneylenders. Some of these issues continued into the following period, and under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi became partially linked to the Independence movement. For instance, the Bardoli Satyagraha (1928, Surat District) a 'non-tax' campaign as part of the nationwide non-cooperative movement, a campaign of refusal to pay land revenue and the Champaran Satyagraha (1917-18) directed against indigo plantations. In the 1920s, protest movements against the forest policies of the British government and local rulers arose in certain regions. Recall our discussion on structural changes in Chapter 1.

Between 1920 and 1940 peasant organisations arose. The first organisation to be founded was the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (1929) and in 1936 the All India Kisan Sabha. The peasants organised by the Sabhas demanded freedom from economic exploitation for peasants, workers and all other exploited classes. At the time of Independence we had the two most classical cases of peasant movements, namely the Tebhaga movement (1946-7) and the Telangana movement (1946-51). The first was a struggle of sharecroppers in Bengal in North Bihar for two thirds share of their produce instead of the customary half.

It had the support of the Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party of India (CPI). The second, directed against the feudal conditions in the princely state of Hyderabad and was led by the CPI.

ACTIVITY 8.7

Find out more about the Naxal Movement:

- The early years
- The current phase
- The issues
- The mode of protest

Discuss. Go back to chapter 4 and identify what could be the social causes responsible for the movement.

Certain issues which had dominated colonial times changed after independence. For land reforms, zamindari abolition, declining importance of land revenue and public credit system began to alter rural areas. The period after 1947 was characterised by two major social movements. The Naxalite struggle and the 'new farmer's movements.' The Naxalite movement started from the region of Naxalbari (1967) in Bengal.

The central problem for peasants was land. You have a clear understanding of the sharp divisions within the agrarian structure in rural India from chapter 4. Boxes 1 and 2 provide two brief accounts of the movement.

...the Siliguri subdivision peasants' conference proved to be a great success. The peasants, quickened and strengthened by their earlier militant struggles, looked forward expectantly. Faces deadened and dulled with the grinding routine of labour on the *jotedars'* fields in sun and rain glowed with hope and understanding. According to Kanu Sanyal's later claims, from March 1967 to April 1967, all the villagers were organised. From 15,000 to 20,000 peasants were enrolled as wholetime activists. Peasants' committees were formed in every village and they were transformed into armed guards. They soon occupied land in the name of peasants' committees, burnt all land records 'which had been used to cheat them of their dues', cancelled all hypothecary debts, passed death sentences on oppressive landlords, formed armed bands by looting guns from landlords, armed themselves with conventional weapons like bows, arrows and spears, and set up parallel administration to look after the villages...

Box 8.7

Source: Sumanata Banerjee "Naxalbari and the Left Movement" in ed. Ghanshyam Shah Social Movements and the State (Sage, Delhi 2002) pp.125-192

The guerrilla movement was heralded by the forcible cutting of crops from the land of a rich landlord at Garudabhadra, near Boddapadu in the plains area on 24 November 1968. More significant was the action in the hill tracts the next day, when in Pedagottili village of the Parvatipuram Agency area, about 250 Girijans from several villages armed with bows, arrows and spears... raided the house of a ...landlord cum moneylender... and took possession of his hoarded paddy, rice, other food grains and property worth about Rs. 20,000. They also seized documents.

Box 8.8**EXERCISE FOR Box 8.7 AND 8.8**

Read box 8.7 and 8.8 carefully. Identify the issues and the tactics.

Many of the agrarian problems persist in contemporary India. Chapter 4 has discussed these in detail. The Naxal movement is a growing force even today.

The so called 'new farmer's movements began in the 1970s in Punjab and Tamil Nadu. These movements were regionally organised, were non-party, and involved farmers rather than peasants. (farmers are said to be market-involved as both commodity producers and purchasers) The basic ideology of the movement was strongly anti-state and anti-urban. The focus of demand were 'price and related issues' (for example price procurement, remunerative prices, prices for agricultural inputs, taxation, non-repayment of loans). Novel methods of agitation were used: blocking of roads and railways, refusing politicians and bureaucrats entry to villages, and so on. It has been argued that the farmers' movements have broadened their agenda and ideology and include environment and women's issues. Therefore, they can be seen as a part of the worldwide 'new social movements'.

WORKERS' MOVEMENTS

Factory production began in India in the early part of the 1860s. You will recall our discussion on the specific character of industrialisation in the colonial period. The general pattern of trade set up by the colonial regime was one under which raw materials were procured from India and goods manufactured in the United Kingdom were marketed in the colony. These factories were, thus established in the port towns of Calcutta (Kolkata) and Bombay (Mumbai). Later factories were also set up in Madras (Chennai). Tea plantations in Assam were established as early as 1839.

In the early stages of colonialism, labour was very cheap as the colonial government did not regulate either wages or working conditions. You will remember the manner in which the colonial government ensured supply of labour in the tea plantations (Chapter 1)

Though trade unions emerged later, workers did protest. Their actions then were, however, more spontaneous than sustained. Some of the nationalist leaders also drew in the workers into the anti colonial movement. The war led to the expansion of industries in the country but it also brought a great deal of misery to the poor. There were food shortage and sharp increase in prices. There were waves of strikes in the textile mills in Bombay. In September and October 1917 there were around 30 recorded strikes. Jute workers in Calcutta struck work. In Madras, the workers of Buckingham and Carnatic Mills (Binny's) struck work for increased wages. Textile workers in Ahmedabad struck work for increase in wages by 50 per cent. (Bhowmick 2004)

The first trade union was established in April 1918 in Madras by B.P. Wadia, a social worker and member of the Theosophical Society. During the same year, Mahatma Gandhi founded the Textile Labour Association (TLA). In 1920 the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed in Bombay. The AITUC was a broad-based organisation involving diverse ideologies. The main ideological groups were the communists led by S.A. Dange and M.N. Roy, the moderates led by M. Joshi and V.V. Giri and the nationalists which involved people like Lala Lajpat Rai and Jawaharlal Nehru.

The formation of the AITUC made the colonial government more cautious in dealing with labour. It attempted to grant workers some concessions in order to contain unrest. In 1922 the government passed the fourth Factories Act which reduced the working day to 10 hours. And in 1926, the Trade Unions Act was passed, which provided for registration of trade unions and proposed some regulations. By the mid 1920s, the AITUC had nearly 200 unions affiliated to it and its membership stood at around 250,000.

During the last few years of British rule the communists gained considerable control over the AITUC. The Indian National Congress chose to form another union called the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in May 1947. The split in the AITUC in 1947 paved the way for further splits on the line of



Top: Bombay textile worker's strike 1981-82



political parties. Apart from the working class movement being divided on the lines of political parties at the national level, regional parties too started to form their own unions from the late 1960s.

In 1966-67 the economy suffered a major recession which led to a decrease in production and consequently employment. There was a general unrest. In 1974 there was a major railway workers' strike. The confrontation between the state and trade unions became acute. During the Emergency in 1975-77 the government curbed all trade union activities. This again was short lived. The workers' movement was very much part of the wider struggle for civil liberties.

In the contemporary context of globalisation you have read about the changes affecting labour. The challenges before the trade unions are also of a new nature. You need to go back to chapter 5 and 6 to understand these.

ACTIVITY 8.8

Follow the news regularly and collect information on the issues that trade unions are taking up.

■ Discuss in the context of globalisation

8.6 CASTE BASED MOVEMENTS

THE DALIT MOVEMENT

*The sun of self-respect has burst into flame-
Let it burn up these castes!
Smash, break, destroy
These walls of hatred.
Crush to smithereens this eons-old school of blindness,
Rise, O people!*

Social movements of Dalits show a particular character. The movements cannot be explained satisfactorily by reference to economic exploitations alone or political oppression, although these dimensions are important. This is a struggle for recognition as fellow human beings. It is a struggle for self-confidence and a space for self-determination. It is a struggle for abolishment of stigmatisation, that untouchability implied. It has been called a struggle to be touched.

The word Dalit is commonly used in Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati and many other Indian languages, meaning the poor and oppressed persons. It was first used in the new context in Marathi by neo-Buddhist activists, the followers of Babasaheb Ambedkar in the early 1970s. It refers to those who have been broken, ground down by those above them in a deliberate way. There is, in the word itself, inherent denial of pollution, karma and justified caste hierarchy.



There has not been a single, unified Dalit movement in the country now or in the past. Different movements have highlighted different issues related to Dalits, around different ideologies. However, all of them assert a Dalit identity though the meaning may not be identical or precise for everyone. Notwithstanding differences in the nature of Dalit movements and the meaning of identity, there has been a common quest for equality, self-dignity and eradication of untouchability. (Shah 2001:194) This can be seen in the Satnami Movement of the Chamars in the Chattisgarh plains in eastern MP, Adi Dharma Movement in Punjab, the Maher Movement in Maharashtra, the socio-political mobilisation among the Jatavas of Agra and the Anti Brahman Movement in south India.

In the contemporary period the Dalit movement has unquestionably acquired a place in the public sphere that cannot be ignored. This has been accompanied by a growing body of Dalit literature.

ACTIVITY 8.9

Find out more about Dalit literature. Discuss any poem or story of your choice from within the body of Dalit writings.

Dalit literature is squarely opposed to the Chaturvarna system and caste hierarchy which it considers as responsible for crushing the creativity and very existence of lower castes. Dalit writers are insistent on using their own imageries and expressions rooted in their own experiences and perceptions. Many felt that the high-flown social imageries of mainstream society would hide the truth rather than reveal it. Dalit literature gives a call for social and cultural revolt. While some emphasise the cultural struggle for dignity and identity, others also bring in the structural features of society including the economic dimensions.

Sociologists, attempts to classify Dalit movements have led them to believe that they belong to all the types, namely reformative, redemptive, revolutionary.

...the anti-caste movement which began in the 19th century under the inspiration of Jotiba Phule and was carried out in the 1920s by the non-Brahmin movements in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu and then developed under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar had characteristics of all types. At its best it was revolutionary in terms of society and redemptive in terms of individuals. In partial context, the 'post Ambedkar Dalit movement' has had revolutionary practice. It has provided alternative ways of living, at some points limited and at some points radical and all-encompassing, ranging from changes in behaviour such as giving up eating beef to religious conversion. It has focussed on changes in the entire society, from radical revolutionary goal of abolishing caste oppression and economic exploitation to the limited goals of providing scope for members of Scheduled Caste to achieve social mobility.

But on the whole...this movement has been a reformist movement. It has mobilized along caste lines, but only made half hearted efforts to destroy caste; it has attempted and achieved some real though limited societal changes with gains especially for the educated sections among Dalits, but it has failed to transform society sufficiently to raise the general mass from what is still among the most excruciating poverty in the world.

EXERCISE FOR Box 8.10

- Identify the reasons why the Dalit movement can be termed reformist as well as redemptive.
- Do you agree with the observation given in the text. Discuss.

Box 8.9

An unknown poet's poem (1890s) on his fellow Mahars.

Their houses are outside the village;
There are lice in their women's hair;
Naked children play in the rubbish;
They eat carrion;
The faces of the untouchables have a humble look;
There is no learning among them;
They know the names of the village goddesses and the demon gods;
But not the name of Brahma.

Box 8.10

BACKWARD CLASS CASTES MOVEMENTS

The emergence of backward castes/classes as political entities has occurred both in the colonial and post-colonial contexts. The colonial state often distributed patronage on the basis of caste. It made sense, therefore, for people to stay within their caste for social and political identity in institutional life. It also influenced similarly placed caste groups to unite themselves and to form what has been termed a 'horizontal stretch'. Caste, thus began to lose its ritual content and become more and more secularised for political mobilisation. (recall the discussion on secularisation in chapter 2)

Box 8.11

The following observations were made by G.B. Pant during a speech that moved the constitution of the Advisory Committee on fundamental rights, minorities etc.

We have to take particular care of the Depressed Classes, the Scheduled Castes and the Backward Classes... We must do all we can to bring them up to the general level...The strength of the chain is measured by the weakest link of it and so until every link is fully revitalised, we will not have a healthy body politic.

Recent years have seen renewed debate about the state decision on reservation to this section.

The term 'Backward Classes' has been in use in different parts of the country since the late 19th Century. It began to be used more widely in Madras presidency since 1872, in the princely state of Mysore since 1918, and in Bombay presidency since 1925. From the 1920s, a number of organisations united around the issue of caste sprang up in different parts of the country. These included the United Provinces Hindu Backward Classes League, All-India Backward Classes Federation, All India Backward Classes League. In 1954, 88 organisations were counted working for the Backward Classes.

THE UPPER CASTE RESPONSE

The increasing visibility of both Dalits and other backwards classes has led to a feeling among sections of the upper caste that they are being given short shrift. The government, they feel, does not pay any heed to them because they are numerically not significant enough. As sociologists we need to recognise that such a 'feeling' does exist and then we need to scrutinise to what extent such an impression is grounded on empirical facts. We also need to ask why earlier generations from the so called 'upper castes' did not think of 'caste' as a living reality of modern India? Box 8.12 provides an obvious sociological explanation.

By and large when compared to the situation prevailing before independence, the condition of all social groups, including the lowest caste and tribes, has improved today. But by how much has it improved? How have the lowest castes/tribes fared in comparison to the rest of the population? It is true that in the early part of the 21st century, the variety of occupations and professions among all caste groups is much wider than it was today. However, this does not change the massive social reality that the overwhelming majority of those in the 'highest' or

To the generations born in Nehruvian India, and specially to those who (like me) were brought up in traditionally upper-caste but newly urban and newly professional middle-class environment, caste was an archaic concept. True, it would be brought out figuratively mothballs to preside over traditional rites of passage, specially marriage, but it seemed to have no active role in urban everyday life.

Box 8.12

It is mainly now- after Mandal so to speak- that we are beginning to understand why caste was almost invisible in urban middle- class contexts. The most important reason, of course, is that these contexts were overwhelmingly dominated by the upper castes. This homogeneity made caste drop below the threshold of social visibility. If almost everyone around is upper-caste, caste identity is unlikely to be an issue, just as our identity as "Indians" may be relevant abroad but goes unnoticed in India. (*Deshpande 2003: 99*)

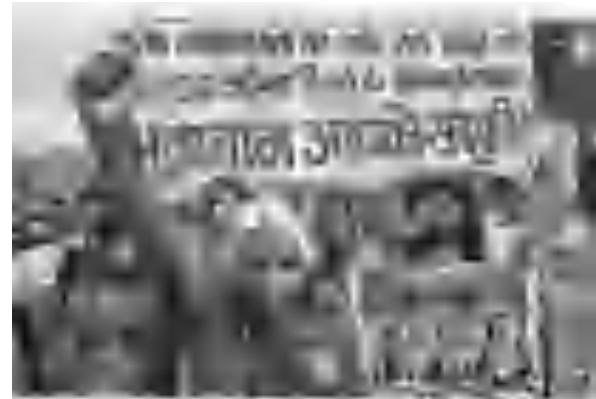
most preferred occupations are from the upper castes, while the vast majority of those in the menial and despised occupations belong to the lowest castes. Issues of discrimination and exclusion have been discussed at some length in Book 1.

8.7 THE TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

Different tribal groups spread across the country may share common issues. But the distinctions between them are equally significant. Many of the tribal movements have been largely located in the so called 'tribal belt' in middle India, such as the Santhals, Hos, Oraons, Mundas in Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas. The region constitutes the main part of what has come to be called Jharkhand. We will not be able to go into any detailed account of the different movements. We take Jharkhand as an example of a tribal movement with a history that goes back a hundred years. We also briefly touch on the specificity of the tribal movements in the North East but fail to deal comprehensively the many differences that exist between one tribal movement and another within the region.

JHARKHAND

Jharkhand is one of the newly-formed states of India, carved out of south Bihar in the year 2000. Behind the formation of this state lies more than a century of resistance. The social movement for Jharkhand had a charismatic leader in Birsa Munda, an adivasi who led a major uprising against the British. After his death, Birsa became an important icon of the movement. Stories and songs about him can be found all over Jharkhand. The memory of Birsa's struggle was also kept alive by writing. Christian missionaries working in south Bihar



Struggles of the Tribals continue

were responsible for spreading literacy in the area. Literate adivasis began to research and write about their history and myths. They documented and disseminated information about tribal customs and cultural practices. This helped create a unified ethnic consciousness and a shared identity as Jharkhandis.

Literate adivasis were also in a position to get government jobs so that, over time, a middle-class adivasi intellectual leadership emerged that formulated the demand for a separate state and lobbied for it in India and abroad. Within south Bihar, adivasis shared a common hatred of *dikus* – migrant traders and money-lenders who had settled in the area and grabbed its wealth, impoverishing the original residents. Most of the benefits from the mining and industrial projects in this mineral-rich region had gone to *dikus* even as adivasi lands had been alienated. Adivasi experiences of marginalisation and their sense of injustice were mobilised to create a shared Jharkhandi identity and inspire collective action that eventually led to the formation of a separate state.

The issues against which the leaders of the movement in Jharkhand agitated were:

- acquisition of land for large irrigation projects and firing ranges;
- survey and settlement operations, which were held up, camps closed down, etc.
- collection of loans, rent and cooperative dues, which were resisted;
- nationalisation of forest produce which they boycotted

THE NORTH EAST

The process of state formation initiated by the Indian government following the attainment of independence generated disquieting trends in all the major hill districts in the region. Conscious of their distinct identity and traditional autonomy the tribes were unsure of being incorporated within the administrative machinery of Assam.

The rise of ethnicity in the region is thus a response to cope with the new situation which developed as a consequence of the tribe's contact with a powerful alien system. Long isolated from the Indian mainstream the tribes were able to maintain their own worldview and social and cultural institutions with little external influence. ...While the earlier phase showed a tendency towards secessionism, this trend has been replaced by a search for autonomy within the framework of the Indian Constitution. (*Nongbri 2003: 115*)

One of the key issues that bind tribal movements from different parts of the country is the alienation of tribals from forest lands. In this sense ecological issues are central to tribal movements. Just as cultural issues of identity and economic issues such as inequality are. This brings us back to the question about the blurring of old and new social movements in India.

8.8 THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

THE 19TH CENTURY SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS AND EARLY WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

You are already familiar with the 19th century social reform movements that raised various issues concerning women. Chapter 2 had dealt with it as did the earlier book. The early 20th century saw the growth of women's organisations at a national and local level. The Women's India Association (WIA) (1917) All India Women's Conference (AIWC) (1926), National Council for Women in India (NCWI) (1925) are ready names that we can mention. While many of them began with a limited focus, their scope extended over time. For instance, the AIWC began with the idea that 'women's welfare' and 'politics' were mutually exclusive. Few years later the Presidential address stated, "...Can the Indian man or woman be free if India be a slave? How can we remain dumb about national freedom, the very basis of all great reforms?" (Chaudhuri 1993: 149)

It can be argued that this period of activity did not constitute a social movement. It can be argued otherwise too. Let us recall some of the features that characterise social movements. It did have organisations, ideology, leadership, a shared understanding and the aim of bringing about changes on a public issue. What they succeeded together was to create an atmosphere where the women's question could not be ignored.

AGRARIAN STRUGGLES AND REVOLTS

It is often assumed that only middle class educated women are involved in social movements. Part of the struggle has been to remember the forgotten history of women's participation. Women participated along with men in struggles and revolts originating in tribal and rural areas in the colonial period. The Tebhaga movement in Bengal, the Telangana arms struggle from the erstwhile Nizam's rule, and the Warli tribal's revolt against bondage in Maharashtra are some examples.

Post 1947

An issue that is often raised is that if there was an active women's movement before 1947, whatever happened afterwards. One explanation has been that



In the North Cedar Hills, a woman named Gufiallo became famous for her part in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

many of the women activists who were also involved in the nationalist movement got involved in the nation building task. Others cite the trauma of Partition as responsible for the lull.

In the mid 1970s there was a renewal of the women's movement in India. Some call it the second phase of the Indian women's movement. While many of the concerns remained the same there were changes both in terms of organisational strategy as well as ideologies. There was the growth of what is termed as the autonomous women's movements. The term 'autonomy' referred to the fact that they were 'autonomous' or independent from political parties as distinct from those women's organisations that had links with political parties. It was felt that political parties tended to marginalise issues of women.

Apart from organisational changes, there were new issues that were focussed upon. For instance, violence against women. Over the years there have been numerous campaigns that have been taken up. You may have noticed that application for school forms have both father's and mother's names. This was not always true. Likewise important legal changes have taken place thanks to the campaign by the women's movement. Issues of land rights, employment have been fought alongside rights against sexual harassment and dowry.



Struggle against Dowry



Shahjehan Begum 'Ape' with a photograph of her daughter, allegedly murdered for dowry.

There has been a recognition too that while all women are in some way disadvantaged vis-a-vis men, all women do not suffer the same level or kind of discrimination. The concerns of the educated middle class woman is different from the peasant woman just as the concern of the Dalit woman is different from the 'upper caste' woman. Let us take the example of violence.

There has also been greater recognition that both men and women are constrained by the dominant gender identities. For instance men in patriarchal societies feel they must be strong and successful. It is not, manly, to express oneself emotionally. A gender-just society would allow both men and women to be free. This ofcourse rests on the idea that for true freedom to grow and develop injustices of all kind have to end.

In the face of widespread unemployment, ecological degradation, and rampant poverty, ... a new ferment of political action began in the country. In some cases, the struggles were launched from party fronts or from joint fronts of coalitions of parties. An example of the latter kind of action is provided by the Anti Price Rise Movement of Bombay and Gujarat in the late 60s....

Box 8.13

During the early 70s, in crisis-ridden Bihar, a massive upsurge of students ...supported Jayaprakash Narayan's call for a 'Total Revolution'. ...A large number of questions about power structures was raised, which included many about women- questions about family, work, distribution, and family violence, unequal access to resources enjoyed by men and women, issues of male-female relationship, and women's sexuality.

The 70s also witnessed the emergence of the 'autonomous' women's movement. During the mid 70s, many educated women took to radical, active politics, and simultaneously promoted an analysis of women's issues. Groups of women came together in many cities. Among the incidents that played catalytic roles in crystallising these meetings into organisational efforts were the Mathura rape case (1978) and the Maya Tyagi rape case (1980). Both were cases of custodial rape by the police, and led to nationwide protest movements...

Source: Ilina Sen "Women's Politics in India" in ed. Maitrayee Chaudhuri Feminism in India (Women Unlimited/Kali, New Delhi, 2004) PP. 187-210.

An analysis of the practices of violence against women by caste would reveal that while the incidence of dowry deaths and violent controls and regulations on the mobility and sexuality by the family are frequent among the dominant upper castes- dalit women are more likely to face the collective and public threat of rape, sexual assault and physical violence at the workplace and in public.

Box 8.14

Source: Sharmila Rege "Dalit Women Talk Differently: A Critique of 'Difference' and Towards a Dalit Feminist Standpoint Position" in Maitrayee Chaudhuri ed. Feminism in India (p.211-223) (Women Unlimited/Kali Delhi 2004)

EXERCISE FOR Box 8.14

- Think what other kinds of difference would exist between one section of women and another.
- Would there still be something common for all women as women? Discuss

CONCLUSION

As we reach the end of the book, it is perhaps relevant to go back to where we began in our first sociology book in class XI. We had begun by discussing the dialectical relationship between the individual and society. Social movements perhaps best shows this relationship. They arise because individuals and social groups seek to change their conditions. Thereby they change both themselves and society.

Questions

1. Imagine a society where there has been no social movement. Discuss. You can also describe how you imagine such a society to be.
2. Write short notes on:
 - Women's Movement
 - Tribal Movements
3. In India it is difficult to make a clear distinction between the old and new social movements. Discuss.
4. Environmental movements often also contain economic and identity issues. Discuss.
5. Distinguish between peasant and New Farmers' movements.

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Glossary

Body Language: The way people dress, talk, move, gesticulate, interact, carry themselves.

Commercialisation: The process of transforming something into a product, service or activity that has economic value and can be traded in the market

Culture: Culture was understood as that which referred to knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Decentralisation: Refers to a process of gradual devolution or transfer of functions, resources and decision-making powers to the lower-level democratically elected bodies.

Digitalisation: Refers to the process whereby information is produced as a universal binary code, and can thus be easily processed, stored and circulated at greater speed across communication technologies like internet, satellite transmission, telephones, fibre optic lines etc.

Disinvestment: Privatisation of public sector or government companies

Division of labour: Specialisation of tasks in ways that may involve exclusion from some opportunities. Hence, closure of labour opportunities exist in employment or by gender.

Diversification: Spread of investment into different types of economic activities in order to reduce risks.

Fordism: Refers to a system of production made popular by the American industrialist Henry Ford in the early part of 20th century. He popularized the assembly line method of mass production of a standardized product (cars). This era also led to payment of better wages to the workers and social welfare policies being implemented by both industrialists and the state.

Great and Little Tradition: The ways of folks or unlettered peasants constitute the Little Traditions and that of the elite or the reflective few the Great Tradition. While the Little Tradition is often localised, Great Tradition has a tendency to spread out. However studies of festivals in India will show how sanskritic rites (Great Tradition) are often added to non Sanskritic rites (Little Tradition) without replacing them.

Identity politics: Refers to a range of political activities that are founded in the shared experiences of a particular marginalized group such as gender, race, ethnic group etc.

Import-substitution development strategy: The import substitution substitutes externally produced goods and services, especially basic necessities such as food, water, energy. The notion of import substitution was popularized in the 1950s and 1960s to promote economic independence of development in developing countries.

Industrialization: The development of modern forms of industry- factories, machines and large-scale production processes. Industrialization has been one of the main sets of processes influencing the social world over the past two centuries.

Means of production: The means whereby the production of material goods is carried on in a society, including not just technology but the social relations between producers

Micro-electronics: The branch of electronics dealing with the miniaturization of components and circuits. The giant step in the field of micro-electronics came in 1971 with the invention by an Intel engineer of the microprocessor that is a computer on a chip. In 1971, 2,300 transistors (a device for controlling flow of electricity) were packed on a chip of the size of a thumbtack, in 1993, there were 35 million transistors. Compare this with the first electronic computer which weighed 30 tons, was built on metal stands 9 feet tall and occupied the area of a gymnasium.

Mono crop regime: Planting a single crop or type of seed over a large area.

Norms: The normative dimension consists of folkways, mores, customs, conventions and laws. These are values or rules that guide social behaviour in different contexts. We most often follow social norms because we are used to doing it, as a result of socialisation. All social norms are accompanied by sanctions that promote conformity. While norms are implicit rules, laws are explicit rules.

Optic fiber: A thin glass strand designed for light transmission. A single hair-thin fiber is capable of transmitting trillions of bits of information per second while a thin copper wire which was used earlier could transmit only 144,000 bits of information.

Outsourcing: Giving work out to other companies.

Patrilineality: A system in which one belongs to one's father's lineage or family;

Piece rate wage: Payment on the basis of items produced.

Post-Fordism: Refers to the method of flexible production adopted by multinational companies who either share their production units or outsource the whole process of production and distribution to third world countries because of the availability of cheap labour. This period also marks the growth of the financial sector and growth of the culture and leisure industry evident in the appearance in cities of shopping malls, multiplex cinema halls, amusement parks and the phenomenal growth in television channels.

Raiyatwari system: A system of tax collection in colonial India in which the government settled the revenue directly with the cultivator.

Reference Group: The social group which an individual or group desires to be like and therefore adopts their ways of dressing and behaving. Usually the reference group occupies a dominant position in society.

Sensex or Nifty index: These are indicators of the rise or fall in the share of the major companies. Sensex is the indicator of the shares of the major companies at the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) while Nifty is the indicator for the companies at the National Stock Exchange (NSE) located in New Delhi.

Social Fact: According to Emile Durkheim they refer to those aspects of social life that shape our actions as individuals.

Sovereignty: The title to supreme power of a monarch, leader or government over an area with a clear-cut border.

Glossary

Structure: Was widely seen as web of interactions, which are both regular and recurrent

Taylorism: System invented by Taylor, involving break up of work under management control.

Values: Ideas held by human individuals or groups about what is desirable, proper, good or bad. Differing values represent key aspects of variations in human culture. What individuals value is strongly influenced by the specific culture in which they happen to live.

Urbanisation: The development of towns and cities

Zamindari system: A system of tax collection in colonial India in which the zamindar would collect all taxes on his lands and then hand the revenue over to the British authorities (keeping a portion for himself)