



MA (Sociology)
FIRST SEMESTER
MASOC 402



**INSTITUTE
 OF DISTANCE
 EDUCATION** **IDE**
 Rajiv Gandhi University

www.ide.rgu.ac.in

PERSPECTIVES ON INDIAN SOCIETY

PERSPECTIVES ON INDIAN SOCIETY

MA [Sociology]

First Semester

MASOC-402



RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY

Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

BOARD OF STUDIES

1. Prof. M Hussain Head, Department of Sociology, R.G.U.	Chairman (Ex-officio)
2. Shri Bikash Bage Assistant Professor Department of Sociology, R.G.U.	Member
3. Dr. S. R. Parhi Assistant Professor Department of Sociology, R.G.U.	Member
4. S. Yadav Assistant Professor Department of Sociology, R.G.U.	Member
5. Prof. V. Xaxa Deputy Director Tata Institute of Social Science, Guwahati	Member
6. Prof. P. Jogdand Dept. of Sociology Mumbai University, Mumbai	Member
7. Prof. J. Borbora Head, Department of Sociology Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Assam	Member

Reviewer

Prof. Maqbul Hussain, Professor, Sociology Department, Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh

Authors

Dr. Sujit Thakur (Unit: 1.3) © Reserved, 2016

Amit Chamarla (Units: 2.2, 3.2, 4.3, 5.8) © Amit Chamarla, 2016

Dr. Syamala K. and Dr. P. I. Devaraj (Unit: 5.0-5.8, 5.10-5.14) © Dr. Syamala K. and Dr. P. I. Devaraj, 2016

Vikas Publishing House (Units: 1.0-1.2, 1.4-1.11, 2.0-2.1, 2.2.1-2.8, 3.0-3.1, 3.2.1-3.2.4, 3.3-3.8, 4.0-4.2, 4.4-4.8)
© Reserved, 2016

All rights reserved. No part of this publication which is material produced by this copyright notice may be reproduced or transmitted or utilized or stored in any form or by any means now known or hereafter invented, electronic, digital or mechanical, including photocopying, scanning, recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without prior written permission from the Publisher.

Information contained in this book has been published by Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. and has been obtained by its Authors from sources believed to be reliable and are correct to the best of their knowledge. However, IGE—Rajiv Gandhi University, the publisher and its Authors shall be in no event be liable for any errors, omissions or damages arising out of use of this information and specifically disclaim any implied warranties or merchantability or fitness for any particular use.



Vikas® is the registered trademark of Vikas® Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.

VIKAS® PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT. LTD.

E-28, Sector-8, Noida - 201301 (UP)

Phone: 0120-4078900 • Fax: 0120-4078999

Regd. Office: 7361, Mayapuri Mansarovar, Ram Nagar, New Delhi - 110 056

• Website: www.vikaspublishing.com • Email: help@vikaspublishing.com

About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

Perspectives on Indian Society

Syllabi	Mapping in Book
UNIT I Colonial Context Emergence and development of Social Anthropology and Sociology in India, Indian Society as fragmentary and static in colonial ethnography, Colonial legacy in sociological and social anthropology in post-independence period.	Unit 1: Colonial Context (Pages 3-36)
UNIT II Indological/Textual Perspective G.S. Ghurye Louis Dumont	Unit 2: Indological or Textual Perspectives (Pages 37-53)
UNIT III Structural-Functional Perspective M.N. Srinivas S.C. Dube	Unit 3: Structural-Functional Perspectives (Pages 55-73)
UNIT IV Marxist Perspective D.P. Mukherjee A.R. Desai R.K. Mukherjee D.D. Kosambi	Unit 4: Marxist Perspectives (Pages 75-97)
UNIT V Subaltern Perspective B.R. Ambedker Ranajit Guha	Unit 5: Subaltern Perspectives (Pages 99-126)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1

UNIT 1 COLONIAL CONTEXT

3-36

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 Emergence and Development of Social Anthropology and Sociology in India
- 1.3 Colonialism in India
 - 1.3.1 Theories of Colonialism
 - 1.3.2 Features of Colonialism in India
 - 1.3.3 Stages of Colonialism in India
 - 1.3.4 Impact of Colonialism
 - 1.3.5 Positive Impact of British Rule
- 1.4 Indian Society as Fragmentary and Static in Colonial Ethnography
 - 1.4.1 Orientalists and their Impact on Indian Society
 - 1.4.2 Colonial Discourses and the Indian Society
 - 1.4.3 Women and the Indian Society
- 1.5 Indian Society after Independence
 - 1.5.1 Indian Social Structure in Post-Independence
- 1.6 Colonial Legacy in Sociology and Social Anthropology in Post-Independence India
- 1.7 Summary
- 1.8 Key Terms
- 1.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 1.10 Questions and Exercises
- 1.11 Further Reading

UNIT 2 INDOLOGICAL OR TEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES

37-53

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 G.S. Ghurye
 - 2.2.1 Contribution of G.S. Ghurye to Sociology
 - 2.2.2 Caste System and Its Characteristics
- 2.3 Louis Dumont
 - 2.3.1 Little and Great Traditions
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Key Terms
- 2.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 2.7 Questions and Exercises
- 2.8 Further Reading

UNIT 3 STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

55-73

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 M.N. Srinivas
 - 3.2.1 Sanskritization
 - 3.2.2 Westernization
 - 3.2.3 Modernization
 - 3.2.4 Secularization

- 3.3 S.C. Dube
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 Key Terms
- 3.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.7 Questions and Exercises
- 3.8 Further Reading

UNIT 4 MARXIST PERSPECTIVES

75-97

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 Marxist View of Social Change
 - 4.2.1 Marxist Theory of Social Change
 - 4.2.2 Dialectical Materialism
- 4.3 Marxist Perspectives on Indian Society
 - 4.3.1 Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee
 - 4.3.2 R.K. Mukherjee
 - 4.3.3 A.R. Desai
- 4.4 Marxian Analysis on the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism
 - 4.4.1 D.D. Kosambi
- 4.5 Summary
- 4.6 Key Terms
- 4.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.8 Questions and Exercises
- 4.9 Further Reading

UNIT 5 SUBALTERN PERSPECTIVES

99-126

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Unit Objectives
- 5.2 Contribution of Ambedkar to Indian Society
 - 5.2.1 Influences on the Life and Thoughts of Ambedkar
- 5.3 Socio-Political Thoughts of Ambedkar
 - 5.3.1 Ambedkar's Idea of Democratic Socialism
 - 5.3.2 Ambedkar and Indian Democracy
 - 5.3.3 Ambedkar's Views on Economic Development and Planning
- 5.4 Role of Reason in the Philosophy of Ambedkar
 - 5.4.1 Ambedkar's Views on Religion
 - 5.4.2 Ambedkar and Buddhism
- 5.5 Ambedkar and Marxism
- 5.6 Ambedkar's Views on Caste and Untouchability
- 5.7 Ambedkar as the Chief Architect of the Indian Constitution
- 5.8 Disparity in the Socio-Political Views of Gandhi and Ambedkar
- 5.9 Ranajit Guha
- 5.10 Summary
- 5.11 Key Terms
- 5.12 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 5.13 Questions and Exercises
- 5.14 Further Reading

INTRODUCTION

Sociology in simple terms is the study of society. It is a social science where various methods of investigation and analysis are used to develop knowledge about human social activity. This book, *Perspectives on Indian Society*, deals with various perspectives of Indian society.

In India, languages, religions, dance, music, architecture, food and customs differ from place to place. However, they possess a 'unity in diversity'. Indian society is a mix of these varied sub-cultures. In Indian society, family, religion, as well as caste play important roles. For generations, Indian society has been stratified based on the hierarchical caste system. This caste system has resulted in the exploitation of the so-called 'lower' castes. Independent India has tried to undo the historical injustices meted out to them by incorporating features of positive discrimination in her policies. India also happens to be the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Islam is another important religion of India. All of the unique traditions of India's religions have combined to create a syncretic social culture that is both diverse and tolerant.

This book has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with the 'Introduction' followed by the 'Unit Objectives' for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with 'Check Your Progress' questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of 'Questions and Exercises' is also provided at the end of each unit. The 'Summary' and 'Key Terms' further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

This book is divided into five units.

Unit 1: Discusses the effects of British Imperialism on Indian society and economy.

Unit 2: Covers textual perspectives of Indian society, especially the views of G.S. Ghurye and Louis Dumont.

Unit 3: Describes structural-functional perspectives of Indian society, especially the views of M.N. Srinivas and S.C. Dube.

Unit 4: Discusses the Marxist perspectives of Indian society, especially the views of D.P. Mukherjee, A.R. Desai, R.K. Mukherjee and D.D. Kosambi.

Unit 5: Covers subaltern perspectives of Indian society, especially the views of B.R. Ambedkar and Ranajit Guha.

NOTES

UNIT 1 COLONIAL CONTEXT

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 Emergence and Development of Social Anthropology and Sociology in India
- 1.3 Colonialism in India
 - 1.3.1 Theories of Colonialism
 - 1.3.2 Features of Colonialism in India
 - 1.3.3 Stages of Colonialism in India
 - 1.3.4 Impact of Colonialism
 - 1.3.5 Positive Impact of British Rule
- 1.4 Indian Society as Fragmentary and Static in Colonial Ethnography
 - 1.4.1 Orientalists and their Impact on Indian Society
 - 1.4.2 Colonial Discourses and the Indian Society
 - 1.4.3 Women and the Indian Society
- 1.5 Indian Society after Independence
 - 1.5.1 Indian Social Structure in Post-Independence
- 1.6 Colonial Legacy in Sociology and Social Anthropology in Post-Independence India
- 1.7 Summary
- 1.8 Key Terms
- 1.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 1.10 Questions and Exercises
- 1.11 Further Reading

NOTES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sociology is the study of human society or societies. However, such a simple initial definition of the subject poses the question, 'What is human society?' There is a difference of emphasis between the singular form of a society and its plural form. 'Society', as a singular term, appears general and unlimited. The plural term, 'societies', sounds more like a set of container units distinct from each other, such that one can take them one by one to inspect their contents.

In fact, sociology has always studied societies, both, taken separately and together, as 'human societies'. The balance between the two aspects may vary, but in the end, the study of one absolutely requires the study of the other. Neither of them makes sense independently. For instance, considering India as a society, one can think of it in terms of cities, factories, schools, farms or prisons. One can also think of it in terms of politics, media or divinity. It is simple to connect all these factors. They can also be visualized as confined within the boundaries of the Indian states and referred to under the general heading of 'Indian society'.

The development of culture, ways of acting, thinking and feeling makes human society special as compared with the societies of other species. These features are transmitted from one generation to the next and across societies through learning, not through inheritance. Culture includes language and technology, both of which involve the communication of ideas and the possibility of sophisticated coordination of action. This vastly enhances adaptability.

NOTES

This unit will begin with an extensive look at the concept of colonialism and its impact in India.

Any study of Indian society would be incomplete without an understanding of the effects of colonialism. India was under British domination for around two hundred years, and this had an immense impact on the social, economic and the cultural situation of Indian society.

Colonialism is basically the establishment, maintenance, acquisition and expansion of colonies in one region by people from another. Simply put, it is a practice of domination which involves the conquest of one set of people by another. It implies various unequal relationships whose impact trickles down to almost all areas of life.

Thinkers are divided on the topic whether India's colonization by the British had a completely adverse effect or whether it also affected the nation positively in certain aspects. The economic historian Dr. Tirthankar Roy asserted that the regenerative role of colonialism played a significant part in shaping the present Indian socio-political system. However, scholars like Aditya Mukherjee and Bipin Chandra have taken a diametrically opposite stand and argue that the regenerative role of British administration was just a myth.

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe the outline of Indian society
- Discuss the features of colonialism in India
- Explain the stages of colonialism in India
- Evaluate the social and cultural impact of colonialism

1.2 EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

The origin of Indian sociology as a distinct discipline can be traced back to the 1920s, during the colonial period. For smooth administration, the British administrators had to understand the Indian customs, manners and institutions. Christian missionaries were also keen to learn local languages, traditional beliefs, and culture for better social interaction. The origin, development and functioning of the various customs and traditions, the economy and polity of the village/tribal community, and the Hindu caste system and joint family system were some of the important themes of study by the British administrators and intellectuals. The first all-India Census was conducted in 1871. The various ethnographic surveys, monographs, census documents, and gazetteers produced during this era constitute a wealth of information on Indian sociology.

The formal teaching of sociology began only in the second decade of the 20th century—at the University of Bombay in 1914, at Calcutta University in 1917, and at Mysore, Osmania and Poona—had included sociology as a course subject. But, there was no separate department of sociology; it was clubbed with the department of economics in Bombay and Lucknow universities, economics and political science in Calcutta

University, anthropology in Poona University, and philosophy in Mysore University. Even in these universities, only a limited number of courses in sociology; such as social biology, social problems (crime, prostitution and beggary), social psychology, civilization, and prehistory; were taught. Strong scientific empirical traditions had not emerged in pre-Independence era.

The contributions made by pre-Independence scholars began to make an impact only in post-Independence, though the number of universities increased to 16 in 1945 (with only two sociology departments, and only one concerned for an independent degree in sociology). The percentage of universities having a sociology department began to increase after 1950. By 1965, among 95 universities, 51 accommodated sociology departments. According to the *Universities Handbook of India* (1973), 16 agricultural universities, 5 All India Institutes of Technology, the Indian Statistical Institute (Kolkata), Tata Institute of Social Sciences (Mumbai), and Gujarat Vidyapeeth (Ahmedabad) also offered sociology as a subject of study and/or research. Today, sociology is taught at all levels—from graduation to MPhil/MLitt level—with some courses giving special emphasis to research methodology.

When the Five-Year Plans were introduced, policies and programmes concerning urban and rural community development, Panchayati Raj, education, abolition of untouchability, uplift of weaker sections (scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward castes), and rehabilitation of people affected by large-scale projects (constructions of large dams, industrial estates, capital cities, etc.) were important areas of research by sociologists. In the 1950s and 1960s, several micro-level studies of caste, joint families, and village communities were carried out. M.N. Srinivas introduced the concepts of dominant caste, Sanskritization, Westernization, and Secularization to understand the realities of inter-caste relations and their dynamics. You will learn about these concepts in unit 3 of the book.

Change in the structural and functional aspects of family in different parts of India was the focal point of most studies in the area of marriage, family and kinship. The village studies focused on stratification and mobility, factionalism and leadership, the *jajmani* (patron-client) relationship, contrasting characteristics of rural and urban communities, and linkages with the outside world. During the 1970s and 1980s, several social research institutes were established in different parts of India. Also, many universities established interdisciplinary women's studies. By now, several studies have been conducted in the fields of education, urban sociology, social movements, communication, voting behaviour, and industrial relations. Currently, sociologies of law, science, medicine, and so on, have earned due importance in the field of sociological research.

1.3 COLONIALISM IN INDIA

Differing views exist on colonialism. One school of thought considers it nothing more than foreign political rule. Another group of thinkers views colonialism as perpetuating a traditional socio-economic structure. Some scholars view colonialism as representing a transitional society, in the process of evolving from a traditional to a modern capitalist society. Yet others see colonialism as producing a society in which two sectors co-exist—one traditional and pre-capitalist, the other modern and capitalist. Colonialism is charged by some radical thinkers, with perpetuating, or at least failing to uproot, semi-feudal features. In fact, colonialism essentially involves two conditions: the land held as

NOTES

Check Your Progress

1. When did the study of Indian sociology as a distinct discipline begin?

NOTES

a colony has no real political independence from the 'metropolis', and the relationship between the two is one of exploitation.

Colonialism is a system of economic and political control evolved by strong nations to exploit a weaker nation's markets and resources for the former's benefit. As the well-known Indian historian Bipan Chandra put it, colonialism 'is a well-structured "whole", a distinct social formation (system) or sub-formation (sub-system) in which the basic control of the economy and society is in the hands of a foreign capitalist class which functions in the colony (or semi-colony) through a dependent and subservient economic, social, political, and intellectual structure whose forms can vary with the changing conditions of the historical development of capitalism as a world-wide system'. Prof. J.A. Hobson defines colonialism as 'the migration of part of a nation to vacant or sparsely peopled foreign lands, the emigrants carrying with them full rights of citizenship in the mother country or else establishing local self-government in close conformity with her institutions and under her final control'.

The essence of colonialism is the idea of deliberate exploitation of another country, its resources and inhabitants. The political, economic or social development in a colony are devised in keeping with the interests of the metropolitan country rather than the needs of the colony itself. Colonialism envelops social, economic, cultural as well as political aspects.

India's case is considered by many scholars as that of the 'classic' colony; the basic features of colonialism and the different stages of colonialism are well illustrated by India under British rule. It may be pointed out that colonialism need not assume the same form at all times; while the basic goals of subordination and exploitation of the colony remain constant, the forms of subordination and exploitation may change in accordance with developments in the individual imperialist country, in the world or in the colony itself. Furthermore, the stages of colonialism are not watertight compartments in themselves: each merges into the next stage with some features continuing into the later stages with some distinct features.

1.3.1 Theories of Colonialism

The liberal and Marxist theories of colonialism emerge in the writing of a number of important thinkers. Karl Marx, in his writings, emphasizes the destructive role of colonialism and identifies some of the key structural features which the capitalism-colonialism interface was leading to. These features were not conducive to the growth of capitalism in the colony though they helped the growth of capitalism in the metropolis or the colonising country. He clearly saw the unrequited transfer of capital from the colony to the metropolis in various forms, what the Indian nationalists called the 'drain', as a 'bleeding process' ruinous to the colony but critical to the process of primitive accumulation and, therefore, to the growth of industrial capitalism in the metropolitan countries.

Liberal theory is found in J.A. Hobson's work at the turn of twentieth century. Hobson, far from being a Marxist, was a conventional British Labour Party intellectual who propounded a theory of colonial empire building (his major work *Imperialism* was published in 1902). His interpretation of imperialism has shaped ensuing non-Marxist conceptions and influenced some Marxist conception as well. He thought that capitalism was bound to engender such expansionism or imperialism. The Capitalist system, he pointed out, means a very uneven distribution of income. Large profits accumulate in the hands of the capitalist and the wages of the worker are low. Thus, the low level of

NOTES

income of the large mass of workers under capitalism keeps the level of consumption low. What is the result? On account of 'Under consumption' all the industrial products that are produced cannot be sold within the country, for there are no buyers. What can the capitalist do under these circumstances? He can try to sell the excess produce that cannot be marketed within the country to foreign markets. If all capitalist countries follow this policy, there will be a struggle to capture markets and to secure captive markets in the form of colonies. Thus, colonial expansion and conflict between capitalists of different countries, according to Hobson, were inevitable outcomes of the capitalist system. Further, due to the above constraint of 'under-consumption', the opportunities for investment for the capitalist become limited in the long run. At the same time, profit keeps on accumulating and there are savings waiting to be invested. This is what Hobson called 'over-saving' which again tended to push the capitalists towards colonial expansion: acquisition of colonies would make investment of surplus capital possible. To sum it up, Hobson's theories of under-consumption and over-saving suggested that colonial expansion or imperialism was a logical corollary of the capitalist system.

Even critics sympathetic to Hobson's work do not hesitate to attack his theory. Fieldhouse labelled Hobson's doctrine of imperialism 'a dogmatic interpretation', and one that cannot be explained in terms of economic theory and capitalism; yet he also acknowledged that Hobson's non-Marxist theory became generally accepted. Lichtheim considered the Leninist theory of imperialism as more firmly grounded because it avoids Hobson's 'theoretical mistakes of making capital investment abroad dependent on under-consumption at home'.

Eight years after the publication of Hobson's work, Rudolf Hilferding published another important analysis, focusing attention on finance capitalism. During this phase, capitalism as Hilferding pointed out, is dominated by huge banks and financial interests that act in close association with monopolist industrial business houses. This analysis of finance capitalism was further extended by V.I. Lenin in his tract on imperialism, *The Last Stage of Capitalism* (1916). Lenin's theory of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism is based on a closed analysis of several principal economic features. One is the rapid concentration of production in large industrial monopolies. Another feature is the role of the Bank, which concentrate into the powerful monopolies with control over money, raw materials and a means of production. The capital of industrial and bank monopolies combines into finance capital, a term Lenin attributed to Hilferding, who wrote, 'finance capital is capital controlled by banks and employed by industrialists'.

In 1913, Rosa Luxemburg also published her work on accumulation of capital and the stages of imperialist expansionism. She was a socialist leader who migrated from Poland to Germany. Intellectually and politically, she left a mark on the European socialist movement and continued to play an important part until she fell a victim to the Nazi onslaught. Her central concern was the examination of capital penetration into primitive economies. She distinguished three phases of capital accumulation. The first involves the struggle of capital with natural economy in areas where there are primitive peasant communities and a common ownership of land or a feudal system or an economic organization oriented to internal demand and where there is little surplus production or demand for foreign goods. In the second phase, capital struggles with a commodity economy. Finally, there is an imperialist phase of capitalist accumulation.

Indian nationalists' view

Independent of this critique of imperialism developed by Hobson, Hilferding and Lenin, the nationalists in India in their scholarly and polemical writing offered a sharp and telling

NOTES

criticism of the colonial economic impact on India. The Indian intelligentsia over the second half of the 19th century began to see colonialism not as the harbinger of or route to capitalist modernization, but as the chief obstacle to the transition to capitalism in India, an understanding which was to lead them to demand the overthrow of British rule. In fact, the Indian early nationalists were among the first in the world, decades, before Hobson, Lenin or Rosa Luxemburg, to evolve a multi-pronged, detailed and sophisticated critique of colonialism.

They evolved the concept of the 'drain of wealth'. It was very much based on the wider understanding of the mercantilist policy of European countries like England, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain and Holland and their process of building their empires during the 17th and 18th centuries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The nationalists maintained that on the basis of their political and military power, the so called imperialist power drained their colonies. As a result, the prosperity and rapid economic development in the 18th and 19th centuries came in these European countries, which were mainly built on the foundation of the drain of wealth. It enabled the Western countries to draw vast real and financial resources from Asian, African and Latin American countries over which they had established political domination. Keeping this broader aspect in mind, nationalists developed the concept of the drain of wealth.

The drain of wealth concept was evolved in the writings of Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Gobind Ranade, Romesh Chandra Dutt and many others who developed a school of economic analysis which highlighted some important features of India's experience under British rule. To them, it meant the transfer of wealth from the late 18th century in the form of plunder and loot and illicit gains by servants of the East India Company and in the form of home charges, i.e., the expenses incurred by the Government of India in England out of its income derived mainly from the taxation of the Indian people and finally, in the form of interests and profits and capital transfer from India to England on private accounts. Nationalist critics pointed out how drain in these different forms impoverished India and increased the economic gap between India and England. They also pointed out how British regime brought about the destruction of the small-scale industries of India, a process that in more recent times has been called de-industrialization.

Moreover, the drain of wealth theory was developed by Indian nationalist thinkers mainly with a view to analyse one of the main causes of poverty in India. They defined this term 'as the unreturned surplus of exports over imports which were transferred of England'. The nationalist leaders were aware that the drain of wealth was harmful chiefly because it resulted in the depletion of productive capital. Dadabhai Naoroji's analysis chiefly emphasized this aspect and in fact formed the core of his drain theory. According to Dadabhai Naoroji, the economic drain from India arose because of the following factors:

- Remittances to England by European employees for the support of families and education of children – a feature of the colonial system of government;
- Remittances of savings by employees of the Company since most employees preferred to invest at home;
- Remittances for the purchases of British goods for the consumption of British employees as well as purchases by them of British goods in India;
- Government purchase of stores manufactured in Britain;
- Interest charges on public debt held in Britain (excluding interest payments on railway loans and debts incurred for productive works);

G.V. Joshi also viewed drain as loss of capital. He showed deep insight when he wrote that the drain should be regarded not as a proportion of the annual gross national product but as a proportion of the annual net potential surplus or saving. He held that this drain bringing no economic return, accounts for the small accumulation of capital in the country. D.E. Wachha and S.S. Iyer also regarded drain as representing a significant amount of capital taken out of the country.

Another important issue on which nationalist thinkers questioned the policy of colonialism was the idea of free trade and laissez-faire. Nationalists contended that it led to a tariff and industrial policy which stifled the possibilities of growth of industries in British India. Consequently, India became 'the agricultural farm' of industrial England, i.e., a source of raw materials and foodgrains, dependent totally on industrial supplies from England. Further, the rate of taxation of agriculture was also criticized by

R.C. Dutt who felt that the burden of land revenue was excessive in areas which were subjected to periodical temporary settlements. This, in his opinion, was the cause of frequent recurrence of famines in British India. Wealth of the countryside was drained away through the revenue collection machinery, making the economic viability of farming so precarious that the farmer could not withstand failure of rain and other natural disasters.

Finally, an important part of the nationalist analysis of British economic policy in India was their criticism of government expenditure on the army, the police and other apparatus of government. The expenditure was so excessive that developmental investments were neglected. For example, the low expenditure on irrigation works contrasted sharply with the generous expenditure on the British Indian army, the railways, etc.

On the whole, the critique of imperialism offered by the Indian nationalist was one of the most powerful instruments of building national consciousness among the subjects of British India. The latter day nationalist spokesmen, like J.L. Nehru developed and strengthened this critique by incorporating into it some elements derived from the Marxian, Hobsonian and Leninist approaches to imperialism.

1.3.2 Features of Colonialism in India

There were four basic features of the colonial structure in India, listed as follows:

- (a) **Complete but complex integration of Indian economy with the world capitalist system:** India's economic interests were entirely subordinated to those of Britain. This is a crucial aspect, for integration with the world economy was inevitable and was a characteristic of independent economies.
- (b) **International division of labour and production system:** The British forced a typical structure of production and international system of division of labour upon India. India produced and exported foodstuffs and raw materials (e.g., cotton, jute, oilseeds and minerals) and imported manufactured products of British industry from needle to railway engines. Even after the development of a few labour-intensive industries (e.g., jute and cotton textiles) the policy of international division of labour continued in India. This policy helped the British produce high technology, high productivity and capital-intensive goods whereas India did the opposite. Till 1935-39, 68.5 per cent of Indian exports comprised food, drink, tobacco and raw materials whereas manufactured goods formed 64.4 per cent of her imports.
- (c) **Low level of capital formation:** The economic surplus or savings generated in the economy for investment and expansion of the economy are fundamental requirements of the process of economic development. The net savings in the

NOTES

NOTES

Indian economy from 1914 to 1946 was only 2.75 per cent of Gross National Product (i.e., national income). Moreover, the share of industry in this low level of capital formation was also low. Machinery constituted only 1.78 per cent of GNP during 1914-46. A huge portion of India's social surplus or savings was appropriated by the colonial state and mispent. Another large part was appropriated by the indigenous landlords and moneylenders. It has been calculated that by the end of the colonial period, the rent and interest paid by the peasantry amounted to ₹14,000 million per year. By 1937, the total rural debt amounted to ₹18,000 million. The princes, landlords and other intermediaries appropriated nearly 20 per cent of the national income. Only a very tiny part of this large surplus was used for the development of agriculture and industry. The capital was being transferred to Britain by a unilateral process called the drain owing to export-import imbalance. It has been estimated that 5 to 10 per cent of the total national income of India was thus unilaterally exported out of the country during the British colonialism.

- (d) **The role of government:** The government played a crucial role in developing, determining and maintaining various strategies to continue the colonial structure. All the policies were framed in Britain in the interests of the British economy and the British capitalist class. There was no support from the government for industry and agriculture. On the other hand, approximately in all the capitalist countries, including Britain, government provided active support in the initial phases of development. The colonial government in India forced free trade in India and denied tariff protection to Indian industries contrary to the policies pursued in Britain, Western Europe and the United States. The colonial government used up almost all the income to meet the requirements of British-Indian administration. Most of the public revenue was spent on military and civil administration. After 1890, approximately 50 per cent of the Central government's income was absorbed as military expenditure. To summarize, it can be said that an enormous amount from Indian capital was taken up by the colonial government; however, Indian agriculture, industry or social infrastructure received little attention.

1.3.3 Stages of Colonialism in India

Colonialism in India may be divided into three distinct stages which were related to distinct forms of exploitation or surplus appropriation. Consequently, each stage represented a different pattern of subordination of colonial economy, society and polity and therefore, different colonial policies, political and administrative institutions, ideologies and impact as also different responses by the colonial people. Colonialism is not one continuous phenomenon or unified structure. The subordination of the colonial country and its exploitation remain constant, but the forms of subordination and exploitation undergo changes over time from one stage to another.

I. First Stage

Mercantilist Phase (1713-1813): This is described as the period of monopoly trade and direct appropriation (or the Period of East Indian Company's Domination, 1757-1813). During the last half of the 18th century, India was conquered by a monopoly trading corporation – the East India Company. The Company had two basic objectives at this stage.

The first was to acquire a monopoly of trade with India. This meant that other English or European merchants or trading companies should not compete with it in purchase and sale of Indian products. Nor should the Indian merchants do so. This would

enable the East India Company to buy Indian products as cheaply as possible and sell them in world markets at as high a price as possible. Thus, Indian economic surplus was to be appropriated through monopoly trade.

The English competitors were kept out by persuading the British Government to grant the East India Company through a Royal Charter a monopoly of the right to trade with India and the East. Against the European rivals, the Company had to wage long and fierce wars on land and the sea. To acquire monopoly against Indian traders and to prevent Indian rulers from interfering with its trade, the Company took advantage of the disintegration for the Mughal Empire to acquire increasing political domination and control over different parts of the country. After political conquest, Indian weavers were also employed directly by the Company. In that case, they were forced to produce cloth at below market prices.

The second major objective of colonialism at this stage was to directly appropriate or take over governmental revenues through the control over state power. The East India Company required large financial resources to wage wars in India and on the seas against European rivals and Indian rulers and to maintain naval forces, forts and armies around their trading posts, etc. East India Company did not possess such resources and the British Government neither possessed them nor was it willing to use them to promote the Company's interests.

Financial resources had to be raised in India for another reason. Indian money was needed to purchase Indian goods. This could be acquired either by sale of British goods in India or by export of gold and silver to India. The first method was barred because the British produced hardly any goods which could be sold in India in competition with Indian products. British industrial products could not compete with Indian handicraft products till the beginning of the 19th century. The British government, heavily influenced by mercantilist theories, was also unhappy with the export of gold and silver from Britain.

East India Company acquired direct control over the revenues of the Indian states. Moreover, both company and its servants extorted illegally immense wealth from Indian merchants, officials, nobles, rulers and zamindars. This lack of change also reflects in the ideology of the rulers. No need was felt to criticize traditional Indian civilization, religions, laws, caste system, family structure, and so on, for they were not seen as obstacles at that stage of colonial exploitation. The need was to understand them sympathetically so that political control and economic exploitation could proceed smoothly without arousing opposition from Indians on religious, social or cultural grounds. This wealth played an important role in financing Britain's industrial revolution.

II. Second Stage

Free Trade – Industrial Mercantile Capitalist Phase (1813-1858): This was a period of exploitation through trade and is also termed as 'Colonialism of Free Trade' during the 19th century. Immediately after the East India Company became the ruler over most parts of India, an intense struggle broke out in Britain to determine whose interests the newly acquired colony would serve.

They wanted India to serve as a market for their ever-increasing output of manufactured goods, especially textiles. They also needed exports of raw materials, especially cotton, and foodgrains from India. Moreover, India could buy more British goods only if it earned foreign exchange by increasing its exports. Increasing exports were also needed to enable dividends of the East India Company and profits of British merchants and earnings and pensions of British officials to be transferred to Britain.

NOTES

NOTES

To suit the convenience of British industrial capitalists, British colonialism in India needed India to be a subordinate trading partner of Britain, as a market to be exploited and as a dependent colony to produce and supply the raw materials and food-stuffs Britain needed. India's economic surplus was to be appropriated through trade based on unequal exchange. As a result, Britain increasingly exported goods produced in factories using advanced technology and less labour with high level of productivity and wages. On the other hand, India produced agricultural raw materials through backward methods of production using great deal of labour leading to low productivity and low wages. This international division of labour was, moreover, not only highly unfavourable to India but was unnatural and artificial and was introduced and maintained forcibly through colonial domination.

The beginning of the change occurred with the passing of the Regulating Act of 1773 and Pitt's India Act of 1784 which were primarily the result of intense struggle within the British ruling classes. The East India Company was saved and given a reprieve by the French Revolutionary Wars after 1789. But the Company gradually lost ground. By 1813, when another Charter Act was passed, the Company had lost most of its political and economic power in India; the real power being wielded by the British Government, which ruled India in the interests of the British capitalist class. The British Indian Government attempted to integrate India's colonial economy with the British and world capitalist economy. The chief instrument was the introduction of free trade. All important duties in India were either totally removed or drastically reduced to nominal rates. Thus, India was thrown open to British manufacturers. Free entry was also now given to British capitalists to develop tea, coffee and indigo plantations, trade, transport, mining and modern industries in India. The British Indian Government gave active state help to these capitalists.

The agrarian structure of India was sought to be transformed in a capitalist direction through the 'permanent settlement' and the 'ryotwari systems'. The large-scale imports and their sale in land and even more the large-scale export of the bulky raw materials and their gathering at the ports from long distances inside the country required a cheap and easy system of transport and communications. Without such a system, India could not be opened to large-scale foreign trade. The government, therefore, improved rivers and canals, encouraged the introduction of steamships on the rivers and improved the roads. Above all, during the latter half of the 18th century, it encouraged and financed a large network of railways linking India's major cities and markets to its ports. By 1905, nearly 45,000 km of railways had been built. Similarly, a modern postal and telegraph system was introduced to facilitate economic transactions.

Many changes were now brought about in the administrative field. Administration was made more elaborate and comprehensive and it reached down to the villages and far flung areas of the country so that British goods could reach, and agricultural products drawn from, its interior villages and remotest parts. The legal and judicial structure of India was overhauled to promote capitalist commercial relations and maintain law and order. The changes, however, related to criminal law, law of contract and level procedures. Personal law, including that relating to marriage and inheritance, was largely left untouched since it did not in any way affect colonial transformation of the economy. Furthermore, it was in the 1830s and 1840s, that English replaced Persian as the official language in India. Lord William Bentinck's resolution dated March 7, 1835 stated that the funds appropriated to education would be best employed in English education alone.

Modern education was now introduced basically with the objective to man the new, vastly expanded administration. But it was also expected to help transform India's society and culture. This transformation was needed for two reasons; it was expected to:

- (i) Create an overall climate of change and development
- (ii) Generate a culture of loyalty to the rulers

It is to be noted that it was around this period that many Indian intellectuals like Raja Ram Mohan Roy began to work for social and cultural modernization for different reasons, mainly as part of national regeneration.

III. Third Stage

Finance Capitalism (1860-1947): This is described as the era of foreign investments and international competition for colonies. During this final phase of colonialism, India was converted into a fertile country for foreign investment, which was made under the guarantee system. A new stage of colonialism was ushered in India from about 1860s. This was the result of several major changes in the world economy:

- (i) There was spread of industrialization to several countries of Europe, the United States and Japan with the result that Britain's industrial supremacy in the world came to an end.
- (ii) There was intensification of industrialization as a result of the application of scientific knowledge to industry. Modern chemical industries, the use of petroleum as fuel for the internal combustion engine and the use of electricity for industrial purposes developed during this period.
- (iii) There was further unification of the world market because of revolution in the means of international transport.

Colonialism at the stage also served important political and ideological purposes of the imperialist countries. Chauvinism or aggressive nationalism based on the glorification of the Empire could be used to tone down social divisions at home by stressing the common interests in the Empire. The British, for example, raised the slogan that 'The Sun never sets on the British Empire' to spread pride and a sense of contentment among workers on whose slum houses the Sun seldom shone in real life. The French talked of their 'Civilising Mission', while Japan talked of Pan-Asianism and claimed to be the champion of the Asian people.

India also performed another important role for Britain. Its army – men and financial resources – could be used to fight Britain's rivals in the struggle for the division and re-division of the world. In fact, the Indian army was the chief instrument for the defence, expansion and consolidation of British Empire in Africa and Asia. The result was a costly standing army that absorbed nearly 52 per cent of the Indian revenues in 1904.

Politically and administratively, the third stage of colonialism meant renewed and more intensive control over India. Moreover, it was now more important than even before that colonial administration should reach out to every nook and corner of India. The administration now became more bureaucratically tight, efficient and extensive than earlier. Railways were built at an even faster rate.

1.3.4 Impact of Colonialism

The colonial policies that governed India under British rule reduced India to the position of a market for British manufacturers and a source of raw materials and foodgrains.

NOTES

NOTES

Investment of British capital in India was selective, intended to profit the British rather than develop the Indian economy. The British Empire in India was a colonial empire from the beginning to end. The objective of which was to exploit India and to drain off her wealth, raw materials and resources for the enrichment of the colonial people. British imperialism was corollary or a mere instrument to achieve the colonial objectives. The following factors led to the transformation of Indian economy into a 'classic colony' in the words of Karl Marx:

- By the right of duty-free trade
- By building the tariff wall in England against Indian export
- After the Battle of Plassey, India was reduced from a manufacturing country to a raw material producing country
- After the annexation of Bengal when England became a potential power, the Indian economy was made subservient to the British colonial interest.

Bipin Chandra, in his seminal work *Colonialism and Modernization*, argued that colonialism in India did not lead to capitalist modernization, neither did it create certain conditions in that direction, i.e., it was not as if it led to 'partial' or 'restricted' modernization or that it had some 'residual' benefits, despite the overall exploitative character, which could be of some advantage after independence. Noticeably opposite to Roy's claims that in two hundred years of colonial 'benevolence' of the British, gave India the advantages, of 'commercialization', 'exposure to the world market', 'transport and communication', 'a strong state', 'western scientific skills', etc., benefits that India hardly would have achieved. However, historians like Aditya Mukherjee and others also do not attest to Roy's claim. The British historian Angus Maddison's monumental work shows that India was the largest economy of the world for thousands of years accounting for close to 30 per cent of the world's GDP. Till as late as the beginning of the 18th century, India was the largest economy with about 25 per cent of the world's GDP, more than eight times that of the United Kingdom. The decline started soon after British colonization and at the end of nearly two hundred years of colonial rule, India's share had been reduced to a mere 4.2 per cent in 1950.

In other fields, the situation was equally depressing. At the time of independence, the average life expectancy was barely 30 years. 84 per cent of people (92 per cent women) were illiterate. The poor obviously died much younger. India was faced with acute food shortages creating near famine conditions repeatedly in different areas. The Bengal famine of 1943, just four years before the British left, claimed more than four million lives. The growth of per capita income in India in the colonial period was either zero or very low, remaining way below that of the independent countries of Europe, USA and Japan between 1820 and 1913. Similarly, the colonial period saw a process of de-industrialization where traditional industry was largely destroyed and modern industry grew very slowly. Positive developments in the Indian economy till 1947 remained essentially backward and structurally colonial. The Indian economy at independence was still basically dependent on a stagnating, low productivity, 'semi-feudal' agriculture with modern industry (in 1950) contributing a mere 6 to 8 per cent of the national income and (in 1951) employing 2.3 per cent of the labour force (in 1946).

During the World War years, the persistent efforts of Indian entrepreneurs to enter frontier areas of industry in India such as automobile, aircraft and locomotive manufacture, shipbuilding, manufacture of armaments, engineering goods, machine tools, and so on, were smothered by the colonial state, using fiscal, monetary and other

NOTES

instruments of state policy such as the 'Capital Issues Control', all in the name of the 'War effort', but in actuality in deference to imperial interests and even the interest of the white colonies. Except for a few pockets of progressive industrial activities, the Indian economy remained stagnant practically throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. While the British did give to India things like law and order, centralized political and judicial administration, roads and railways, new system of education and so on, the price which they extracted in the form of the drain was excessive, leaving the Indian economy stagnant and vast Indian masses poor and miserable. Agriculture, the largest sector of the Indian economy, was in a state of ruin under colonialism. Per-capita agricultural output actually fell at the rate of 0.72 per cent per year during 1911-1941. Per-capita food grains output fell even more sharply by 1.14 per cent per year, a 29 per cent fall over the period. All crop yields per acre declined by 0.01 per cent per year during 1891-1946 and again foodgrain yields declined more rapidly by 0.18 per cent, and even more sharply by 0.44 per cent per year during 1921-46. India was in fact losing to Britain as drain or tribute an equal proportion, if not more, of what was invested in India. However, defenders of British colonialism were not impressed with this argument and asserted that Indian growth story was written at the time of colonial administration. They argued that British colonialism brought law and order and modern transport and communications, led to growth of foreign trade and integrated the colony with the global market, brought in resources to India through British investments (drain was persistently denied), made major changes in property rights in agriculture and improved irrigation, all factors leading to unprecedented economic development in India. Historians like Tirthankar Roy made the claims that it would be better for nationalist historians and Marxists to look within for the weaknesses and flaws in Indian system like rigid social customs, inflexible social institutions, orthodoxy in values and habits instead of blaming the British. Further, he argued that over-population, shortage of capital, lack of ambition, geographical weaknesses, harsh climatic conditions, spending extravagantly on weddings, and other factors played major role in India's underdevelopment rather than policy of the drain or free trade. However, Roy's admiration for the British and his appreciation for modernization, industrialization and integration of Indian economy with the world were exposed by nationalist thinkers on substantial grounds.

There are following sectors which were badly affected by British colonial policy:

General economic impact

- The ruin of Indian trade
- De-industrialization
- Foreign economy dominance on Indian economy
- The ruin of Indian handicrafts and industries
- Drain of wealth

Agriculture impact

- Change in agrarian life
- Growth of rural indebtedness
- Recurrent famines
- Pressure of population and land

Political sector

- Unification of administrative system

NOTES

- Introduction of new constitutional provisions
- Emergence of new political institutions

Social and cultural impact

- Rise of the middle class
- Socio-religious movements
- New education system
- Introduction of printing press
- Disintegration of the village community
- Disintegration of joint family system and village panchayat

The ruin of Indian trade

By 1717, the East India Company had become a monopolistic organization. When the British gained political power, they turned the trade and tariff in their favour. India was converted into a readymade market and exporter of raw material. Indian handicrafts and industries were ruined.

- By the right of duty-free trade the company became a monopolistic organization and eliminated all sorts of competition.
- When the company became a political power, it formulated the trade policies to serve the British colonial interests by raising the tariff wall.
- After the success of Industrial revolution in England, India was converted into the biggest open market for British goods and an exporter of raw material.
- Trade was a powerful channel for the drain of Indian wealth, i.e., for the exports from India, the country got nothing in return.

Under the British rule, almost every core area of Indian economy was under colonial control. This led to the transformation of Indian economy into dependent and under-developed colonial economy.

Indian handicraft and industries were ruined on account of British import policy due to:

- Imposition of heavy duties on Indian manufactures
- British trade and tariff policy
- Indian handicraft could not compete with the British industrially produced goods
- Growing unemployment and poverty in India

De-industrialization

The destruction of traditional Indian industries was one of the earliest consequences of colonialism to be noticed and documented in this country. While it was evidently connected with the growth of modern factory industry in England, the beginning of the process of destruction of Indian cottage industries lay further back, in the 18th century, when the products of Indian industries were still prized as valuable items of commerce.

The artisans were also facing great hardships. Restrictions were imposed on import of Indian textiles in Britain while the British could bring their machine-made textiles virtually without any taxes to India. The Indian artisan was not in a position to compete with the goods produced by machines in England. With the coming of machines, the artisans had suffered in England. But in that country, they were soon compensated

by alternative employment opportunities in new factories. In India, machine-made products were coming from England, and, the development of factories in India was very slow as it was disfavoured by the State. This being the situation, a large number of artisans were rendered jobless. The workers in factories, mines and plantations also suffered. They were paid low wages and lived in extreme poverty.

The newly emerging Indian industrialists also faced hardship due to the government's policies relating to trade, tariff, taxation and transport. They could see how Britain was using India mainly as a source of raw materials for British industries or, in the later period, as a place for the investment of British capital. The British capitalists who had vast resources were provided with all the facilities. The Indian capitalist class that had just started emerging and needed government patronage, was, on the other hand, completely ignored.

Agriculture

The British agrarian policy was mainly aimed at drawing out the maximum land revenue. In the Permanent Settlement areas, the land revenue was fixed for the zamindars (to be paid to the State). The zamindars kept charging more from the peasants than what they had to pay to the State. Most of the time the peasants had to borrow money from money lenders. The money lenders charged exorbitant rates of interest for the money they lent to the peasants. Whenever the peasants tried to resist the exploitation by landlords and money lenders, the official machinery helped the latter. A large number of cash crops (like indigo, cotton, sugarcane) were taken by the British on dictated prices to be used as raw materials. Cotton and indigo cultivators were the worst affected. As a result of the British land revenue policy, a large number of peasants were reduced to landless labourers. The number of landless labourers was as high as 20% of the population (52.4 million with their dependents) in 1901.

The poorer peasants were raising crops for the market virtually hypothecated in advance to the money lender, the better-off section of the peasantry was relatively free. The latter could store their goods, and wait for better prices than what prevailed during the glut in the market after harvest. They could also cart their crops to markets in towns to obtain a better price than what the village *bania* or itinerant *dallal* offered. Furthermore, they could make their own decision as to which crop to grow while the poorest farmer was virtually forced to raise crops as demanded by the village *bania*. In some regions, the rich peasants themselves became money lenders to poorer peasants and thus the process of differentiation was accentuated.

According to estimates based on the 1931 census, we get the following picture of social strata in village India. At the bottom of the pyramid were the landless agricultural labourers (including bonded labourers) accounting for 37.8% of agriculturists. The stratum above them had the farmers with very small holdings of below 5 acres (9%) and various types of tenants-at-will and share croppers (24.3%). The layer above consisted of the better-off section of farmers with land above 5 acres in size (about 25.3%). Finally, at the narrow top of the pyramid were the members of the rent receiving class, many of whom did not actually cultivate land themselves (3.6%). The condition of the bonded labourers was the worst: they worked all their life, and sometimes for generations, for the 'master'.

Under British rule, more and more areas were brought under commercial crops such as indigo, opium, sugarcane, cotton, tea, coffee, etc. Commercialization of agriculture was mainly motivated on account of British revenue from this industry. As regards the

NOTES

NOTES

colonial motives, the commercialization of Indian agriculture was promoted to provide raw materials to the British industries and to convert India into a raw material producing country. On account of commercialization of agriculture, more areas were brought under the commercial crops leading to the shrinking of areas growing food grains. Indian agriculture was linked to the world markets. It also led to the emergence of new merchandise class who further exploited the peasants. The tragedy of commercialization of agriculture was the coercive hold of the Zamindars, the moneylenders, the merchants, the British planters, lease holder, and so on, on the peasantry. Commercialization further exposed the peasantry to exploitations and opened the floodgates for the drain of Indian wealth.

Under the commercialization of agriculture, the production was not made for consumption but to cater to the market needs.

Growth of rural indebtedness

On account of the very nature of British land revenue settlements, the peasantry had little or no surplus. In case of crop failure or social needs, they had to depend on money lenders who were buyers cum creditors, i.e., the money lenders bought the produce from the indebted peasant at the dictated prices.

The recurrent famines under British rule

The economists Dr. Amartya Sen and Dr. Jean Dreze have shown through their research that during the periods of British rule, India experienced a major famine every decade and a minor famine in different regions every alternate year. Famines were followed by epidemics in which millions of people perished. Beginning with famines in 1770, till the great famine of Bengal in 1946, more than two hundred million people perished.

The worst feature of the famines was that they did not result due to the issue of monsoon or non-availability of food grains. The majority of the starvation took place because the starving population had no money to buy foodgrains. Thus, it can be stated to be deliberate British imperialist policy.

Pressure of population over land

Under the British rule, the handicraft and the industries had been completely ruined. This led to growing pressure on land. However, the land could not support the total population because the agriculture had become unprofitable.

1.3.5 Positive Impact of British Rule

The presence of a colonial government on Indian soil played a complex, yet decisive, role. The impact of British rule on Indian society and culture was widely different from what India had known before. The establishment of colonial rule in India was followed by a systematic attempt to disseminate colonial culture and ideology as the dominant cultural current. Faced with the challenge of the intrusion of colonial culture and ideology, an attempt to reinvigorate traditional institutions and realize the potential of traditional culture was made during the nineteenth century.

The impact of modern Western culture and consciousness of defeat by a foreign power gave birth to a new awakening. There was an awareness that a vast country like India had been colonized by a handful of foreigners because of internal weaknesses within the Indian social structure and culture.

Role of press and literature

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an unprecedented growth of Indian-owned English and vernacular newspapers, despite numerous restrictions imposed on the Press by the colonial rulers from time to time. In 1877, there were about 169 newspapers published in vernacular languages and their circulation reached nearly 1,00,000.

The Press, while criticizing official policies, on the one hand, urged the people to unite, on the other it also helped spread modern ideas of self-government, democracy, civil rights and industrialization. The newspapers, journals, pamphlets and nationalist literature helped in the exchange of political ideas among nationalist leaders from different regions.

Western thought and education

Introduction of a modern system of education afforded opportunities for assimilation of modern western ideas, which, in turn, gave a new direction to Indian political thinking, although the English system of education had been conceived by the rulers in the interest of efficient administration. The liberal and radical thought of European writers like Milton, Shelley, John Stuart Mill, Rousseau, Paine, Spencer and Voltaire helped many Indians imbibe modern rational, secular, democratic and nationalist ideas.

The English language helped nationalist leaders from different linguistic regions to communicate with each other. Those among the educated, who took up liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, etc.) often visited England for higher education. There they saw the working of modern political institutions in a free country and compared that system with the Indian situation where even basic rights were denied to the citizens. This ever-expanding English educated class formed the middle class intelligentsia who constituted the nucleus for the newly arising political unrest. It was this section which provided leadership to the Indian political associations.

1.4 INDIAN SOCIETY AS FRAGMENTARY AND STATIC IN COLONIAL ETHNOGRAPHY

In India, languages, religions, dance, music, architecture, food and customs differ from place to place. However, they possess unity in diversity. The culture of India is a mix of these varied subcultures. India happens to be the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. The Afghans, Turks and Persians invaded India and made the country their home. They also contributed significantly to the culture of their new home. As a result, we now have an India that is really colourful and extremely tolerant.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, India was prosperous and trade was booming. The export was done on a large scale to various Asian and European markets. After the colonizers took over during the late 1700s, they discouraged the export of finished goods from India. This was the first step by which the Indian market was compromised in order to increase the benefit of the markets of England.

Due to the restrictions that were imposed on the export of products and the shipping of raw materials from India, many Indian traders lost their wealth. This was basically a phase of 'deindustrialization' in India. Before colonial rule, people were enthusiastic about pursuing trade as their livelihood, but with the beginning of the colonial

NOTES

Check Your Progress

2. What is the essence of colonialism?
3. Why was the drain of wealth theory developed?
4. What did British colonial policies reduce India into?
5. What was the main purpose of British agrarian policy?
6. Why was the commercialization of Indian agriculture promoted by the British?
7. What was the role of the Indian Press during British rule?
8. List one advantage of the introduction of a modern education system in British India.

NOTES

rule, that enthusiasm was thwarted. Now the inclination shifted towards agriculture, but even that was not an encouraging option for the common man. Taxation on agricultural produce was even heavier as compared to the pre-colonial rule, which itself was quite a lot.

Some of the British historians are of the view that British rule brought calmness and stability into the Indian administration and brought a sense of unity among various regions in the Indian economy. These claims, however, are completely rejected by Indian historians but we cannot deny the fact that the administration was weak in India. Also there was a lack of unity which allowed the British to take over India in the first place.

Agriculture was the mainstay of the Indian economy during the pre-colonial period or the Mughal era, contributing the biggest source of income as well as the biggest employment generator. The major crops produced during this period included millet, oilseeds, cereals, hemp, chilli, sugarcane, cotton, indigo, betel and other cash crops; indigo cultivation was largely seen in Agra and Gujarat while Ajmer was famous for the production of sugarcane. The founder of the Mughal dynasty Babur introduced the cultivation of many central Asian fruits in India; this was followed by the cultivation of tobacco and potato introduced in India by the Portuguese during the reign of Jahangir. Aside from agriculture, trade, handicrafts, silk weaving, were also important sectors in the Mughal era Indian economy. The period also saw improved transport and communication which contributed to the development of the economy. As the textile industry was flourishing there was also a tremendous demand for silk and cotton.

The lifestyle of the Mughal rulers also encouraged the flourishing of art, handicraft, architecture and trade in the country. Merchants started gaining prominence under their rule and trade within and outside the country grew exponentially. One reason for this was that the Mughals unified large parts of India under one single entity; something that had not happened for centuries. After the arrival of European traders, cities like Fatehpur Sikri, Lahore and Agra, Cambay, Broach and Surat became huge centres of trade. All of this contributed to immense wealth being generated within India. According to the British economist Angus Maddison, India's GDP in 1700 was about 27% of the world's GDP.

According to historians, one of the most notable shortcomings of the Mughal rulers was that they did not do enough to change the social conditions of the agrarian community. Not only did they fail to take any steps to increase the total area under cultivation; no innovative methods were introduced to increase the productivity of the cultivable land. Hence, the Mughal Era was plagued by periods of famines some of which were the worst in the history of India. The famines had a detrimental effect on the economy. Economy in the Mughal epoch started to deteriorate subsequent to Aurangzeb's death.

The great Mughal Empire was so much extensive and strong as compared to other empires of its time that they could easily be jealous of it. It was founded by Babur, consolidated by Akbar, prospered under Jahangir and Shah Jahan and attained its zenith at the time of Aurangzeb. But immediately after Aurangzeb's death, began that process of disintegration and decline which led to its being limited to areas in the vicinity of Delhi by AD 1750. In AD 1803, the English army occupied Delhi and the great Mughal Empire became a mere pensioner of the English East India Company.

An important way to understand the socio-economic life in modern India is to understand the nature and character of the British colonial power, which shaped the Indian socio-economic life. The emergence of the British colonial state should be seen as a steady process. Earlier, political institutions and state-society relations were

restructured within the broad discourse of enlightenment. Instead of falling in a linear progression, the evolution of the colonial state was marked by constant interaction between the state and public that created multiple sets of discourses and institutions in accordance with strategic imperatives. The power of this state was derived not only from sheer brute military force, but also from the 'grand discourses of European rationalism'. The colonial state generated many theories, self-definitions, narratives and strategies, which were used to define the state and society in the colony. It used various tactics and also negotiated with the natives, which resulted in greater control over the alien social world that it had entered. Hence at different phases of colonial expansion, the state refashioned its institutions and discourses in accordance with the larger politico-economic ideas, and relations between different class/caste forces within the colonies. The process of colonial expansion is best understood as based on shifting alliances, whereby it uses various political idioms, cultural symbols and discursive practices to create hegemony in the colonies. At each stage of colonial expansion, differing sets of discourses were used strategically to legitimize the colonial rule and also negotiate with various indigenous groups.

1.4.1 Orientalists and their Impact on Indian Society

In the early phase of colonial expansion, mercantilist ideas dominated the relations between the Company and indigenous institutions of power. It is important to note that by the eighteenth century, the Company had resorted to an expansionary logic based on the image of dominance and deployment of 'force' against regional elites. The establishment of forts and port cities were not only defensive postures, but were also linked to the protection of English sovereignty, especially its property and extra-territorial rights. Further, forts acted as alternative centres of authority which could forge relations with mercantile interests against the sovereign empire. After the Battle of Plassey, the Company got effective diwani rights of revenue collection while maintaining the Mughal political and legal institutions. Hence, a dual power institution had been developed, which 'masked the real nature of Company's sovereignty'. While the Company undertook territorial expansion and revenue exactions, it had to mediate constantly with the larger public opinion in England that critiqued the Company for its profit orientation.

The expansion of the Company coincided with the emergence of orientalist scholarship which attempted to understand the Indian past through its textual sources. In the initial stage, the East India Company's position in India was precarious and unsettled. In the last two decades of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth, Company officials pursued a policy of conciliation towards the native culture of its new dominion. Orientalism was facilitated by a number of academics who were attracted to the Indian civilization. The promotion of knowledge of Asia had attracted scholars as well to the Company's service. In 1784, the Asiatic Society was founded in Calcutta by William Jones. Soon, Jones advanced his famous thesis on the common origin of Indo-European languages. Some British scholars devoted themselves to the study of Sanskrit, philology and Indian culture and history. Sir William Jones identified Chandragupta Maurya with Sandrokottus of Greek. James Prinsep and Henry Masser deciphered the Brahmi script, translated the Ashokan inscriptions and many texts of Buddhist literature. This opened a new chapter in the history of ancient India. Further, the efforts of William Jones, Jonathan Duncan and other orientalisks rekindled interest in the study of ancient Indian literature.

However, the so-called tolerating and synergetic orientalism was after all an ideology which stemmed from the need of the British rule to legitimize their rule in India.

NOTES

NOTES

It, therefore, produced knowledge about the Indian society, a process which has been called as 'reverse acculturation'. It was precisely this political vision of informing the European rulers of the customs and rules of the land in order to assimilate them into subject population and to help administrate more efficiently, that Fort William College was established at Calcutta in 1800. The orientalist discourse had political agenda. It is also important to note that if orientalist discourse was initially premised on a respect for the ancient traditions, it did produce knowledge about the subject society, which ultimately prepared the ground for the rejection of orientalism as a policy of governance. It was, for example, highlighted that the once magnificent Aryan civilization underwent degeneration due to the supposed impact of Islam and the Mughals in India, thus sowing the seeds of communalism. British rulers, missionaries and historians like James Mill later denounced the culture, character and social structure of the native Indians. This legitimized more authoritarian rule and administration over India, i.e., it sanctioned British rule over India, if India needed to be rescued from the predicament of its own creation and elevated to a desired state of progress as achieved in Europe. The British also propagated theories of racial superiority of the white race to justify their domination over dark races of the globe. Men like William Jones typified the 'radical at home and nonetheless the upholder of authoritarian rule'.

The racial discrimination that was built into the colonial politico-legal system and which became a matter of daily experience was further aggravated by the Arms Act and the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 followed by the Elbert Bill. Surendranath Banerjee's imprisonment in a case of contempt against court in 1883 helped sharpen the militant edge of late nineteenth century nationalist consciousness; a defensive attitude and the consequent delight in a glorious Hindu past, being its important components. This revived interest in one's own community led to a sharper consciousness of other groups that inhabited the subcontinent. One of the most dangerous features of this aggressively Hindu orientation was the tendency to disregard Muslim rule of the preceding centuries. The question of historicity being always important, the revivalists sought a 'non-existent' patriotic tradition in the heroic Rajput and Maratha resistance to Mughal dynasties.

The xenophobic strand of nationalism eventually manifested itself in the form of communal politics. The seeds of communalism were sown during Lord Lytton's viceroyalty (1876-80). On 30 December 1906, a separate party—the Muslim League—was launched to pursue and safeguard Muslim interests. Their demands were accepted through Minto-Morley Reforms, known as the Government of India Act of 1909. This Act devised a novel method to distribute and balance the power. It came as the first effective dose of communalization of Indian politics. After gaining the loyalty of Muslims during the second half of the nineteenth century, the British turned their attention to uplift non-Brahmin castes. In many ways, the colonial rule redefined the caste system. The orientalist scholars immersed themselves in understanding the ancient past. They focussed on classical texts often ignoring the Indian customs that were not part of scriptures, but were equally important in governing the social life. Their interpretation of classical texts highlighted the caste system as the most essential form of Hindu social organization, thereby giving it a rigid definition. Furthermore, colonial ethnographers provided a new understanding of caste system in India by providing a racial dimension to the concept of caste. They argued that the fair-skinned higher castes represented the invading Aryans, while the darker lower castes were the non-Aryan autochthons of the land. Caste was gradually given an official legitimacy.

1.4.2 Colonial Discourses and the Indian Society

During the second phase of colonial expansion, the state assumed a more interventionist stance in response to the ideological currents of evangelism, utilitarianism, and liberalism. This resulted in the reconstitution of state-society relations whereby the authoritarian forms of governance developed along with new legitimizing discourses based on rational education, universalistic history and enumeration of societies. Utilitarians like Bentham and Mill used the trope of oriental despotism in their narratives of ancient Indian civilizations and advocated individualism through just laws and governance. Some of these intellectual currents developed in the context of industrialization and there was a shift in the colonial relations from being a surplus market to a market for manufactured products. The rhetoric of civilization superiority and reform characterized the state's administrative policies which constantly mediated between publics in the metropole and the incipient capitalist class and traditional elites in the metropole.

Along with the expansion of administrative bureaucracy, certain forms of knowledge or discourses were generated around tribes and castes, whereby the colonial state objectified communities according to reified categories. Hence from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, there was a systematic effort at compilation of information regarding customs, kinship patterns, religions and ritualistic practices of various communities aimed to fit them into neat categories. It is interesting to note the ways in which the ideology discourse on the criminal tribes was used to effectively categorize communities as 'professional criminals' which legitimized extra-legal forms of coercion. Stewart Gordon in his study of the Bhil tribes has pointed out to the development of a colonial discourse on the criminal tribes which was linked to the nineteenth century British conception of criminals as constituting a 'professional class' having their own ways of life. With the sedentism of the agrarian societies, marginal groups with their shifting economies began to be characterized as constituting tribes having inherent criminal traits. Alternative legal systems like the informer system, community membership of the *thagi* and the expansion of the *thagi*/dacoity department within the police services, had formed. Much of these discourses were based on their mediations with the landed communities whose social prejudices and economic interests also influenced much of the assessments.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, systematic efforts were made for an all-India classification of societies, based on a Brahminic theory of caste classification which did not correspond to the actual relations between the castes. Some ethnologists used the occupational criteria to describe castes, while others employed pseudo-scientific racism and anthropometry for racial classification. Hence, the colonial understanding of castes and tribes was based on the categorization of communities according to immutable social, religious and occupational traits. Susan Bayly argued that the colonial administration of this period was more interested in understanding the 'biological and moral' traits of the race rather than the ideologies of the caste. Hence, attempts were made at creating radical and linguistic classification based on anthropometric data.

Ajay Skaria, author of *Hybrid Histories: Forests, Frontiers and Wildness in Western India* has argued that the colonial discourse based on the 'anachronistic' ranking of society, constructed stereotype like primitiveness, evilness and masculinity on various tribal communities. These discourses were used for the formulation of legislations like the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 which proclaimed 'any tribe, gang or class or person' as a 'criminal tribe if it were addicted to the systematic commission of non-boilable offences'.

NOTES

NOTES

Hence, tribes like the Magyar Doms and Kunjars were all categorized as criminal castes, and were subjected to enhanced surveillance and control both by the state and the landed elites. Anand Yang has argued that the Criminal Tribes Act and the discourse on race should be linked to the larger imperial ideology which sought the justification of British rule, and its establishment as a paternalistic state. With the shift towards authoritarian liberalism, severe legal regulations within the criminal penal codes were used for dominance over the marginal groups, especially crimes against property. At the same time, while the state assumed authoritarian forms, discourses on western education and scientific rationalism resulted in the opening of consultative and interventionist channels within the administration. Hence, attempts were made at the accommodation of newer classes within the administrative and judiciary services, under the centralized command of the British administrative services. The discourses on western education and rationalism were internalized by the emerging elite class forces within India, thus providing an ideological legitimacy for colonial expunction and its reforming agencies. Therefore, it is by using the tropes of civilizational superiority, rationalism and western education that the colonial state in its mediations with the emerging capitalist and landed communities created a hegemonic discourse in the metropole.

1.4.3 Women and the Indian Society

The status of women became the main focus of the reforming activities of the colonial state as well as of the educated Indians. When civilizations were ranked and compared, the position of women determined the progress of the civilization. Indians were increasingly under attack by the Western observers, from missionaries to civilians. The Indian civilization was considered backward because it assigned a low status to women. So, the Indian intelligentsia also responded to this civilizational critique by advocating and supporting reforms to improve the status of women in the Indian society. Also, with these early nineteenth-century public discourses on reform, one witnesses a strengthening arena reserved for women. It was earlier proposed that the western influences, especially British, brought to India by the small English educated elite provided stimulus to the intelligentsia to bring women's issue to the fore. These debates over women's issues, however, were essentially male dominated and in no way did they focus on women.

The new language of nationalism increasingly came to use the vocabulary of religion and sacrifice, and hence, women's participation in the nationalist movement gained acceptance. The rising wave of nationalism incorporated the women's question in a way that there was a clear-cut division between the polluted public space outside the household and a pure private space within the home. The male nationalist patriarch had to bear with the intervention of a foreign regime at his workplace, but he chose to keep his personal space, i.e., home out of the purview of the state. The West was seen as a consumerist, materialist world in complete opposition to the spiritualist East. The nationalists sought to depose a similar distinction between their homes, and the world outside the home was to be the preserve of spiritualism where the state could not interfere. The woman of the household emerged as the new champion of self-identity of the Indians in the newly imposed schema. The new role, however, did not seek to place women in a position that was divorced from modernity. The plethora of literature produced for women's improvement is reflective of the stress laid on the creation of this 'new woman'.

It is in this context that Partha Chatterjee, author of *Women and Social Reform in Modern India*, speaks of a reconstructed 'classical' tradition which was distinct both

NOTES

from the West as well as the prevalent popular culture. The 'new' woman of the 'new' patriarchy was quite the reverse of the 'common' woman in her behaviour, etiquette, education and morals. The mounds of prescriptive literature being published were meant for an 'all round' improvement of women. The publication of such a large body of literature as well as the reformist zeal stressed on educating women. Women's education was also deemed important for their new role of the 'companionate wife' who would be mentally in tune with her English educated husband. It was common for reformers to take the initiative in educating their wives. Special texts for women were produced. Now broadly categorized as improvement texts, they described all aspects of daily living for a good religious and rational being. The prescriptions of these texts aimed to clearly outline the identity of a good Hindu or Muslim, especially a good Hindu or Muslim woman.

In the face of opposition to schools run by Christian missionaries, the Indians themselves began to open schools for girls. A 'feminine' curriculum was designed to prepare the new women, proficient in the running of the household and catering to needs of all members of the family and at the same time, capable of nurturing the home on indigenous and rationalistic grounds. The early educated women were also eager participants in the propagation of nationalist ideas of the new woman. Men's compromise with the colonial regime had to be compensated for by the women by continuing the observance of rituals that men were finding hard to follow in the changed times. The changes brought about in the women's world, as Partha Chatterjee asserts, were both through force and persuasion, garbed in the language of love, religion or tradition. Women emerged as mascots of the 'untouched' and pure India. This process did not always lead to greater confinement of women. In fact, it often allowed them space in arenas outside the home too. This was done through a gradual and systematic decasualization of the image of the women, reflective in the changing iconography of the time. The icon of Kali (Shakti) gave way to that of chained Mother Goddess in need of rescue, by the turn of the century.

1.5 INDIAN SOCIETY AFTER INDEPENDENCE

India is a vast country with the geographical area of 3,287,240 sq km and a population of over one billion people. The society in India is quite old and complex in nature. Many scholars have diverse opinions on the origin of Indian society. However, the old heritage of Indian society has shown enough evidence of immigrants from various racial, ethnic and religious groups. India's cultural heritage is one of the most ancient, extensive and varied among all those who make up the cultural heritage of mankind. Throughout the ages many races and peoples contributed to India's culture. Some came into contact with her only temporarily, others settled permanently within her borders. The keynote of the distinctive culture thus evolved was synthesis on the basis of eternal values. So India has a long history and its cultural tradition is very rich.

It is often said that there is no other country that offers the same cultural diversity as India. India is indeed unique when it comes to diversity, with 29 different states each with their own distinct traditions and character, and a population rich with diverse religious faiths, dress and accents. Such a level of diversity could perhaps be found elsewhere in an entire continent such as Europe; however, in India this diversity is contained within the boundaries of a single nation.

India is a vast country and from north to south and east to west various cultures have amalgamated, promoting cultural pluralism amidst cultural diversity. The composition

NOTES

of Indian society reflects the various diversities existing in India. It is essential to remember that the bulk of the Indian population represents racial admixture in varying degrees. Racial origins, however tenuous, are a part of the ethnic memory of most of the communities. This plays a significant role in shaping their identity and self-image. In this unit we will discuss the religious, linguistic and cultural composition of India and observe how these act as diversifying factors and at the same time have an underlying unity. Diversity in India is found in terms of race, religion, language, caste and culture. Sociologists say that Indian unity has been both politico-geographic and cultural in nature. The diversities have remained, but simultaneously provided for a mainstream culture.

Let us look at some of the unique features of Indian society:

(a) Religious composition and diversity

Indian society is divided into a large number of religious communities. Broadly there are seven major religions in India, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism. In India, Hindus constitute the majority of the population (80.5%). The Muslims are the second largest religious group (13.4%). The Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.9%), Buddhists (0.8%), Jains (0.4%), and other religions like Jews, Zoroastrians, Parsis, etc., comprise 6 per cent. All these religions are further divided into various sects. Though the other religious communities are numerically less, their contribution to India's cultural heritage is noteworthy.

All religious groups are further divided internally. The Muslims make up a large proportion of the total population in Jammu and Kashmir. Some coastal districts in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and in Lakshadweep comprise entirely of Muslims. Sikhs are more numerous in Punjab. Christians are found all over India, but are a majority only in the state of Nagaland. Buddhists are mostly found in Maharashtra, Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh and the Zoroastrians in and around Mumbai. Traditionally, all religions have existed in India in peaceful coexistence.

The secular nature of Indian society was well acclaimed worldwide. But the British policy of 'Divide and Rule' and the partition of the country led to various communal conflicts and tensions among various religious communities. Politics practised in the name of religion has further aggravated the problem as such politics is based on narrow vested interests. Article 25 of the Constitution gives all religious communities the right to 'profess, propagate and practice their religion'. It is pertinent to know that the right to propagate one's religion was included in deference to the concerns of the minority communities, particularly Muslims and Christians, who maintained that preaching and propagating their faith was an essential part of their religion.

Hinduism is the oldest religion in India and is divided into various sects and cults. Hinduism is basically divided into *Shaivite* (worshippers of Lord Shiva), *Vaishnavite* (worshippers of Lord Vishnu), *Shakta* (worshippers of Shakti or Mother Goddess in different incarnations like Durga, Kali, Parvati, etc.) and *Smartas* (worshippers of all the three Gods). Even among these, there are further sub-divisions making Hindu religion more complex. Moreover, the Hindu religion has accommodated many Gurus, saints and their followers like Swami Chidanand, Shivanand, etc.

Some sects like *Satnamis*, *Kabirpanthis*, *Radhaswamis*, *Swaminarayan*, and so on, are also prevalent in Hinduism. *Brahmo Samaj* and *Arya Samaj* are also a part of Hinduism. Therefore, Hinduism with its diverse cults, sects, rituals and numerous doctrinal differences accommodates many believers.

Muslims are divided into two major groups, Sunnis and Shias, out of which Sunnis have a larger population than Shias. Indian Christians are divided into Catholics and Protestants; whereas Buddhism is also divided into two, Mahayana and Hinayana based on differences in religious doctrines. The Jains in India are divided into Digambara (unclothed) and Svetambara (white robed). The Jains do not practise untouchability and no restrictions are observed with regard to commensality and social intercourse. It is interesting to note that both Buddhism and Jainism evolved as a protest against the Brahminical social order and the superior position ascribed to Brahmins in Hinduism.

Sikhism is a synthesizing religion and the majority of the Sikhs are found in Punjab. However, after partition there has been a large scale migration and now Sikhs are found almost everywhere in India and even in other countries like the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States. Their unique tradition of *Langar* (free food for all) has brought together many religious communities and also inculcated the feeling of community and service to mankind. Sikh places of worship, *Gurudwaras*, are found everywhere in the country.

The Parsis and Jews in India are small religious communities who have contributed a lot towards the industrial development of India, e.g., Jamshedji Tata who founded the Tata group of industries. The Parsis are mostly found in Mumbai and Jews are found in Kerala and Maharashtra.

While the religious composition of Indian society has also resulted in the diversifying of religion, there is no denying the fact that religion has also acted as a unifying force. While most societies grant individuals the right to religious belief, in India, communities enjoy the right to continue with their distinct religious practices.

Perhaps the most significant part of this is that in all matters of family, individuals are governed by their community personal laws (Larson, 2001). Religious communities also have the right to set up their own religious and charitable institutions; they can establish their own educational institutions, and above all, these institutions can receive financial support from the state. Taken together, these are the ways by which public recognition has been granted to different religious communities and space given to them to continue with their way of life (Mahajan, 1998).

India has many religious festivals which are celebrated amongst all religious communities. Festivals like Diwali, Id-ul-Fitr and Christmas are celebrated by all religious communities. Centres of pilgrimage such as Badrinath, Rameshwaram, Kedarnath, Ajmer Sharif and many more attract people from every corner of India across religious lines and strengthen the process of national integration. The tourist places portraying beautiful Muslim architecture like the Taj Mahal, Lal Quila, Qutub Minar, and so on, attract people from all walks of life.

(b) Linguistic diversity

India has always been a multi-lingual country. Language has also been an important source of diversity as well as unity in India. According to the Grierson (Linguistic Survey of India, 1903-28) there are 179 languages and as many as 544 dialects in the country. The Constitution of India, in its 8th Schedule recognizes 22 official languages with English as an important associate language. All the major languages have different regional variations and dialects. Some of the dialects of Hindi are Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, and Haryanvi. Originally, only 14 languages were included in the 8th Schedule. Bodo, Dogri, Konkani, Marathi, Manipuri, Nepali, Santhali and Sindhi were recognized later. India's first PM Jawaharlal Nehru had remarked, 'The makers of the Constitution were wise in

NOTES

NOTES

laying down that all the 13 or 14 languages were to be national languages.' The languages listed in this schedule have acquired different names at different stages and are better known as the scheduled languages now. The Minorities Commission report and the official Language Resolution 3 of 1968 considered languages listed in the schedule as major languages of the country.

The 'Programme of Action' Document, 1992 of the National Policy on Education, 1986 considered them as modern Indian languages. The highest literary awards in the country are given to 24 literary languages in India by the Sahitya Academy, and newspapers and periodicals are published in 35 languages every year.

English is recognized as an important instrument of knowledge dissemination, commerce and maintenance of international relations. A provision was made to extend the use of English language in the article 343 as 'Official language of the Union' for all official purposes of the Union even after a period of fifteen years with a provision that 'the President may, during the said period, by order authorize the use of the Hindi language in addition to the English language'.

Originally among the scheduled languages, the speakers of Hindi had the highest percentage (41.03%). However, it is noticed that the linguistic regions in the country do not maintain a sharp and distinct boundary; rather they gradually merge and overlap in their respective border zones.

Though all the languages spoken in India are different from each other, yet they may be grouped into four linguistic families; the Austroic Family (*Nishada*), Dravidian family (*Dravida*), Sino-Tibetan Family (*Kirata*) and Indo-European Family (*Arya*). The languages of the Austroic family are spoken by tribal people in Meghalaya, and in parts of Central Indian tribal belts like Ranchi, Mayurbhanj, etc.

The languages of the Dravidian family are spoken in southern parts of India.

The dialects and languages of the Sino-Tibetan family are spoken by the tribal people of the North-Eastern region and in the sub-Himalayan region in the North and North-West. People in the Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh also speak these languages. The speakers of the languages of Indo-European family are found in North India. The majority of the people in the North Indian plains speak Indo-European family. Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh also have large population of speakers of these languages.

The degree of linguistic diversity in India is perplexing, not only for visitors but also for Indians. Each of the country's 29 states has adopted one or two of the 22 official languages. India's linguistic barriers are compounded by the fact that each language also has a unique written form, with an alphabet that is unrecognizable to people who are ignorant of that language.

The linguistic diversity found across India stems from a history that saw numerous ancient kingdoms, each with its own language. These languages remained distinct to the area even after a kingdom was dissolved or merged with another.

State lines later drawn by the colonial rulers often crossed former political and linguistic boundaries.

After Independence, many of the southern states in India opposed the installation of Hindi as India's national language. Simultaneously, there was a strong lobby across different regions of the country for organization of states on a linguistic basis. This has resulted in the protecting and encouraging of linguistic diversity.

The formation of groups based on common linguistics, each with the political rights to administer itself within the structure of the federal system, resulted in that particular linguistic community becoming the majority in that specific region. Slogans like 'Tamil Nadu for Tamils', 'Maharashtra for Marathi's', and so on further aggravated the language problem.

Although there is a great diversity of languages and dialects in India, fundamental unity is found in the ideas and themes expressed in these languages. Sanskrit has influenced many languages in India. However, in spite of diversities, Hindi continues to be the national language and people of one State can communicate with people of another State as a national language generates national sentiment.

(c) Cultural diversity

India is a multi-cultural society and is a fine example of diversity and unity in cultures. India's rich natural resources have attracted many from across the world bringing about great diversity in human cultures. Powerful kingdoms and empires contributed to the shaping of India's cultural regions. The various conquests in the historical past have also been responsible for creating diversity. The bulk of the Indian population represents racial admixture in varying degrees. Unlike several other lands where the dominant human cultures have tended to absorb or eliminate others, in India the tendency has been to nurture diversity, which has been favoured by the diversity of the country's ecological regimes (Gadgil and Guha, 1992). From the beginning, Indian civilization has witnessed a pluralistic culture.

This pluralistic culture which has its roots in the Vedic period, was enhanced by the upsurge of Buddhism and Jainism, and was further reinforced during the early medieval period, which saw the founding of the Bhakti Movement. Vedic society was an admixture of different cultures. It was a combination of Aryan and non-Aryan, with a mix of tribal elements added. There are many cultures which coexist simultaneously in India. Communities in India demonstrate commonalities in culture traits irrespective of the religious background they belong to, even though these religious groups are further subdivided.

Many studies on cultural diversity and syncretism have been conducted by sociologists and anthropologists like Y. Singh, N.K. Das, Madan, Majumdar, etc., which adhere to various sociological approaches like structural functionalism of Radcliffe-Brown or functionalism of Malinowski. However, all this research proves that in spite of there being so many contrasts and diversities, there exists an underlying thread of unity which is seen in cultural and regional traits. India has undergone many cultural changes since independence. On one hand, where ethnic and regional groups or castes, tribes, minorities and other groups are fighting for their individual identities, there is a pervasive commonality of many integrative cultural processes. In India, we can now increasingly see a rise in 'inter-regional migration' which results in the merging of regional cultural traits, cooking patterns, cultural performances, ritual forms, styles of dress and ornamentation. A sense of synchronization is evolving which helps in dissolving prevailing differences and contributes towards cultural consistency.

Moreover, the role played by Indian religion, philosophy, art and literature in strengthening India's unity is praiseworthy. India celebrates various festivals together which reflect the solidarity of people of India amidst cultural diversity.

Thus, it is to be noted that diverse societies in India have evolved through dialogue and interactions at different levels. The multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and

NOTES

multi-religious society in India is the result of a constant exchange of ideas amongst the various groups. India is the best example of portraying various diversities and within this diversity a peculiar thread of unity prevails, making India a unique nation.

NOTES

1.5.1 Indian Social Structure in Post-Independence

India's culture is diverse. Different regions have different cultures and traditions. At the same time, you can find a lot common in them. Let us try and look at the various social formations which lend different characteristics to the Indian society.

- **Caste system**—India's social structure is founded on its caste system. The caste system is divided into four major castes—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras. Brahmins are the priests and the uppermost caste. Kshatriyas are the warriors, Vaisyas the business class, and Sudras are the working class. Inter-caste marriages, once forbidden, are commonplace in the urban areas today. Untouchability still persists, with the Dalits treated as untouchables and reduced to menial jobs like cleaning the streets etc. Today, with burgeoning urbanization, the caste system does not have an influence it once did on society.
- **Family**—The family unit is given great significance. Divorces are not appreciated. Couples try their best to adjust rather than break up and cause children (also given high importance) distress. Nowadays, due to modernization, divorces do take place with greater regularity; still, on the whole, couples look at retaining the family unit first.
- **Women**—In the past, women have played an important role in the India's political and social structure. That sadly changed over time. Women remain submissive in many regions of the country, although lately, with better education, they are more confident in general.
- **Men**—The man's authority in the Indian social system is still unchallenged. He is very dominating by nature, due to his position as the head of the family.
- **Patriarchal setup**—The Indian family is patriarchal, with the father as the head of the family unit. The eldest male member is respected and has much influence over matters of the family.
- **Matriarchal setup**—In Kerala and Meghalaya, however, the woman is the dominant force, and 'she' authority on family matters.
- **Marriage**—The Indian society gives the institution of marriage a lot of importance. Marriages are usually arranged, but people in urban areas have started choosing their own partners. Marriages are conducted with intricate rituals and celebrated with much pomp.
- **Birth**—This is viewed as an auspicious occasion warranting much celebration. The birth of a male child is much sought after. In some regions, the birth of a girl child is considered unfavourable.
- **Death**—Elaborate ceremonies are held when people die, and rituals are held every year in their remembrance.

Unity in Diversity

When India became independent in 1947, freedom fighters and those who framed our Constitution worked on a document which provided for a culturally diverse state. Independent India had to allay the fears of its people and the leadership was urged to

keep to its promise of providing equality to all the people of India. Respect for the individual could only come about through respecting the diverse beliefs and traditions that the people represent.

Unity in diversity expresses the opinion that India can remain a strong and unified country while retaining its cultural diversity. As a result of the geographical mobility of people, various parts of the country are found to have commonalities in their ways of life. Religious communities share many common cultural rights but this does not extend to them having any separate political rights, whereas recognized linguistic communities enjoy cultural and political rights. These rights have simultaneously encouraged diversity and strengthened democracy.

Other areas like judiciary or law are also based on the principle of equality.

A single Constitution, a national flag, common currency, national anthem, and so on, further strengthen the unity of India. All Indians are conscious that they have a distinct national identity amidst various diversities. The various historical monuments, temples, mosques, churches, gurudwaras attract lot of tourists and reinforce the bond of unity.

In situations of war and natural disasters, this unity in diversity can easily be seen, when the entire nation comes together in support of one another. Even during sporting events, the entire nation supports the national team, which itself may comprise members from various regional and religious backgrounds.

In spite of the many differences that the potpourri of cultures inevitably entails, India's people are united with a common cultural heritage. There is no doubt that India is a vast land of myriad physical features. The country is blessed with mountains, hilly terrains, plains, and coastal areas, among other geographical features. There are seemingly countless religions, languages and castes. The type of food varies in different regions. Still, people are united and share basic human values.

India's culture is vibrant and tolerant. Even with the advent of foreigners over the last four or so centuries, little has changed. In fact, one can say that the foreign cultures have blended with the Indian culture and the country is better for it. However, narrow-mindedness can weaken national unity. Thus, it is up to people to feel proud of being 'Indian' while retaining their unique features. As for now, India remains one of the best examples of the term 'Unity in Diversity'.

1.6 COLONIAL LEGACY IN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA

It is difficult to understand the development of sociology in India without alluding to its colonial history. By the 1850s, the colonial state in India was about to experience numerous critical changes.

Land, and the revenue and authority that accumulated from the relationship between it and the state, had been central to the formation of the early colonial state, eclipsing the formation of East India Company rule in that mixture of formal and private trade that itself marked the formidable state-like functions of the country.

The most significant event that took place was the 1857 War of Independence, which suggested showed that the British did not know anything about the folkways and

NOTES

NOTES

customs of the Indian people. If they had, the revolt would not have occurred. One of the significant impacts of the 1857 revolt was the advent of ethnographic studies. It was with the advent of ethnography, anthropology and sociology that began to provide empirical data of British rule.

The founder of ethnographic studies in India was Herbert Risley. In his book *Caste and Tribes of Bengal* published in 1891 Risley talked about Brahminical sociology, and discussed ethnography of the castes. It was his work that made the British realise the importance of caste in India. As the scholar Nicholas Dirks observes, 'Risley's final ethnographic contribution to colonial knowledge thus ritualised the divineness of caste, as well as its fundamental compatibility with politics only in the two registers of ancient Indian monarchy or modern Britain's benevolent despotism'.

In the British period, sociology and social anthropology developed in India in the colonial interests. The British administrators wanted to obtain knowledge of Indian customs, manners and social life so as to rule India better. Sociology developed due to the intellectual curiosity of western scholars and the reactions of Indian scholars to them.

Moreover, Christian missionaries wanted to know local Indian languages, folklore and culture to help them in their missionary activities. These overlapping interests led to a series of tribal, caste, village and religious community studies and ethnological and linguistic surveys. On the other hand, some western scholars were attracted by the Sanskrit language, Vedic and Aryan civilization, others were attracted by the nature of its ancient political economy, law and religion. These scholars were by in large labelled as orientalist. Beginning from William Jones, Max Muller and others, there was a growth of Indological studies.

The political theorists and philosopher Karl Marx was attracted by the nature of rule in India to help him in his theory of the evolution of capitalism. In the same way, the scholar Henry Maine was interested in the Hindu legal system and village communities to establish the theory of status to contract.

Therefore, Indian society and culture became the testing ground of various theories, and a field to study problems like the growth of towns, poverty, religion, land tenure, village social organization and other native social institutions. The wide array of Western scholarship on Indian society in the pre Independence period also had an impact on Indian sociologists. Some Indian sociologists like G.S. Chaturvedi were inspired by indological perspectives, while the theories of Marx had a deep impact on the theories of A.R. Desai and R.K. Mukherjee.

After Independence

An important change in Indian sociology after independence was in regard to the external intellectual influences. Before independence the teaching of sociology and social anthropology was mainly, if not wholly, influenced by the then current theoretical concerns in Great Britain. Indian sociologists are by in large influenced by diffusionism and functionalism (of Malinowski). The syllabi in the pre independence period also reflected traditions of ethnology, evolutionism and Indology. After independence, however, American sociological traditions significantly influenced the teaching of sociology in India. This can be seen from the type of subjects that were taught. For example, structural-functional theory (Parsons and Merton) and research methodology. Along with American sociologists like Parsons and Merton, Marxist thinkers continued to influence Indian sociologists in the post-independence period. In the middle of such diverse intellectual stimuli, Indian

Check Your Progress

9. How many languages are present in India?
10. What are the four linguistic families in India?
11. What is the meaning of the phrase 'unity in diversity'?

sociologists began to criticize, modify and develop different sociological methods in the study of Indian society and culture, and these were echoed in the syllabi of different Indian universities.

1.7 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The origin of Indian sociology as a distinct discipline can be traced back to the 1920s, during the colonial period. For smooth administration, the British administrators had to understand the Indian customs, manners and institutions.
- The origin, development and functioning of the various customs and traditions, the economy and polity of the village/tribal community, and the Hindu caste system and joint family system were some of the important themes of study by the British administrators and intellectuals.
- The formal teaching of sociology began only in the second decade of the 20th century—at the University of Bombay in 1914, at Calcutta University in 1917, and at Lucknow University in 1921. But in pre-Independence era, only three other universities—Mysore, Osmania and Poona—had included sociology as a course subject.
- In post-independence India, when the Five-Year Plans were introduced, policies and programmes concerning urban and rural community development, Panchayati Raj, education, abolition of untouchability, uplift of weaker sections, and rehabilitation of people affected by large-scale projects were important areas of research by sociologists.
- In the 1950s and 1960s, several micro-level studies of caste, joint families, and village communities were carried out. M.N. Srinivas introduced the concepts of dominant caste, Sanskritization, Westernization, and Secularization to understand the realities of inter-caste relations and their dynamics.
- Colonialism is a system of economic and political control evolved by strong nations to exploit a weaker nation's markets and resources for the former's benefit.
- India was a colony of the British Empire for over a century and it had an immense impact on the socio-economic development of the political system of India.
- Colonialism is basically the establishment, maintenance, acquisition and expansion of colonies in one region by people from another.
- Thinkers are divided on the topic whether India's colonization had a completely adverse effect or did it also affect the nation positively in certain aspects.
- Bipan Chandra states that colonialism 'is a well-structured whole, a distinct social formation (system) or sub-formation (sub-system) in which the basic control of the economy and society is in the hands of a foreign capitalist class which functions in the colony (or semi-colony) through a dependent and subservient economic, social, political, and intellectual structure whose forms can vary with the changing conditions of the historical development of capitalism as a world-wide system'.
- There are various theories of colonialism such as the liberal and Marxist views and the views of the Indian nationalists.
- It led to the complete but complex integration of India's economy with the world capitalist system but in a subservient position.

NOTES

NOTES

- To suit British industry, a peculiar structure of production and international division of labour was forced upon India.
- A point that is basic to the process of economic development is the size and utilization of the economic surplus or savings generated in the economy for investment and therefore expansion of the economy.
- The State played a crucial role in constructing, determining and maintaining other aspects of the colonial structure.
- Colonialism may be divided into three distinct stages which were related to distinct forms of exploitation or surplus appropriation. Consequently, each stage represented a different pattern of subordination of colonial economy, society and polity and therefore, different colonial policies, political and administrative institutions, ideologies and impact as also different responses by the colonial people.
- The impact of British rule on Indian society and culture was widely different from what India had known before. The establishment of colonial rule in India was followed by a systematic attempt to disseminate colonial culture and ideology as the dominant cultural current.
- Orientalism was after all an ideology which stemmed from the need of the British rule to legitimize their rule in India. It produced knowledge about the Indian society, a process which has been called as 'reverse acculturation'.
- If orientalist discourse was initially premised on a respect for the ancient traditions, it did produce knowledge about the subject society, which ultimately prepared the ground for the rejection of orientalism as a policy of governance.
- The orientalist discourse essentialized certain Brahminical texts and the Islamic laws as constituting the indigenous body of legal knowledge, which resulted in the translations of dharmastras and Halhed's Code of the Gentoo laws.
- The founder of ethnographic studies in India was Herbert Risley. In his book *Caste and Tribes of Bengal* published in 1891 Risley talked about Brahminical sociology, and discussed ethnography of the castes.
- Along with American sociologists like Parsons and Merton, Marxist thinkers continued to influence Indian sociologists in the post-independence period.

1.8 KEY TERMS

- **Colonialism:** Establishment, maintenance, acquisition and expansion of colonies in one region by people from another.
- **Finance capitalism:** A term in Marxian political economics that denotes the subordination of processes of production to the accumulation of profits in a financial system.
- **Zamindar:** A zamindar was an aristocrat, typically hereditary, who held enormous tracts of land and held control over the peasants, from whom the zamindars reserved the right to collect tax.
- **Monopoly:** It is the exclusive possession or control of the supply of or trade in a commodity or service.
- **Laissez faire:** Laissez faire is an economic system in which transactions between private parties are free from government interference such as regulations, privileges, tariffs, and subsidies.

NOTES

1.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The origin of Indian sociology as a distinct discipline can be traced back to the 1920s, during the colonial period.
2. The essence of colonialism is the idea of deliberate exploitation of another country, its resources and inhabitants. The political, economic or social development in a colony are devised in keeping with the interests of the metropolitan country rather than the needs of the colony itself.
3. The drain of wealth theory was developed by Indian nationalist thinkers mainly with a view to analyse one of the main causes of poverty in India.
4. The colonial policies that governed India under British rule reduced India to the position of a market for British manufactures and a source of raw materials and food grains.
5. The British agrarian policy was mainly aimed at drawing out maximum land revenue.
6. The commercialization of Indian agriculture was promoted to provide raw materials to the British industries and to convert India into a raw material producing country.
7. The Press, while criticizing official policies, on the one hand, urged the people to unite, on the other it also helped spread modern ideas of self-government, democracy, civil rights and industrialization.
8. Introduction of a modern system of education afforded opportunities for assimilation of modern western ideas, which, in turn, gave a new direction to Indian political thinking, although the English system of education had been conceived by the rulers in the interest of efficient administration. The liberal and radical thought of European writers like Milton, Shelley, John Stuart Mill, Rousseau, Paine, Spencer and Voltaire helped many Indians imbibe modern rational, secular, democratic and nationalist ideas.
9. According to the Grierson (Linguistic Survey of India, 1903-28) there are 179 languages and as many as 544 dialects in the country. The Constitution of India, in its 8th Schedule recognizes 22 official languages with English as an important associate language.
10. The four linguistic families in India are the Austric, Sino-Tibetan, Dravidian and Indo-Aryan.
11. Unity in diversity expresses the opinion that India can remain a strong and unified country while retaining its cultural diversity.

1.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short-note on the emergence of sociology in India.
2. What were the views of Indian nationalists with regards to British colonialism in India?
3. Describe the second stage of capitalism in India.
4. What were the positive impacts of British rule in India?

5. Write a short-note on religious composition and diversity in Indian society after independence.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the concept of colonialism.
2. What were the Marxist views on colonialism?
3. Explain the concept of 'Drain of Wealth'.
4. Write a detailed note on the features of colonialism in India.
5. What was the general economic impact of colonialism on India?

1.11 FURTHER READING

- MacIver, R.M and C. Page. 1962. *Society: An Introductory Analysis*. New York: Macmillan.
- Chandra, Bipan. 2004. *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Desai, A. R. *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan Private Limited.
- Tariq Mohanmadi. *Modern Indian History*. New Delhi: Tata-McGraw-Hill Education.

NOTES

UNIT 2 INDOLOGICAL OR TEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES

NOTES

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 G.S. Ghurye
 - 2.2.1 Contribution of G.S. Ghurye to Sociology
 - 2.2.2 Caste System and Its Characteristics
- 2.3 Louis Dumont
 - 2.3.1 Little and Great Traditions
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Key Terms
- 2.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 2.7 Questions and Exercises
- 2.8 Further Reading

2.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you were introduced to the emergence of society and sociology in India. You also learned about the impact of colonialism on the Indian economy and society. We will now go on to discuss various perspectives of looking at Indian society.

Indian sociology has followed many perspectives to explore Indian culture and society, which have developed through constant interaction with the Western systems of knowledge as well as through indigenous knowledge systems. These perspectives are developed by scholars who are placed in certain socio-cultural milieu and their ways of looking at social reality differs with regard to their differential experiential domains and social contexts. These perspectives help in exploring social phenomena, social processes and social reality in general in the Indian sub-continent. This unit will focus on indological or textual perspectives of Indian society, specifically the views of the social thinker G.S. Ghurye and Louis Dumont.

G.S. Ghurye is one of India's most renowned sociologists. His seminal work delineated the characteristics of the caste system in India, examining the caste system through both cultural and structural viewpoints. The French sociologist Louis Dumont, a towering figure in the field of sociology and anthropology in the world, specialized in the unique culture and society of India.

2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe the theories propagated by G.S. Ghurye
- Analyse the characteristics of the caste system as given by G.S. Ghurye
- Discuss Louis Dumont's approach to the study of Indian society

NOTES

2.2 G.S. GHURYE

Govind Sadashiv Ghurye was born on 12th December, 1893 in a Brahmin family on the west coast of India. He grew up to become the first and one of the finest exponents of sociology in India. He studied sociology and social anthropology at Cambridge University. On his return from Cambridge, he continued with his research and teaching and spent long years at Mumbai University. Ghurye died at the age of 90 on 28 December, 1984. He remained intellectually agile till his death and published 31 books during his lifetime. He is often considered to be the 'Father of Indian Sociology'.

Ghurye's most enduring contribution to Indian sociology is his fruitful synthesis of the indological and sociological perspectives. Despite his training at Cambridge under the British anthropologist W.H.R. Rivers and his broad acceptance of the structural-functional approach, Ghurye did not strictly conform to the functionalist tradition while interpreting the complex facets of Indian society and culture which he chose to investigate. Indeed, Ghurye helped the emergence of sociology as a distinct discipline in India from its early beginnings in Indology and descriptive ethnology. The exploration of diverse aspects of Indian culture and society through the use of Indological sources is the most outstanding achievement of Ghurye. His monographs on *Indian Sadhus* (1964), on *Religious Consciousness* (1965), on *Gotra and Charan as the two Brahmanical Institutions* (1972), among others, reflect his scholarly bent. Ghurye's work, *Caste and Race in India* (1932) combined the historical, anthropological, and sociological approaches. Later, he made a comparative study of kinship in Indo-European cultures. In his studies of kinship and caste, Ghurye emphasized two points: First, the kin and caste networks of India had parallels in some other societies. Second, kinship and caste served in the past as integrative frameworks. The evolution of Indian society was based on the integration of diverse racial and ethnic groups through these networks.

The *gotra* and *charana* were kin-categories of Indo-European languages which systematized the rank and status of the people. These categories were derived from *rishis* of the past. These *rishis* were the real or eponymous founders of the *gotra* and *charana*. According to Ghurye, the rules of endogamy and commensality which marked them into a totality or collectivity. The Hindu religion provided the conceptual and ritualistic guidelines for this integration. The Brahmins in India played a key role in legitimizing the caste structure through their interpretation of *dharmashastras*, which were the compendia of sacred codes.

Ghurye introduced a down to earth empiricism in Indian sociology and social anthropology. He was not dogmatic in the use of theory and methodology.

Ghurye's works on tribes were general as well as specific. He wrote a general work on scheduled tribes in which he dwelt on the historical, administrative and social dimension of Indian tribes. He also wrote on specific tribes such as the Kolis of Maharashtra. Ghurye was of the view that the Indian tribes were like 'backward Hindus'. Their backwardness was due to their imperfect integration into Hindu society.

Ghurye made original contributions to the study of Indian religious beliefs and practices. He wrote three books on this in the period between 1950 and 1965. He argued that the religious consciousness in ancient India, Egypt and Babylonia was centred around temples.

In his work on Indian sadhus, Ghurye examined the paradoxical nature of renunciation in India. In Indian culture, the sadhu or *sannyasin* is supposed to be detached from all caste norms, social conventions, etc. In fact, he is outside 'the pail of society.' Indian sadhus have acted as the arbiters of religious disputes, patronized learning of scriptures and even defended religion against external attacks. Thus, Ghurye believed that renunciation has been a constructive force in Hindu society.

Ghurye also wrote on Indian art but unlike Radhakamal Mukherjee, who viewed it as a vehicle of values, norms and ideals of a civilization which had thrived through the centuries, Ghurye was looking at art as a specifically Hindu configuration. According to him, the Hindu, Jain and Buddhist artistic monuments shared common elements. In contrast, Hindu and Muslim monuments were grounded in diverse value systems. The Indian temples were indigenous in inspiration. But Muslims art was Persian or Arabic and had no roots in this soil. He did not agree with the view that the Muslims monuments in India represented a synthesis. The Hindu elements merely remained decorative in Muslims buildings.

2.2.1 Contribution of G.S. Ghurye to Sociology

As stated before, G.S. Ghurye contributed immensely to the study and growth of sociology in India. His most enduring contribution to Indian sociology is his attempt to synthesize Indological and sociological perspectives. He helped sociology emerge as a distinct discipline in India from its early beginnings in Indology and descriptive ethnology. His own classic study about caste, published in his book *Caste and Race in India*, moved the focus of sociological study from a reconstruction of a social institution, i.e., caste, from Sanskrit texts to a study of how it functioned in the modern social reality. Other contributions of Dr Ghurye include *Caste and Race in India*, *Scheduled Tribes*, *Social Tensions in India*, *Vedic India* and *India Recreates Democracy*. In addition to his various publications, he had also earned international reputation in the field of sociology and won several awards and prizes.

Ghurye examined the caste system from both the cultural and structural viewpoints. He highlighted the dynamism of the caste system in India.

Ghurye's writings reveal a central theme, i.e., his conviction of the presence of an overall cultural unity of the Indian population or the Hindu population to be more precise. He says that this unity is manifest in the process of acculturation, which has been going on across the country. This acculturation, which began with the arrival of the Aryans, has proved to be a great tool of unification and has kept the people together despite their diverse racial and cultural background.

Ghurye founded the prestigious Indian Sociological Society in 1952 and started its bi-annual journal sociological bulletin. Thus, he created effective forums for the exchange of views of various eminent scholars and thinkers.

2.2.2 Caste System and Its Characteristics

According to Dr. G.S. Ghurye, any attempt to define caste 'is bound to fail because of the complexity of the phenomenon.' He has outlined the following characteristics of the Indian caste society in his book *Caste and Race in India*:

- **Segmental division of society:** A caste society is divided into several small groups called castes. Each of these castes is a well-developed social group; the membership of which is based on birth. Since membership is based on birth,

NOTES

NOTES

mobility from one caste to another is impossible. Each caste has its own traditional social status, occupation, customs, rules and regulations. Castes are groups with a well-developed and distinct life of their own.

- **Role of caste panchayats:** There are caste councils or caste panchayats to regulate the conduct of members. During the early days, every caste in every village used to have its own caste panchayat. It consisted of five chosen members who enjoyed social privileges and respect. The caste panchayat used to perform a number of functions. It used to make the members comply with caste rules and regulations. Settling caste disputes and giving its final verdict on matters referred to it, were its other functions. It used to award punishments to those who violated the caste rules and obligations. Yet another function of the caste council was to safeguard the interests of the caste members. Thus, Ghurye wrote, 'a caste was a group with a separate arrangement for meting out justice to its members apart from that of the community as a whole, within which the caste was included as only one of the groups.' From this, Ghurye concluded that the members of a caste ceased to be the members of the community as a whole in so far as that part of their morals, which is regulated by law was concerned. It is clear that caste almost enjoyed quasi-sovereignty from the fact that the caste council was prepared to retry criminal offences already decided by the courts of law.

The types of punishments that the councils awarded were as follows:

- Temporary or permanent outcasting
- Fines
- Feasts for the members of their caste
- Corporal punishment
- Religious expiation

Prof. Ghurye emphasized that in a caste-bound society community feeling must have been restricted. People owed greater allegiance to their caste than to the community as a whole. This is what he meant by segmental division of Indian society.

He also discussed the close bonds between people of the same caste. In times of need, festivities (like marriages) or tragedies (like untimely deaths), it is the caste members who are the first to be there to either help or participate. Hence, he says, castes are small and complete social worlds in themselves though existing within the larger society.

- **Hierarchy:** According to Ghurye, one of the principal characteristics of caste society is the hierarchy of groups. It is found all over the country. Caste groups are arranged into a four-fold social and ritual hierarchy, with Brahmins at the top and Shudras at the bottom. The Kshatriyas are placed after the Brahmins and the Vaishyas come in at number three. In the social hierarchy, the lowest rung of the caste society is occupied by the Shudras, who are treated as untouchables. Ritrally, they are considered to be the most impure. Thus, the concept of hierarchy forms the crux of the caste society.

Ghurye observes that though this general four-fold gradation is valid, the place due to each caste or sub-caste is not easily determinable. Further, there is no acceptable common principle by which to grade the castes. With the exception of the Brahmins at the top and the degraded castes at the bottom, the members of a large number of intermediate castes think that their caste is better than their neighbour's caste and should be ranked accordingly.

NOTES

- **Restrictions on feeding and social intercourse:** Every caste imposes restrictions on its members with regards to food, drink and social intercourse. Caste often decides who can accept what kind of food from whom. All food is divided in two classes, *Kachcha* and *Pakka*. The general rule is that the members of a caste should accept *Kachcha* food—the food which uses water in its preparation—only from either their own caste members or from members of a ritually higher caste. A Brahmin would accept *Pakka* food—food cooked in *ghee*—from members of some lower castes but would never accept *Kachcha* food from them. Generally, any kind of food prepared by the Brahmins is acceptable to members of all castes.

There are also widespread beliefs of pollution by touch, which forces members of certain castes to maintain a social distance from members of a different caste. Ghurye has observed that ideas about the power of certain castes to convey pollution by touch is not so highly developed in Northern India as it is in Southern India. In some parts of the country, like Maharashtra, even the shadow or view of a Shudra or untouchable is sufficient to pollute a man from a higher caste. In Tamil Nadu, the *Shanar* or toddy tappers were supposed to keep twenty four paces away from a Brahmin. In Kerala, a Nayar would approach a Nambudiri Brahmin but could not touch him; whereas a Tiyan was supposed to keep himself at a distance of thirty six steps from a Brahmin (Ghurye 1950). Therefore, traditionally, the castes considered to be untouchables were forbidden entry into the upper-caste houses.

- **Civil and religious disabilities and of the different sections:** In a caste society, there is an unequal distribution of privileges and disabilities among its members. While the higher caste members enjoy all the privileges, the lower caste people suffer from all kinds of disabilities. According to Dr. Ghurye, 'Segregation of individual castes or of groups of castes in village is the most obvious mark of civil privileges and disabilities, and it has prevailed in a more or less definite form all over India. Segregation is more severe in the South than in the North.' The untouchables are not only segregated, but also forced to live separately on the outskirts of the residential area of the higher castes. They did not have any rights and were not allowed to move freely in the community.

Caste discrimination and exploitation of the lower castes was universal across the country. All over India, the impure castes are debarred from drawing water from the village well, which is used by the members of other castes. In Maharashtra, the *Mahars*—an untouchable caste—were prevented from spitting on the road as a pure caste Hindu might get polluted by touching the spit with his feet. A Mahar had to carry an earthen pot with him and spit into it. Further, he also had to drag a thorny branch with him to clean his footprints so that nobody got polluted by walking on his footsteps. Besides, he had to lie prostrate on the ground at a distance if a Brahmin was passing by so as to ensure that his shadow did not pollute the Brahmin. Members of the Mahar and *Mang* castes were not allowed to enter the city of Poona (Pune) before 9.00 a.m. and after 3.00 p.m. lest their long shadows pollute the high caste people. In Punjab, where such discrimination was less stringent, the schools run by the Government practically shut their doors on the students from impure castes like *Chamars* and *Mahars*. The teachers and students belonging to pure castes made life miserable for them and they found it difficult to sit in the same class rooms.

NOTES

In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the life of the lower castes was severely regulated. The upper castes prescribed to them the kind of houses they could build for themselves and what building materials they could use. The *Shanars* and *Izhavas*, toddy tappers of the eastern and western coasts, were not allowed to construct houses higher than a single storey. They were not allowed to carry umbrellas, wear shoes and gold ornaments, milk cows or use the ordinary language spoken by others.

The Brahmins were given more liberty because they were believed to be born 'pure' and 'superior'. Education and teaching were almost the monopoly of the higher caste people. Chanting the Vedic hymns was the exclusive privilege of the Brahmins. They have been regarded as the most important subject and it is the duty of the king to provide them with protection.

The Brahmins secured a host of privileges and perquisites for themselves on the strength of their importance to the effective running of the state or kingdom. They managed to pay less duties and taxes than others. They were given lenient punishments when found guilty of any crime. Their lands were assessed at lower rates than those of other castes and only they could enter the innermost precincts of the temples. The Brahmins were so conscious about their superiority that they did not even bow before the idols of Gods in a Shudra's house.

- **Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation:** In the caste-ridden society, there is a gradation of occupations also. Some occupations are considered to be superior and sacred, while certain others degrading and inferior. For a long time, occupations were very much associated with the caste system. Each caste had its own specific occupations and they were almost hereditary. Prof. Ghurye wrote that it was considered incorrect for a caste member to abandon his hereditary occupation in pursuit of another even though the latter might be a more lucrative option.

The restrictions placed on occupational mobility made it difficult for members of one caste to pursue the occupation of another caste. The effects of these restrictions were two fold. Firstly, prestigious professions like priesthood were monopolized by the Brahmins and no other caste was allowed entry into that occupation. Another respectable profession, teaching, was also almost the exclusive preserve of the upper castes. Secondly, degraded occupations like sweeping, scavenging, washing clothes, etc. were shunned by the higher castes and became the hereditary occupations of the lower castes.

Individual talents, aptitudes, interests, enterprise, abilities and achievements were neglected and every caste was forced to stick to its traditional occupations.

- **Restrictions on marriage:** The caste system imposed restrictions on marriage also. Caste is an endogamous group. Endogamy is a rule of marriage according to which an individual has to marry within his or her group. Each caste is sub-divided into several sub-castes, which are again endogamous. Inter-caste marriages were strictly forbidden. Prof. Ghurye wrote that endogamy is such a dominant aspect of caste society that an eminent sociologist regarded it as the essence of a caste system.

There are, however, a few exceptions to the general rule of marrying within one's own group, which are due to the practice of hypergamy. In some parts of Punjab, especially in the hills, a man of a higher caste can marry a girl from a lower caste while in Malabar, the younger sons of the Nambudiri and other Brahmins marry

Kshatriya and Nayar women. Outside of this practice, the only other authentic case where inter-caste marriage is allowed is that of some of the artisan castes of Malabar. Any man trying to violate this law was put out of his own sub-caste and his chances of regaining entry were doubtful. For example, if the Konkarnath Brahmins or the Karhada Brahmins of Maharashtra marry outside their sub-castes, expulsion from the membership of those sub-castes is generally the penalty awarded to them.

Due to the strong presence of sub-caste endogamy in matters of marriage and other social interactions, Ghurye tried to highlight the differing views as to whether sub-castes should be treated as equal to castes. Gait believed that this should not be done as it would create a huge multiplicity of castes.

Sub-caste was important only for the members of the caste who framed rules for their different sub-castes. For example, a Brahmin considered the various low castes as Shudras and does not go into the further sub-divisions within the Shudras but the Shudras are conscious about the various sub-castes within themselves. On balance, Ghurye pointed out that no scientific student of caste, not even Gait himself, proposed to follow the Indian sentiment in this matter. Rather, to get a correct idea of the institution of caste, sub-castes should be recognized as the real castes.

2.3 LOUIS DUMONT

Professor Louis Dumont (1911-1998) was a French anthropologist, born in the Ottoman Empire of France. He taught at the Oxford University during the 1950s and was director at the EHESS (*École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*) in Paris, France.

During the Second World War, Dumont was imprisoned by the Nazis. Later, he developed his German skills and after a spell as a farm hand, he was employed in a factory on the outskirts of Hamburg. He was given a Sanskrit manual by his wife Jenny and ended up receiving a private weekly magazine. He took Sanskrit lessons from an Indologist, Walther Schubring, a specialist on the study of Jainism.

By the end of his life, Professor Louis Dumont had become a specialist on Indian cultures and societies. He also studied western social philosophy and ideologies. He selected south Indian universities for his study, partly due to the shift of his interest from Indo-European and Vedism to classical Hinduism. He studied with the martial caste of *Pramalai Kallar* for nearly eight months; they were selected mainly for their cultural diversity and distance from the Sanskritized Brahmins caste. Although the Aryan-Dravidian dichotomy was and still is, important for students of kinship and marriage, Dumont came to emphasize the oneness of Indian civilization.

Dumont's book *Homo Hierarchicus* discusses many new perspectives of the Indian social structure. The ideas of tradition and ideology were intrinsic parts of his writing. He also brought the method of 'structuralism' to his study of the Indian caste system. The major elements of his methodology are as follows:

- Cognitive historical approach
- Indological and structuralist approach
- Ideology and structure
- Dialectic transformational relationship and comparison

NOTES

Check Your Progress

1. What is G.S. Ghurye's most enduring contribution to Indian sociology?
2. What did Ghurye mean by the segmental division of Indian society?
3. According to Ghurye, what made it difficult for members of one caste to pursue the occupation of another caste?

NOTES

Dumont explains the theory of caste through his Indological approach and assumes the union of Indian civilization (unity). Dumont believes that Indian civilization is a specific ideology whose main components are its opposition to westernization and modern change with traditional, holism against individualism, hierarchy against equality, purity against pollution, status against power and so on. This basic opposite behaviour is mainly the base for comparing the global ideology within the specific ideology of the Indian caste system. The opposition is between the principles of pure and impure. The idea of hierarchy has a crucial place in Dumont's study of the Indian caste system. The system of hierarchy implies opposition between the pure and the polluted, that is, it also helps in determining its dialectics. It also gives a suggestion of the relationship of encompassing and being encompassed. In the Indian caste system, the principle of purity encompasses the impure. He studied south Indian sub-castes, their social organization and religion of the *Pramalai Kallar* caste, in particular.

In the book *Homo Hierarchicus*, Dumont makes an argument that is deductive in nature—a general theoretical hypothesis being confronted with empirical data that may lead to the basic assumption that the theory comes first, followed by empirical data. There is much in the writings of Dumont that supports this thought, for example, the manner in which he delegates empirical aspects to the residual level. However, this book was the final product of more than three years of research work and study in the southern and northern parts of India and a result of an intensive participation with the related literature of that time.

Dumont became a close associate of Evans-Pritchard and David Pocock during his Oxford days and closely worked with the British empirical tradition of sociology. Eventually, Dumont credited Evans-Pritchard with an achievement in 'ethnographic theory', for immediately discovering the conceptual principle of *Nuer Political Organization*, from his research data. Dumont's theories were based on hierarchy and his thoughts on Indian society and traditional culture provided the basics for a great debate in the 1970s.

In 1955, a study of a little community of an Indian village by McKim Marriott was a major landmark study of Indian society and culture. Marriott exemplifies a general drift in anthropology, away from the deserts, jungles and arctic wastes. This study carried out by the anthropologist has contributed significantly to the drift in the Indian traditional social system. Many western professional anthropologists opted for India, as their field of research and many of those who did, studied tribal and rural societies. M.N. Srinivas was also a representative of the structural functionalist camp in British social anthropology. You will learn about his views in the next unit.

Similarly, many other thinkers also studied the changes in Indian society. Yogendra Singh contributed in this matter, with special reference to advancement in Indian society. He suggested that social change is an ideology that must be studied with the help of scientific tools. He suggested the following seven approaches and concepts in this subject:

- Sanskritization
- Westernization
- Little and Great Traditions
- Multiple Traditions
- Theories of Structural Changes

NOTES

- Dialectical Approach
- Cognitive Historical Approach

These have shown that theoretical perspectives involved in the anthropology of India and study of traditional shift are diverse in nature, similar to the social and cultural phenomena under study and investigation. There may not be any single approach that may claim pre-eminence, neither can particular theories or methods, despite drifts in urgent issues and popular trends, claim superiority over others. That is why there exists a continuous debate on these approaches among the researchers.

2.3.1 Little and Great Traditions

The approach to analyse social change with the help of the concepts of 'Little and Great Traditions' was used by Robert Redfield in his studies of the Mexican communities. He also used the concept to analyse Indian society. Influenced by this model, Milton Singer and McKim Marriott conducted some studies on social changes in India. The basic ideas in this approach are:

- Civilization
- Social organization
- Tradition

Yogendra Singh described the 'Great Tradition' as 'those persisting and important arrangements of roles and statuses appearing in such corporate groups as castes and sects, or in teachers, reciters, ritual-leaders of one kind or another, that are concerned with the cultivation and inculcation of the great tradition'

Indian social structure is based on a two-step hierarchy, in which there exist two types of cultural processes. The cultural process that is followed by the elite, or members of upper class society are considered to be the 'Great Tradition'. On the other hand, cultural process being adopted and followed by people belonging to the lower section of the society is the 'Little Tradition'. There is a constant interaction and relation between these two traditions.

The analysis by sociologists reveals that approaches of 'Great Tradition' and 'Little Tradition' help in providing a comparative study in the area of cultural change in society. The same is not possible through the approaches of Sanskritization and Westernization. The reason lies in the reality of Westernization, which is not directly connected with the cultural process of social change.

This concept is based on the idea of evolutionary view of civilization and traditional structure. This states that there is always a kind of interaction among the traditions of the society. The little tradition social structure consists of its own role incumbents that include artists, poets and storytellers.

The sociologist Milton Singer framed some statements about the social change, based on cultural background:

- Indian society is a primary civilization, fashioned with 'Little Tradition'.
- This type of continuity in culture is due to the sharing nature of common cultural consciousness.
- A special class is the main agent of these certain cultural processes, with the help of religious books and texts.

NOTES

- It is primary characteristic of civilization that it does not accept modernization in a linear fashion. Indian society is the example of such a civilization.

Subsequently, it was argued that 'Little Tradition' and 'Great Tradition' distinctly interacted in culture. S.C. Dube explained the six folds of the tradition in India, they are as follows:

- Classical
- Local
- Regional
- Western
- Sub cultural
- Emergent

For Milton Singer and Robert Redfield the meaning of 'tradition' is the passing of thoughts, information, beliefs and customs by word of mouth, with the help of examples, to present and forthcoming generations. So to say, tradition is the inherited practices or opinion and conventions associated with a social group for a particular duration. It also incorporates the attitudes of people, durable interactional methods and social and cultural institutions. Similarly 'Great Tradition' is concerned with elites, literates and a reflective few who are capable of analyzing the facts, interpreting and reflecting knowledge based on culture. While 'Little Tradition' comprises the belief pattern, the institutions, knowledge that included proverbs, riddles, folkways, legends and myths that imbibe cultural knowledge from the 'Great Tradition'. The solidarity of Indian civilization is reflected in the perpetuation of the unity of worldview of the folk/peasant and the elites, or through cultural performances and their cultural outcomes. Cultural outcomes are institutionalized around the structure of great tradition and little traditions.

There are number of centres of little traditions throughout India and there exists a network of socio-cultural relationships in the society. Such relations are mainly based on cultural knowledge and ideology of the society. Meanwhile, there exists a difference in tradition represents the text based on the *Shastras*, while the area of 'Little Traditions' is based on folk or peasant and local versions of text-based knowledge and cultural performance. Great Tradition means persisting for important arrangements of various roles and status appearing in institutions, like caste, sects, teachers, ritual leaders, priests, cultural performers, religious teachers, etc. They are all engaged in spreading and regular dissemination of cultural knowledge to the society. The basis of knowledge which they include is from various religious texts (mythologies and epics).

The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are two important mythological texts which formed the foundation of cultural performances of the society. Both these great epics have their local versions available for the society, written in simple local languages with local examples for easy comprehension of folk or peasant population. Since the main points of cultural performance are villages and the spectators are the peasants, the little tradition consists of its self-role incumbents as follows:

- Folk artists
- Folk musicians
- Story-tellers
- Tellers of riddles

- Street singers
- Mendicant performers
- Interpreters of proverbs and puzzles
- Street dancers
- Astrologers
- Fortune-tellers
- Medicine men

In a village, the teacher of a primary school is a main person for little tradition knowledge. He himself performs multi-cultural activities and with the help of village leaders, organizes various folk performances, mythological plays, dramas, recitation of sacred language, saying of prayers, accompanied by folk music for the following purposes:

- Singing of devotional songs
- Providing entertainment

Singing of devotional songs is a sacred duty, while providing entertainment is a secular one, meant for relieving stress and strain with which peasants are sometimes concerned. This practice of little and great traditions helps in fostering the collaboration, mutual cooperation and unequal interaction. In general, 'customs' are what people follow in a society and do or adopt collectively and transmit the same from one generation to another. Through the regularity of interaction between these traditions, Indian civilization is moving forward, similar to the western world. The changes brought in 'Great Tradition' were started by individuals or groups of educated and literate people, or a selected few, keeping in view the requirements of time. As the 'Great Tradition' in India is connected with certain cultural bonds or any innovation or change, which is happening or taking place at any centre, it influences similar changes at other locations and centres, step by step. Once the centre of great tradition assimilates change, it also influences some sort of changes in the little tradition of its ground level. Hence, the process of change is flowing from top to down or from the higher to the ground in Indian society and civilization.

Indian tribal societies generally form a dimension of Indian civilization, but not necessarily the part, as do little traditions in the peasant societies. Indian tribal societies are governed autonomously by their own social framework. They have their own traditionally and mutually adjusted and internally dependent components. Indian tribal society is autonomous because it does not need any other system for its continued functioning. It may be seen that such traditional systems have evidences of elements of culture, communicated from others, but it may be understood that the system moves forward by itself and in describing its parts and its workings patterns, there is no need for going outside from the small group itself. There may be exceptions where one tribal society depends on another tribal society for a usable commodity or service. Such exceptions are small and do not seriously modify the fact that culture is maintained by the communication of heritage through generations of these people, who make up the local society.

The culture of the peasant community is not working autonomously. It is an aspect or a dimension of the civilization, of which it is a component. Since the peasant society is part-society, so it is considered to be the half culture. For the maintenance of peasant culture a continued communication needs to exist between the local community of ideas and thoughts originating externally. The mind power and intellectual and sometimes religious and moral life of the peasant village is perpetually not complete.

NOTES

NOTES

The peasant culture has a history based on evidence. This history is not local, it is the history of the entire civilization of which the village culture is one local expression. These points are in recognition of both the generic aspects of the peasant culture of the village. Hence, the peasant culture is half culture or part culture, as stated earlier. The story of isolated tribal communities is different from others. For better understanding of tribal communities, new thoughts and new procedure of research and investigation need to be called upon. For the study of villages, one needs to focus on the relevance of research by the researchers of history, literature, religion and philosophy, all together. It makes anthropology very difficult and much more interesting for revealing the facts of traditions.

Now, we take a look at the recognition which has been connected with discussions of the civilization, which is the difference between the 'Great and Little Traditions'. It may be further stated, in a different way, for high culture and low culture, or folk and classical culture, or popular and learnt traditions. Milton Singer also used the terminology hierarchic and low culture. In a civilization or society, there exists a great tradition of the reflective few, and there is a little tradition, which is largely non-reflective.

Great tradition is formulated and taught in primary schools or temples. Little tradition keeps itself going in the daily way of living of village communities. The tradition of the philosopher and literate man is a tradition that is consciously formulated and handed down to generations and that of the little tradition is for the most part, taken for granted and not submitted to such selection and considered refinement and further improvement of ideas.

These two traditions are mutually dependent. 'Great and little tradition can be thought of as two currents of thought and action, distinguishable, yet ever flowing in and out of each other. The views of great and little tradition relationships may be like histograms. We sometimes see diagrams of the up and downfall changes through the time of religion and civilization. Teachings are invented and they are continually understood by peasants in ways not intended by teachers. Hence, great and little tradition may be thought of as two simultaneous streams of traditions of the civilization.

It is not possible to differentiate between the two traditions in all isolated tribal societies. If we see among Andaman islanders, we find nothing at all about any esoteric aspect of religion or thought. There are certain differences between laymen and experts in understanding of religious background. In any primitive tribal society, this type of dichotomy is similar to the difference between the great and little tradition with respect to civilization and peasantry in Indian society. The tribal societies constitute a proto dimension of peasantry society. Some tribal societies or sections thereof are under the influence of the process of Hinduisation, as stated by many researchers.

Cognitive Historical Approach

Cognitive approach is considered to be the scientific investigation basis for human cognition, that is, all mental abilities of human beings like to accept, to learn, to remember, to think, to reason and to understand the human society.

The word 'cognition' came from the Latin word 'cognoscere' or 'to know'. Basically, a cognitive approach study describes how people get and apply knowledge of information for betterment and learning. It is very closely related to cognitive science and is influenced by artificial intelligence, modern science, philosophy, anthropology, linguistics, biology, physics and other sciences. The word 'cognitive psychology' came into sociology through the 1967 book *Cognitive Psychology* by Ulric Neisser.

The cognitive approach focuses on the manner in which humans process information, looking at how we react on the available information that comes in to the person. In other words, the approach is interested in knowing the change in the tradition of the society in general. Specifically, it is interested in knowing how Indian society is divided into several forms since centuries. Moreover, it gives the idea as to how the traditional values and traditional patterns are changing and the variables that mediate between stimulus/input and response/output. Cognitive approach also aims at the study of internal processes including customs, folkways, religion, perception, attention, language, memory and thinking.

In the study of sociology and political science, the analyses of Dumont are generally discussed with fundamental reference to his great distinction between two types of societies, i.e., holistic and individualistic societies. Some critiques have suggested that merely emphasizing this contrast revealed a vague nostalgia for old hierarchical forms of social life of human beings.

The originality of Dumont's work lies in placing the emphasis on the changing of values that helps in changing a traditional type into a modern type of society. Researchers who protest against the idea of a holistic sociology are on the opposite side of Dumont. They disagree with the fundamental principles of his theoretical undertaking, that is:

- Sociology must grasp social life, on the basis of the ideas that the actors deploy
- A capacity which primarily incorporates the actors if they are citizens of a society with an individualistic ideology

All readings of Dumont started with what he himself (in the *Essais sur l'individualisme*) called the comparative principle.

In his work, he questions how western individualism counts as anthropology and not just as a history of ideas. Dumont dealt directly with changes in the ideas, which limited him to the hints when it came to institutions and social forms. Dumont explained this fact several times. As can be seen in his first publication, *La Tarasque* (1951), Dumont, a student of Marcel Mauss was hardly ignorant of the form and contents of field studies. As he said, his investigation of individualism made no claim to be complete. It is counted as anthropology because it needs in us a change of perspective that involves reform of our conceptual apparatus.

The work of Louis Dumont in the 'Great Tradition' was one of his major and principal contributions that remind us of what the 18th and the 19th century writers of French knew so well, namely how rare is our contemporary assumption of basic freedom, equality and a sort of brotherhood. He set a tough task for himself, namely an exploration of the origin of modern civilization of the humanity.

According to Dumont, for understanding anything, three basic things are required:

- The deployment of a sufficiently powerful and flexible methodology
- Scholarly knowledge that is both wide and deep
- Ability to ask the right questions

Here we are trying to look at the question that Dumont asks and the method he advocates for answering the question. Dumont wrote that 'In most of the human societies and in the first place, in traditional societies, the relations between human beings are very important and crucial, highly valued, than the relations between the human beings and material things'. Such primacy is reversed in modern type of societies, where relations among human beings are subordinate to relations between human and material things.

NOTES

NOTES

This seems familiar to the readers of Karl Marx and the German sociologist Georg Simmel. Due to the impact of capitalistic society all relations are mediated through private property, the market and the capital.

The distinct contribution of Dumont is to investigate the opposition between individual and the group, as a hierarchy between two distinct elements of the society, each of which encompasses the other when considered from a certain perspective. The societal relation in individuals and the group of human beings is hierarchical in nature and a different relation means a different place in the hierarchal position.

The most basic formula of hierarchical opposition can be presented by the following fact:

Let us assume that human society and the society under investigation, both show in their self-system of thoughts, the same two elements X and Y. It means one society should be subordinate X to Y and the other, Y to X is enough for considerable differences to occur in all their concepts under consideration.

When we are trying to analyse holistic societies, we must select a suitable methodology that helps in recognition and the submission of the individual to the entire unit. However, we must also oppose the *exclusivism* or *absolute socio-centrism* that accompanies every holistic ideology. Another important concept that is used for the study of human society is 'Cognitive Psychology'. It moves around the notion that 'if we want to know what makes people tick then we need to understand the internal processes of their self-mind'.

Dumont's work on the caste system

As stated earlier, Dumont has traced the history and distribution of the *Pramalai Kallars* of south India. He traced out their culture, agricultural practices, economic and political organizations of the society and the collective representations included in their social organization and religious framework. His work is particularly worthy as a structuralism ethnography and as the first step in the construction of a comprehensive structuralism theory of traditional Indian society. In his work, Dumont moves gracefully from ethnographic data to the level of hierarchical ideology enshrined in ancient religious texts, which are revealed as the governing conception of the contemporary caste structure of Indian society.

2.4 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Ghurye's most enduring contribution to Indian sociology is his fruitful synthesis of Indological and sociological perspective.
- The exploration of diverse aspects of Indian culture and society through the use of Indological sources is the most outstanding achievement of Ghurye.
- Ghurye examined the caste system from both the cultural and structural viewpoints. He highlighted the dynamism of the caste system in India.
- Ghurye's writings reveal a central theme, i.e., his conviction of the presence of an overall cultural unity of the Indian population or the Hindu population to be more precise.

Check Your Progress

4. What are the major elements of Dumont's methodology in his study of Indian society?
5. According to Robert Redfield, what is great tradition concerned with?
6. In Indian society, where does one learn the great tradition and little tradition?

NOTES

- According to Ghurye, a caste society is divided into several small groups called castes. Each of these castes is a well-developed social group; the membership of which is based on birth.
- According to Ghurye, one of the principal characteristics of caste society is the hierarchy of groups.
- Ghurye also states that in a caste society, there is an unequal distribution of privileges and disabilities among its members.
- Professor Louis Dumont was a French anthropologist, born in the Ottoman Empire of France. He taught at the Oxford University during the 1950s and was director at the EHESS in Paris, France.
- Dumont's book *Homo Hierarchicus* discusses many new perspectives of the Indian social structure.
- Dumont believes that Indian civilization is a specific ideology whose main components are its opposition to westernization and modern change with traditional, holism against individualism, hierarchy against equality, purity against pollution, status against power and so on.
- In the book *Homo Hierarchicus* Dumont makes an argument that is deductive in nature—a general theoretical hypothesis being confronted with empirical data that may lead to the basic assumption that the theory comes first, followed by empirical data.
- The approach to analyse social change with the help of the concepts of 'Little and Great Traditions' was used by Robert Redfield in his studies of the Mexican communities.
- 'Great Tradition' is concerned with elites, literates and a reflective few who are capable of analyzing the facts, interpreting and reflecting knowledge based on culture. While 'Little Tradition' comprises the belief pattern, the institutions, knowledge that included proverbs, riddles, folkways, legends and myths that imbibe cultural knowledge from the 'Great Tradition'.
- The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are two important mythological texts which formed the foundation of cultural performances of the society.
- In the study of sociology and political science, the analyses of Dumont are generally discussed with fundamental reference to his great distinction between two types of societies, i.e., holistic and individualistic societies.
- The originality of Dumont's work lies in placing the emphasis on the changing of values that helps changing a traditional type into a modern type of society.

2.5 KEY TERMS

- **Synthesis:** It refers to the combination of components or elements to form a connected whole.
- **Anthropology:** The comparative study of human societies and cultures and their development is known as anthropology.
- **Dogmatic:** It is an adjective that describes someone who is inclined to lay down principles as undeniably true.

NOTES

- **Hierarchy:** It is a system in which members of an organization or society are ranked according to relative status or authority.
- **Deductive:** Something that is characterized by or based on the inference of particular instances from a general law.

2.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Ghurye's most enduring contribution to Indian sociology is his fruitful synthesis of Indological and sociological perspective.
2. G.S. Ghurye emphasized that in a caste-bound society community feeling must have been restricted. People owed greater allegiance to their caste.
3. The restrictions placed on occupational mobility made it difficult for members of one caste to pursue the occupation of another caste.
4. The major elements of his methodology are as follows:
 - Cognitive historical approach
 - Indological and structuralist approach
 - Ideology and structure
 - Dialectic transformational relationship and comparison
5. For Robert Redfield, great tradition is concerned with elites, literates and a reflective few who are capable of analyzing the facts, interpreting and reflecting knowledge based on culture.
6. In Indian society, great tradition is formulated and taught in primary schools or temples. Little tradition keeps itself going in the daily way of living of village communities.

2.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on Ghurye's contribution to Indian sociology.
2. According to Ghurye, what is the role of hierarchy in the caste system?
3. Differentiate between little tradition and great tradition.
4. Write a short note on the cognitive historical approach.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Ghurye's writings reveal a central theme, i.e., his conviction of the presence of an overall cultural unity of the Indian population or the Hindu population to be more precise.
2. Discuss Ghurye's view of the characteristics of Indian caste system.
3. The idea of hierarchy has a crucial place in Dumont's study of the Indian caste system. Discuss.
4. What role does the little tradition and great tradition play in Indian society?

2.8 FURTHER READING

- Ahuja, Ram. 1993. *Indian Social System*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Beteille, Andre. 1996. *Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*. Mumbai: Oxford University Press.
- Dube, S.C. 2005. *Indian Society*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
- Dumont, Louis. 1981. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Singh, Y. 2000. *Culture Change in India: Identity and Globalization*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Singh, Y. 1986. *Modernization of Indian Tradition*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Srinivas, M.N. 1995. *Social Change in Modern India*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

NOTES

UNIT 3 STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

NOTES

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 M.N. Srinivas
 - 3.2.1 Sanskritization
 - 3.2.2 Westernization
 - 3.2.3 Modernization
 - 3.2.4 Secularization
- 3.3 S.C. Dube
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 Key Terms
- 3.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.7 Questions and Exercises
- 3.8 Further Reading

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you studied about indological or textual perspectives of Indian society, specifically the views of G.S. Ghurye and Louis Dumont. In this unit, we will move on to study structural-functional perspectives of Indian sociologists.

The basis of the system of structural functionalism was laid during the economic crisis of the 1930s. Alvin Gouldner, in *The Coming Crises of Western Sociology* (1970), argues that structural functionalism was developed as a response to the challenge posed by Marxism. Marxism was a general theory of society which condemned capitalism, whereas structural functionalism was to become a general theory of society which did not condemn capitalism or use it to offer an explanation to justify the various social phenomena taking place around the world.

Today, there has been a major revival of interest among younger American sociologists in the US, and there is now a flourishing 'neo-functional' school in existence. This unit will discuss the views of Indian structural-functionalists like M.N. Srinivas and S.C. Dube.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Evaluate the process of sanskritization as enumerated by M.N. Srinivas
- Explain the concept of westernization
- Discuss the process of secularization
- Describe S.C. Dube's view of Indian villages

Structured-Functional Parameters

NOTES

Srinivas also explained the basic concepts to understand our society, firstly *book view* and *secondly field view*.

According to him book view meant bookish perspective; he argued that religion, *varna*, caste, family, village, and geographical structure are the main elements that are known as the bases of Indian society. The knowledge about such elements is gained through sacred texts or from books. Srinivas calls it book view or bookish perspective. Book view is also known as Indology, which is not acceptable to Srinivas and he emphasized the field view.

According to Srinivas, *field view* meant fieldwork perspectives. He believed that knowledge about the different regions of Indian society can be attained through field work. This he called field view. Consequently, he prefers empirical study to understand our society. Srinivas took the path of small, regional studies rather than the construction of grand theories. In this context, field work plays an important role to understand the nativity of the rural Indian society. Srinivas also studies caste and religion (1952, 1959, 1962, and 1966) and highlighted not only their structural-functional aspects, but also the dynamics of the caste system in rural setting. He proposed concepts like 'dominant caste', 'Sanskritization', 'Westernization' and 'secularization' to understand the realities of inter-caste relations and also to explain their dynamics. The concept of 'dominant caste' has been used in the study of power relations at the village level. Srinivas presents the results of a number of studies on the structure and change in the village society. You will learn about Srinivas' concepts of *sanskritization*, *westernization* and *secularization* a little later in the unit.

M.N. Srinivas was one of the few who preferred to be a professor and remained one all his life rather than accepting the offer of a powerful and prestigious post in the government. Srinivas is best known for having coined the concept of 'Sanskritization'. According to him, caste is undoubtedly an all-India phenomenon in the sense that there are everywhere hereditary, endogamous groups which form a hierarchy, and that each of these groups has a traditional association with one or two occupations. Everywhere there are Brahmins, untouchables, and peasants artisan trading and service castes. Relations between castes are invariably expressed in terms of pollution and purity. Srinivas wanted to explore and understand the process of change at Bangalore.

Change is the unchangeable law of nature. Society as a part of the vast universe is not an exception to this eternal law. The reality of social life is the reality of change. Change means alteration, modification, replacement, differentiation or integration within a phenomenon over a particular period of time, caused by a force. It refers to the amount of difference in condition of the object or phenomenon in any direction, between two points of time. Time factor is the measuring rod of the amount and direction of change. The primary concern of a sociologist is social change and not the physical, environmental or natural changes. Of course, physical and environmental changes are not exclusively out of the sociological purview. These are studied so far as they are causally related with social change. In the light of such discussion, social change may precisely be put as any alternation, modification or replacement in any aspect of society over a particular period of time, as a result of the operation of forces either endogenous or exogenous, or both. Society is commonly viewed from two different and yet co-related angles, i.e., *structural* and *functional*. According to this point of view, Kingsley Davis defines social change as 'any such alternations as occur in social organization, that is, structure and functions of society'. Structure refers to an orderly arrangement of parts or elements on the basis of certain principles. It consists of relatively stable interrelationships among its parts. For instance, the structure of an organization refers to the orderly and relatively stable arrangement of its various limbs like head, hand, leg, stomach, heart, etc. All structural elements are never permanently static. The interrelationships among individuals and group change; new types of relationships emerge; the old role-set gets transformed to a new role-set; the quality of role performance changes with personal succession; with the new types of relationships new regulative norms evolve; culture, value and ideologies keep on changing, with the growth of human knowledge and experience and

NOTES

The functional view of society is closely related to the structural view. Each of the constituent parts of a social system contribute more or less towards the maintenance and continuity of the whole system. The whole social system exists because its parts perform their roles. The function of one part is inter-related and interdependent with the other part. Various constituent elements like economics, political, educational, familial, etc., in their functional part constitute economic sub-system, political sub-system, educational sub system and the family sub-system. The functions of these sub-systems are again interwoven to make the whole social system. The functional view of society emphasizes upon:

- Pattern maintenance
- Tension management
- Process of adaptation to its social and non-social environment
- The way and means of goal attainment
- The process of integration among various parts
- The process of value consensus
- Each of these processes is related with a functional sub system of the society

Social change is a process by itself. Though change brings about modification and alterations, it is never a barrier between the old and new. Change is not a separating wall between the old order and the new order. Rather, the process of change is the intermediate continuity between the old social order and new social order. Change does not break and destroy the old structure. Through change, the old structure only gets transformed to suit the new conditions of living. The process of change helps the existing social structure to maintain its identity. For in the face of new circumstances, a social system may need to adapt its structure to some extent in order to survive. Change in the structure of the system may enable it to maintain its integrity as a distinguishable system, whereas if it maintains the same structure too long it may lose its integrity as a system altogether.

3.2.1 Sanskritization

While analyzing the process of social change, and in particular in the context of Indian society, the process of Sanskritization, Westernization, modernization and secularization serve as important conceptual tools for M.S. Srinivas.

Srinivas made a sincere effort to analyse the process of social change in Indian society through his significant work, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1952). This book was probably the first such attempt to study change in the Indian context in a systematic manner. The term Sanskritization was coined by Srinivas during his study on the Coorgs. It was primarily meant to analyse the process of cultural mobility. According to him, Sanskritization is a process which has been occurring throughout Indian history and will continue to occur in the future. Srinivas defined Sanskritization as 'the process by which a low Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently "twice-born" caste'. As he stated, such changes are initiated by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that the particular caste traditionally conceded to the

NOTES

Srinivas further maintained that Sanskritization is usually accompanied by and often results in upward mobility for the concerned caste. However, the mobility associated with Sanskritization is only *positional* change in the system of caste hierarchy and does not lead to any *structural* change, i.e., a particular caste moves up in the local caste hierarchy and the neighbour caste comes down, but this takes place in the broader caste hierarchy as a whole. There is no change to the caste structure as such.

Sanskritization, moreover, as a process is not confined to the Hindu system but also happens to the tribal groups as well such as the *Bhils* of western India, the *Gonds* and *Oraons* of central India, and the *Pahadis* of the Himalayas. This usually results in the tribe undergoing Sanskritization claiming to be a caste and, therefore, Hindu. In the traditional system, the only way to become a Hindu was to belong to a caste, and the unit of mobility was usually a group and not an individual or a family. Thus, the main argument that Srinivas wants to place is that contrary to the theoretical and book view of the caste system, there is scope for mobility inside the caste structure. As he stated, 'The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins, and adoption of the Brahminic way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called Sanskritization.'

Originally, Srinivas used the term 'Brahminization' to describe the process of mobility inside the Hindu caste system. However, looking at the broader nature of the process later, he used the term Sanskritization to denote inter-caste mobility. The term 'Sanskritization' is a much broader concept than 'Brahminization' because not only does it encompass non-Brahmin models like Kshatriyas model, Jat model, Vaishya model and models of other 'twice-born' castes but also denotes a wide spectrum of values and lifestyles (Hasnain 2006, 601). Srinivas said that Sanskritization was no doubt an awkward term, but it was preferred to Brahminization for several reasons: Brahminization subsumed in the wider process of Sanskritization though at some points Brahminization and Sanskritization are at variance with each other. For instance, the Brahmins of the Vedic period drank 'Soma', an alcoholic drink, ate beef and offered blood sacrifices. Both were given up in the post-Vedic times. It has been suggested that this was the result of Jain and Buddhist influence. Today, Brahmins are by and large vegetarians; only the *Saraswat*, *Kashmiri* and *Bengali* Brahmins eat non-vegetarian food. All these Brahmins are, however, traditionally teetotalers. In brief, the customs and habits of the Brahmins changed after they had settled in India. Had the term Brahminization been used, it would have been necessary to specify which particular Brahmin group was meant, and at which period of its recorded history. Again the agents of Sanskritization are not always Brahmins. It is not only the Brahmins, but also local 'dominant castes'

NOTES

in this process is the manifest rejection of the norms of institutionalized inequality fostered by the traditional caste-stratified system. It leads, however, to a paradox: Sanskritization reinforces the normative system which is represented by caste stratification, but it also, at least in principle, violates its basic tenet, i.e., the acceptance of the principle of hierarchy. For this reason, many sociologists have seen in the process of Sanskritization a latent form of class conflict which results from the peculiar structural constraints of Indian society. Srinivas made this point indirectly while analyzing his concept of 'dominant caste'.

M.N. Srinivas also discussed another process of social change known as Westernization. Westernization means a process whereby societies increasingly adopt Western culture, lifestyles, technology, food patterns, language, alphabet, religion, ideas, philosophy and value systems. Srinivas used the term 'Westernization' particularly to indicate the change that took place in Indian society during British rule in the 19th and early 20th centuries. He stated that 'Westernization refers to the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, and the term subsumes changes occurring at different levels—technology, institutions, ideology, values.' Westernization as a process started having its impact substantially on the elites of the country since they had access to modern and British education, especially English. Brahmins and other higher castes who were enjoying power and position in society with the tradition of learning, eagerly took to secular education system that the British imparted with English as the medium.

Srinivas wrote that British rule produced radical and lasting changes in Indian society and culture. It was unlike any previous period in Indian history as the British brought with them new technology, institutions, knowledge, beliefs and values. New technology and the revolution in communication enabled the British to integrate the country as never before in its history. During the 19th century, the British slowly laid the foundations of a modern state by surveying land, settling the revenue, creating a modern bureaucracy, army, police, instituting law courts, codifying the law, developing the communications like railways, post and telegraph, roads, canals, establishing schools, colleges and so on. They also brought with them the printing press that made a significant impact on Indian society since publication of books and journals transmitted modern and traditional knowledge to a large number of people.

Srinivas went on to make distinctions between Westernization and two other related processes: industrialization and urbanization. According to him, although there were cities in the pre-industrial world, they differed from post-industrial revolution cities. For one thing, they needed large rural population for their support, so that ancient and medieval countries remained dominantly agricultural in spite of a few big cities. Again, while the Industrial Revolution resulted in an increase in the rate of urbanization, and highly urbanized areas are generally highly industrialized areas, urbanization is not a simple function of industrialization. For Srinivas, while most of the Westernized people are usually found in big cities, it will be wrong to equate Westernization with urbanization. Even in a country like India, there are people in rural areas who are as much and may be more westernized than many of their urban counterparts.

Westernization resulted not only in the introduction of new institutions like press, newspapers, journals, elections, and so on, but also in fundamental changes in the old institutions. For example, although India had schools long before the British came to

Self-Instructional
Material

NOTES

India, they were fundamentally different from the schools introduced by the British in that they were restricted to only upper-caste elites and transmitted mostly traditional knowledge. Besides, there were certain value preferences implicit to the process of Westernization as well. One of the important values is 'humanitarianism'. This meant an active concern for the welfare of humanity irrespective of caste, class, religion, age and sex. It encompassed both equalitarianism and secularization. Humanitarianism resulted in many administrative measures taken by the British to fight epidemics, famines, and building schools, hospitals, and so on and also brought in several civil and procedural laws that put an end to certain inequalities that existed in Hindu and Islamic personal laws. Moreover, Christian missionary activities were remarkable in making humanitarian efforts especially in the form of providing education and health facilities. According to Srinivas, the missionaries were the bitter critics of the Hindu social customs like caste, untouchability, low status of women and child marriage. This led to reinterpretation of Hinduism at both ideological and institutional levels and the conversion of the lower castes like 'Harijans' to Islam and Christianity. Such factors were instrumental in producing a changed attitude among the Hindu elites towards the traditional caste system and untouchability.

According to Srinivas, the increase in Westernization does not retard the process of Sanskritization; rather both go on hand in hand and to some extent, increase in Westernization accelerates the process of Sanskritization. For instance, the postal facilities, railways, busses, and media which are the fruits of Western impact on India rendered before, Sanskritization and Westernization are concepts that analyse the process of cultural change and have no scope for systematic explanation of changes in the social structure. Srinivas pointed out that to describe the social changes occurring in modern India in terms of Sanskritization and Westernization, we need to describe it primarily in cultural and not in structural terms.

According to Jena and Mohapatra, the process of Westernization had its impact on both the 'little' and 'great traditions'. Its influence on little traditions is termed as primary westernization and on great tradition as secondary westernization.

(i) **Primary Westernization:** Primary westernization means changes induced by the influence of the West on Indian traditions. Initially, Western culture made its impact on peripheral aspects of Indian culture. It created a sub-cultural pattern limited to a very specific group of people within a particular geographical area. Thus, during the early periods of British rule, the West's influence was localized and peripheral. For example, in British trade centres, like Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, there emerged a new commercial middle-class, the social composition of which differed from place to place. In Calcutta, they were 'Baniyas' (Merchants), in Madras, it was the Brahmins, whereas in Bombay they were mostly Parsis. These commercial middle-classes served as middle-men between native Indians and the British traders. This class was not westernized to any significant extent though they adopted Western dress, language and ways of living. In their basic psychological disposition, they were quite Indian. According to the Indian sociologist Prof Yogendra Singh, they can be termed as 'quasi-westernized middle men'. Towards the early part of the 19th century, another group emerged: a group of English-educated professionals who played a major role in the process of Westernization. These English-educated people took up the values and ideologies of western culture like humanism, equality, and so on. Different socio-cultural reform movements started in this period spearheaded by these English-educated

classes to campaign against the sati-system, untouchability, child marriage and other social evils. The role of movements like the *Brahmo Samaja*, the *Prarthana Samaja*, and so on, was very important in this context. Such reformist movements, though local in spread, influenced the British administration and many progressive laws were passed as a result, e.g., the prohibition of sati, child marriage, introduction of widow remarriage and so on. The expansion of modern education, transportation and communication served as a prelude to greater Westernization in the basic structural pattern of Indian society. Western cultural traits of humanism, rationality and equality started stimulating Indian minds which later on brought about changes in the 'great tradition' of Indian society.

(ii) **Secondary Westernization:** Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the process of Westernization started taking firm roots in the Indian social structure. Western culture emerged as the basic ideology. Many social reformers justified the adoption of the Western cultural spirit in order to make Indians feel the necessity of liberty, freedom and equality. The cumulative effects on the changes in 'little tradition' and many other economic, political as well as administrative policies also affected the 'great traditions' of the country. Gradually, a new structural pattern with many new institutions started replacing many of its old institutions. Some such changes in the 'great tradition' of the country included introduction of the universalistic legal system, the expansion of modern, scientific and universal education, urbanization and industrialization, development in transport and communication, and the growth of the sense of unity and nationalism.

3.2.3 Modernization

Modernization is one of the most important concepts in developmental sociology. During the 1850s and 1860s, modernization became one of the dominant themes of research. Modernization deals with the effects of economic development on traditional social structures and values. The process of modernization is related to industrialization, urbanization, high standard of living, development of civilization, and a broadness of viewpoint. According to Eisenstadt, 'From a historical point of view modernization is a process of change towards those type of social, economic and political systems which were developed in Western Europe and North America from the 17th to 19th century, and after that spread over to South America, Asia and Africa during the 19th and 20th century'. In social science disciplines, modernization refers to the transition from a 'pre-modern' or 'traditional' type of society to a 'modern' society. Many sociologists associate modernization with the spread of education, urbanization and industrialization. According to the sociologist Diana Kendall, urbanization is a process which has accompanied to the sociologist the rapid process of industrialization. In sociology, modernization is also linked to the process of rationalization. In a modernized society, the individual becomes much more important, gradually replacing the family or community as the primary unit of society. As societies experience the process of modernization, the importance of religion and traditional values becomes less important and people start thinking more about reason and rationality. The term modernization is less value-loaded than its predecessor—Westernization. Most developing countries were proud of their cultural heritage and deeply attached to it. While they were attracted to Western culture, they had no plans to abandon their own life-styles and value systems. The term Westernization thus elicited adverse reactions. Unlike Westernization, the concept of modernization recognized the strength of roots; it did not pose any overt threat to the cultural diversity of the people

NOTES

NOTES

aspiring for rapid change. To the elite of the Third World, the ideal of Westernization was difficult to swallow; they accepted modernization readily because it did not appear to offend their own cultural dignity.

According to Daniel Lerner in his book *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958), there are three features of modernization which are core to a modernized personality—empathy, mobility and high participation. Empathy is the capacity to see things as others see them. All societies possess this capacity in some measure, but to sharpen and strengthen, it can make a qualitative change in human interaction. The second attribute, mobility, does not only imply geographical mobility; rather it is used in a more comprehensive sense. Unlike traditional societies which had ascribed status, modernized societies have open status system and largely give emphasis to achievement rather than birth. The third attribute—high participation—refers to the increased role of individuals in realizing social goals and objectives in more active ways. The character of modern society is rational in cognitive aspects, universalistic in membership aspects, functionally specific in substantive definitional aspects, neutral in affective aspects, individualistic in goal orientation aspect and hierarchical in stratification aspects. According to Jena and Mohapatra, units of society tend to be more specialized and self-sufficient in a modern society and there is increasing evidence of role differentiation, solidarity and integration.

Singh remarked that modernization symbolizes a rational attitude towards issues, and their evaluation from a universalistic and not a particularistic view point, (when it involves an emotional response to problems), orientation is empathic and not constrictive. Modernization is rooted in a scientific worldview. It has deeper and positive association with levels of diffusion of scientific knowledge, technological skill and technological resources in a particular society. However, what may be essential to modernization is the commitment to scientific worldview, the internalization of humanistic and philosophical viewpoint of science or contemporary problems and not merely the volume of technological advancement. It is possible that a society, like an individual, might command a maximum of scientific skills and resources but a minimum of its necessary psychic and emotional requisites. It is otherwise possible that a successful scientist may be a failure as a 'modern' human, and a most affluent or technologically advanced society may also be the one which is most tyrannical. He further mentioned that the distinction between modern values and traditional values may be maintained on the grounds, that modern values, like science, being evolutionary and universal, might not be typical to any one particular cultural tradition, whereas traditional cultural values may be particularistic and typical. Modernization in its essential attributes or in ideal-typical forms is a universal-cultural phenomenon. Like science, modernity is not an exclusive possession of any one ethnic or cultural group, but it belongs to the humanity as a whole.

Yogendra Singh analysed modernization in Indian context of change in a very systematic manner. According to him, the sources of change can be endogenous or exogenous. Endogenous sources of change are the sources within the social system and exogenous sources are those coming from outside. Besides, change takes place in 'tradition' and 'social structure'. Tradition, according to Singh, is characterized by hierarchy, holism, continuity and transcendence and is divided into great tradition and little tradition. As has been stated previously, the former is the cultural belief and value systems that are practiced throughout the country, while the latter comprises the folk cultural beliefs and oral traditions and localized adoption of the great tradition. Both Hinduism and Islam in India featured holism, hierarchy, continuity and transcendence. Modernization of great tradition in both these cases referred to a pattern of change from hierarchy to equality,

from holism to individualism, from continuity to historicity and from transcendence to rationalism and secularism. In India, following the process of Westernization, there was educational modernization, emergence of universal legal system, advancement in communication systems and transportation, expansion of urban centres and modern political institutions. Similarly, in the sphere of little tradition, two forces of change, Sanskritization and Islamization (conversion to Islam) came through.

Further, Singh analysed change in social structure which he divided into macro and micro-structure. The change in macro-structure refers to the change in the political, industrial and urban structures. For example, the elites in India came from homogenous backgrounds before independence. However, the post-independence era saw changes in the macro-structure, so much so that elites started coming from different socio-cultural backgrounds. The change in the micro-structure refers to the change in caste, family, communities, and so on. The modernization of caste for example was seen in its association with politics without losing its social functions. Voting behaviour is largely influenced by the caste of the candidate contesting the election. Hence, Singh claimed that India's modernization process is very unique and it is being instituted through the adaptive changes in the traditional structures rather than structural breakdown.

For a clear understanding, Jena and Mohapatra give the following indicators of modernity:

- A degree of self-sustaining growth in the economy or at least growth sufficient to increase both production and consumption regularly;
- Increasing use of inanimate sources of power to meet human requirement and to solve human problems;
- A noticeable degree of both individual and collective effort to achieve the technological advancement;
- A measure to mass participation in the political affairs or at least a sort of democratic representation in defining and choosing policy alternatives;
- A diffusion of secular-rational norms in the culture;
- An increment of mobility in the society—understood as personal freedom of physical, social and psychic movement;
- The emergence and growth of specific functional organizations and attendant changes in social structures and values;
- A corresponding transformation in the model personality that equips the individuals to function effectively in a social order.

Ram Ahuja cites the following problems of modernization.

- The first paradox of modernization is that a modern society must change in all ways at once but such a regular, coordinated pattern of growth cannot be conceivably planned. A certain amount of social unrest is, therefore, inevitably created. For example, mass educational system demands that trained individuals must be absorbed in occupational roles commensurate with their training and knowledge. However, it is not always possible to provide jobs to all educated people. This leads to unrest among the educated unemployed people.
- Structural change is uneven during periods of modernization. For example, industries may be modernized but family system, religious system, and so on remain conservative. These discontinuities and patterns of change affect the established social and other structures and produce lags and bottlenecks.

NOTES

NOTES

- Modernization of social and economic institutions creates conflicts with traditional ways of life. For example, trained doctors pose a threat to traditional medicine men. Similarly, machine-made finished products pose a threat to traditional hand-made crafts and the livelihood of the artisan communities.
- Most often roles adopted by people are modern but values continue to be traditional.
- There is a lack of co-operation among agencies which modernize and among institutions and systems which are modernized. This often leads to cultural lag as well as institutional conflicts.
- Modernization raises the aspiration of people but many times social systems fail to provide opportunities to them to achieve those aspirations. This creates frustrations, deprivations and social unrest.

3.2.4 Secularization

Secularization is another important process of social change in the modern Indian context. It refers to the transformation of a society identified with religious values, ideas and institutions towards non-religious ideas, values and institutions. As societies progress and modernize, the people follow values of reason and rationality; while religion, religious scriptures and institutions lose their influence on people and their social life. Thus, secularization is a process where societies lose their religious significance. The sociologist Max Weber opined that scientific and technological advancement would weaken peoples' belief on religion and supernatural powers. Rationality will also overpower superstitious beliefs and dogmas. Weber called this process the 'disenchantment of the world'.

The term 'secularization' was first used in Europe in 1648. It was then understood as the process of transferring the Church's properties to the control of rulers. The British sociologist Bryan Wilson defined secularization as 'a process where religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance'. Similarly, the Austrian-born American sociologist Peter Berger defined secularization as 'the process by which sections of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols'. Further, M. N. Srinivas wrote that 'the term secularization implies that what was previously regarded as religious is now ceasing to be such and it also implies the process of differentiation which results in the various aspects of socio-economic, political, that secularism is a sub-process of modernization.

M.N. Srinivas wrote elaborately on the process of secularization in his analysis of social change in Indian society. According to him, British rule brought with it a process stronger with the development of communications, growth of towns and cities, increased spatial mobility and the spread of education. The two World Wars and Gandhi's civil disobedience campaigns, both of which socially and politically mobilized the masses, also contributed to increased secularization. Following independence, the Constitution also recognised India as a secular state and maintained that all citizens are equal before law. Comparing both Sanskritization and secularization, Srinivas opined that of the two, secularization is the more general process, affecting all Indians; while Sanskritization affects only Hindus and tribals. As he mentioned, broadly, it would be true to say that secularization is more marked among the urban and educated sections of society and the Social Sciences, he elaborated that one of the essential elements of secularization is rationalism, a comprehensive expression applied to various theoretical and practical

tendencies which aim to interpret the universe purely in terms of thought, or which aim to regulate individual and social life in accordance with the principles of reason and to eliminate as far as possible or to relegate to the background everything irrational.

The main ingredients of secularization are discussed below:

1. **Decline in religiosity:** Religion is based on a distinction between the sacred and the profane in which the term sacred is associated with faith in a mythical or supernatural power. However, the process of secularization in contrast implies a gradual decline of religious feelings. In a perfectly secularized society, religious considerations are replaced by rationalistic considerations. Thus, as the process of secularization proceeds, the social institutions and individual actions become increasingly free from the influence of religion.
2. **Rationality:** With the gradual decline of religious controls, there takes place a corresponding increase in rationalism in the process of secularization. People start thinking about the problems of their day-to-day life. Reason takes the place of faith. Instead of taking everything for granted, people try to find out the cause of happenings in their individual as well as social life. A tendency towards establishment of cause and effect relationship becomes increasingly popular.
3. **Empiricism and commitment to scientific world views:** The process of secularization results in growth in empiricism and scientific world view. Human knowledge is based on observation, experimentation and verification. Experience and experimentation governs the human consciousness. Beliefs, faiths and mythical orientation are increasingly replaced by the scientific knowledge derived from empirical observation.
4. **Process of differentiation:** The growth of empiricism and rationalism necessarily results in a corresponding differentiation in the social structure. Different aspects of social life come to be differentiated from each other. Each such aspect, for example, economic, legal, political and moral sub-systems becomes increasingly distinct. Each sub-system gets further differentiated which results in increasing specialization and professionalization.

To sum up, it can be said that secularization is a process which brings change in the approach of people towards things where rationality and reason increasingly influence their attitude and orientations and where religious and superstitious beliefs have less control on human behaviour.

As stated above, the process of secularization in India started with British contact. However, there is a difference between the Western model of secularization and the Indian model of secularization. The Indian experience of secularization is a unique one. In the West, especially in Europe, secularization meant isolating the Church/religion from public life/control. Thus, the Western model is without religion. However, the Indian model of secularization is with religion. The Indian Constitution mentions in its 'Preamble' that it is a 'secular' country where each and every religion will be treated by the state equally and that there would not be any state religion. The Constitution also defines that every individual has the freedom to practice, profess and propagate any religion. It has been instituted as one of the fundamental rights of Indian citizens. The right to freedom of religion is guaranteed under Article 25 of the Constitution of India. Article 25(1) of religion is subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion. Article 25 (2) says, 'Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law: (a)

NOTES

NOTES

Regulating or restricting any economic financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice; (b) Providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.' Thus, this Article in the Constitution of India guarantees that every person in India shall have the freedom of conscience and shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate religion, subject to the restrictions that may be imposed by the state on some grounds.

3.3 S.C. DUBE

Shyama Charan Dube (1922-1996) is a renowned sociologist and anthropologist of India. Dube has been a member of the teaching faculty of social anthropology and sociology at universities of India and also abroad. He began his professional career as a lecturer at Bishop College, Nagpur and Maharashtra. Later, he joined the Department of Political Science in Lucknow University.

While teaching in Lucknow, Dube got his book *The Kamar* published. He was influenced by D. N. Majumdar whom he aided in the initial stages of the publication of the journal *Eastern Anthropologist*. While in contact with Majumdar, Dube enhanced his anthropological readings. He then moved to Osmania University, Hyderabad and replaced Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf as a reader in the Department of Sociology. He also later visited the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and the London School of Economics. There, he interacted with many academicians, one of them being Raymond Firth who assisted him in writing the book on the Indian village. Dube was a brilliant speaker in both, English and Hindi.

Dube became famous for his study of the Indian village community to which he applied the structural-functional approach. Dube identified the semi-independent nature of the Indian village, but did not regard it as 'static, timeless and changeless'. He was of the idea that a particular village cannot act as a representative of rural India as a whole since it cannot represent rural India in its cultural arena. He conducted a study of the Shamirpet suburban mandal in Rangareddi district of Telangana, which gives us an analysis of the social, economic, family and ritual structure of the village.

Dube's contribution to the study on Indian villages and the changes in the villages is extremely significant in the field of sociology. Dube's later works also contained the same insight of the Indian society where he also demanded accuracy in theoretical formulations and practical certification of these ideas. His later works include: *The Study of Complex Cultures* (1965), *Explanation and Management of Changes* (1971), *Contemporary India and its Modernization* (1974).

Dube has always been a supporter of interdisciplinary orientation and was always interested in research work. Hence, his multidimensional personality is observed in the way he looked at things from different perspectives. Yogesh Atal, an Indian sociologist, commenting on Dube's personality writes:

Dube has constantly been on the move both geographically and intellectually. Rather than harping on the same theme and concentrating on a narrow specialty, he chose the challenging task of exploring new territory and extending the frontier of knowledge.

Dube (1965) suggested an all-inclusive frame of reference for the study of 'complex cultures' in order to interpret the Indian society better. Dube made use of

deductive-positivistic approach rather than inductive-inferential approach, based on null situation, like 'no change in modern India' or 'India's unchanging villages'.

Dube's *Indian Village* (1955) is an important work of the post-1950 period since it is considered to be the very first work providing a full-length account of the village social structure. His depiction of the rural social structure and institutions is very lucid and this work came to be regarded as a source for many other accounts of the rural society which were studied later. But there were some loopholes in his study as he did not offer any analytical insights nor did he give any other alternative framework to study and examine the Indian rural society (Dhanagare, 1993: 53-54).

It was the recognition of the Community Development Programme (CDP) by the Government of India that enhanced Dube's interest in rural studies. This demanded a shift from 'structure' to 'change' in the Indian villages, which is covered in his other pioneering work *India's Changing Villages* (1958).

S.C. Dube's chief theoretical interest is in social structure and change as well as sociology of economic development. His doctoral dissertation was on *The Kamar* (1951) which was a total study of the tribe of Madhya Pradesh. It is a full length monograph on this tribe of middle India.

Dube's *Indian Village* (1955) deals with total study of village Shamirpet in the region of Telengana of Andhra Pradesh. His work provides a reasonably adequate introduction to the historical, geographical and political setting as well as to the social, economic and religious practices of a village in India.

According to him, no village in India is completely autonomous and independent, for it is always one unit in a wider social system and is a part of an organized political society. An individual is not the member of a village community alone; he also belongs to a caste, religious group or tribe which has a wider territorial spread and comprises several villages.

Based on his research, S. C. Dube gave certain indicators of the concept of social development. They are discussed as follows:

- Social development is a shift in emphasis from the individual to larger collectivities, including the poor who constitute the majority.
- It is a modification in the strategies of planning and implementation to take account of the interface between economic and cultural objectives.
- The concept is a redefinition of social goals in terms of the satisfaction of human needs and improvements in the quality of life.
- The formation of indicators to evaluate social progress and to assess emerging social trends.
- The setting up of monitoring mechanisms to ensure that growth level is sustainable and at no point exceeds the outer limits.
- The anticipation of growth-related and other problems and preparedness to handle them quickly and also effectively.
- The idea of social development is understood as a creation of ethos in which it is possible to question and rethink the appropriateness and adequacy of existing social formations and to work towards their restructuring.

The main works of Dube are as follows:

- The Kamar*, Indian Village (1955)
- India's Changing Villages* (1958)

Check Your Progress

- According to Srinivas, what is the meaning of field view?
- What is the main argument that Srinivas wants to place in his analysis of caste?
- How does M.N. Srinivas define dominant caste?
- What is the meaning of primary westernization?
- What is the process of modernization related to?

NOTES

NOTES

- *Institution Building for Community Development* (1968)
- *Contemporary India and Its Modernization* (1974)
- *Tribal Heritage of India* (1977)
- *Understanding Society* (1977)
- *Modernization and Development* (1988)
- *Tradition and Development* (1990)
- *Understanding Change* (1990)
- *Indian Society* (1990)

Along with these, Dube also wrote some books in Hindi, such as *Manav evam Sanskrati*, *Bhartiya Gram*, *Vikas ka Samajshasta*, and *Sankraman ki Peera*.

Dube on Indian society

Dube wrote about contemporary Indian society in his book *Indian Society*, which was published in 1990. In the book, Dube drew upon different sources to write about Indian society of the past and present. According to Dube, present Indian society has different contradictions that seem to be mystifying. It is a society of enormous depravations, but it also has some islands of prosperity. It is a culture embedded in spirituality, yet, at the same time, the ruling classes, have set standards of brazen consumption that seem almost unethical.

Indian society, for Dube, is both continuous, and changing. Dube believes that the reason for change must be sought in an array of factors. So far state compulsion has been instrumental in bringing about little social and cultural change in the village community. The factors of utility, convenience and availability have played a more critical role in bringing several new elements into the life of the community. In the family milieu, changed conditions and changing attitudes of the people have brought about some important variations. With the changing economy, in place of their traditional occupations, people have started accepting other vocations. Family bonds have been under stress and are not as strong or cohesive as they used to be. There are several reasons for the erosion of kinship: modern education, new occupations, geographical mobility, impact of mass media, and so on. Another important change has been greater freedom of choice in marriage, especially for men. Dube states that the influence of the city has brought extremes in the organization of the community has so far prevented any drastic structural change in Indian village communities.

Looking at the country broadly, Dube suggests three trends in Indian society. These are:

- (a) The regional culture, founded on the traditions, customs and life-ways of the culture area;
- (b) The national culture, consisting of some pan-Indian characteristics inspired by the national renaissance, cemented by the struggle against British colonialism as well as by social and economic reform and sustained by the will to find a rightful place in the community of countries; the components in this group being partly revivalists and partly conscious innovations; and
- (c) Taking on characteristics and components from western technology and culture. Traditional social institutions and culture, traditions and life-ways continue to be idealized. The belief is that these began long ago and people salvation lies in following these traditions, which are divinely ordained.

Check Your Progress

6. Name one person who influenced Dube.
7. What were the loopholes in Dube's writing?
8. Name two books Dube wrote in Hindi.

NOTES

3.4 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- M.N. Srinivas was a well-known sociologist and social anthropologist. His contribution to the discipline of sociology is immense having done pioneering works in the field of caste and study of social change in India.
- Srinivas wanted to explore and understand his countrymen not on the basis of European or American textbooks, not from the point of view of sacred texts, but from the field experience through observation. For this, he made extensive field work study of Coorg from 1940-42.
- Srinivas proposed concepts like 'dominant caste', 'Sanskritization', 'Westernization' and 'secularization' to understand the realities of inter-caste relations and also to explain their dynamics.
- Sanskritization is a process of cultural mobility, where the low Hindu caste or tribe or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently 'twice-born' caste.
- Westernization is a process whereby societies increasingly adopt Western cultures, life-styles, technology, food pattern, language, alphabet, religion, ideas, philosophy, value systems, etc.
- Primary westernization means changes induced by the influence of the West on Indian traditions.
- Initially, Western culture made its impact on peripheral aspects of Indian culture. It created a sub-cultural pattern limited to a very specific group of people within a particular geographical area. Thus, during the early periods of British rule, the West's influence was localized and peripheral.
- Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the process of Westernization started taking firm roots in the Indian social structure.
- Modernization refers to the transition from a 'pre-modern' or 'traditional' type of society to a 'modern' society; especially, it is associated with the spread of education, urbanization and industrialization.
- According to Daniel Lerner in his book *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958), there are three features of modernization which are core to a modernized personality—empathy, mobility and high participation.
- Secularization refers to the transformation of a society identified with religious values, ideas and institutions towards non-religious ideas, values and institutions.
- The term 'secularization' was first used in Europe in 1648. It was then understood as the process of transferring the Church's properties to the control of rulers.
- The British sociologist Bryan Wilson defined secularization as 'a process where religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance'.
- Shyama Charan Dube is a renowned sociologist and anthropologist of India. Dube became famous for his study of the Indian village community to which he applied the structural-functional approach.
- Dube identified the semi-independent nature of the Indian village, but did not regard it as 'static, timeless and changeless'. He was of the idea that a particular

NOTES

village cannot act as a representative of rural India as a whole since it cannot represent rural India in its cultural arena.

- Dube's *Indian Village* (1955) is an important work of the post-1950 period since it is considered to be the very first work providing a full-length account of the village social structure.
- Dube's depiction of the rural social structure and institutions is very lucid and this work came to be regarded as a source for many other accounts of the rural society which were studied later.

3.5 KEY TERMS

- **Sanskritization:** The process by which a 'Low' Hindu caste changes its customs in the direction of a high caste.
- **Westernization:** The transformations that have taken place in technology, ideologies, values and institutions due to British rule in India.
- **Norms:** Norms are socially accepted rules which people employ in deciding on their actions.
- **Values:** People's beliefs about what the world should be like, as they have to determine the effect on their actions is called values.
- **Secularization:** A process of decline in the social influence of religion.

3.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. According to Srinivas, field view meant fieldwork perspectives. He believed that knowledge about the different regions of Indian society can be attained through field work. This he called field view.
2. The main argument that Srinivas wants to place is that contrary to the theoretical and book view of the caste system, there is scope for mobility inside the caste structure.
3. Srinivas defines 'dominant caste' as one that 'yields economic or political power and occupies a fairly high position in the hierarchy'.
4. Primary westernization means changes induced by the influence of the West on Indian traditions.
5. The process of modernization is related to industrialization, urbanization, high standard of living, development of civilization, and a broadness of viewpoint.
6. Dube was influenced by D. N. Majumdar whom he aided in the initial stages of the publication of the journal *Eastern Anthropologist*.
7. There were some loopholes in Dube's study as he did not offer any analytical insights nor did he give any other alternative framework to study and examine the Indian rural society.
8. Two of the books that S.C. Dube wrote in Hindi are *Manav evam Sanskrati* and *Bhartiya Gram*.

3.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is Westernization? Examine it briefly in the Indian context.
2. What are the main ingredients of secularization?
3. Write a short-note on S.C. Dube's analysis of Indian villages.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse in detail the process of Sanskritization propounded by Srinivas.
2. Discuss the process of modernization and its features.
3. What is secularization? Comparatively analyse the Western and Indian models of secularization.

3.8 FURTHER READING

- Abel, Theodore. 1980. *The Foundations of Sociological Theory*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Abraham, Francis M. and John Henry Morgan. 1985. *Sociological Thought*. Chennai: Macmillan India.
- Aron, Raymond. 1965. *Main Currents in Sociological Thought, Vol. I and II*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- Srinivas M.N. 2003. *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Srinivas M.N. 1995. *Social Change in Modern India*. Noida: Orient Blackswan.
- Desai A.R. 1985. *India's Path of Development: A Marxist Approach*. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan.

NOTES

UNIT 4 MARXIST PERSPECTIVES

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 Marxist View of Social Change
 - 4.2.1 Marxist Theory of Social Change
 - 4.2.2 Dialectical Materialism
- 4.3 Marxist Perspectives on Indian Society
 - 4.3.1 Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee
 - 4.3.2 R.K. Mukherjee
 - 4.3.3 A.R. Desai
- 4.4 Marxian Analysis on the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism
 - 4.4.1 D.D. Kosambi
- 4.5 Summary
- 4.6 Key Terms
- 4.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.8 Questions and Exercises
- 4.9 Further Reading

NOTES

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learned about structural-functional perspectives of the theorists M.N. Srinivas and S.C. Dube. In this unit, the discussion will turn to the Marxist perspective.

As a student of sociology, you must have heard the name of Karl Marx. The thoughts of this philosopher and revolutionary had a huge impact on the history of the twentieth century; in fact his writings continue to influence thinkers of political science, sociology, economy, history, and so on, to this day. Despite his political orientation towards the creation of a communist society, Marx devoted much of his writings to the dialectical and critical analyses of capitalist society. The dialectic emphasizes that among the elements of social world there are no simple cause and effect relationships; fact and value are not seemingly divided clearly between a line; there are no hard and fast dividing lines among phenomena in the social world. Marx's analysis of actors and structure should be viewed in the framework of his opinions on human nature, which is also the starting point for his critical analysis of the contradictions inherent within the capitalist structure. Marx stated that a disagreement exists between our human nature and work in the capitalist system. Workers get alienated from their labour because it does not belong to them, but rather to the capitalist owners.

Marx's theories and opinions were a response to the quick changes taking place in Europe, primarily Germany, as a result of industrialization. He also studied the nature of the structures of capitalism and their adverse effects on the actors and elaborated on the pivotal role played by commodities in capitalism. He used the term 'reification' to explain the process whereby social structure becomes naturalised, absolute and independent of human action. In this context, it can be said that capital is the most reified component in a capitalist society. Using the framework enumerated by Marx, and expanded by other Marxist philosophers, this unit will discuss the perspective of Indian Marxist thinkers like R.K. Mukherjee, A.R. Desai, D.P. Mukherjee and D.D. Kosambi.

NOTES

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe A.R. Desai's interpretation of tradition
- Explain R.K. Mukerjee's opinion about values
- Discuss D.D. Kosambi's analysis of feudalism in India
- Examine the Marxist concept of dialectical materialism
- Discuss D.P. Mukherjee notions of the nature of tradition

4.2 MARXIST VIEW OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Karl Marx is considered one of the founders of sociology along with Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. His theories on social change hugely influenced sociologists in the years following his death. Let us take a look at his theory of social change.

4.2.1 Marxist Theory of Social Change

Economics plays a cardinal role in a man's daily life. The noted sociologist and philosopher, Karl Marx, gave the most important theory to show how the economy was a major factor in social change. Marx explained that economy constitutes the basic structure of society. This basic structure consists of the means of production (raw material, labour, machines and so on.) and the relationship of production (e.g. slave-master and slave, lord and serf, capitalist and worker).

Other institutions like family, education, religion, polity, and so on, constitute the superstructure. Change in the means and relationship of production, consequently, leads to the change in various institutions, i.e., in the superstructure of society. This change in the relationship of production occurs as a result of a conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed class, the haves and the have-nots, the ruling and the ruled class. It was a result of this class conflict that society transformed from primitive communism to slavery, slavery to feudalism and from feudalism to capitalism. From capitalism, Marx predicted, two more societal changes would occur due to this class conflict—socialism and communism. The underlying philosophy of socialism is 'from each according to his capacity and to each according to his work' and of communism is 'from each according to his capacity to each according to his need'. Marx envisioned that the socialist society will be ruled by proletariats for a transitional period and gradually a classless communist society would emerge.

In India, a cursory look at 19th and 20th century society shows how society changed as a result of economic developments. Post-independence, industrialization brought enormous changes in the lives of people. Not only did it change the occupation structure in Indian society—with a significant section of society moving away from agriculture to industry—but it also affected inter-personal relationships.

The change from an agriculture based economy to an industrial economy also resulted in people from rural areas migrating to cities to work in factories. This drastically reduced the effect of caste/untouchability and also transformed joint families into nuclear households.

As Karl Marx stated, any change in the means of production (or the material productive forces of society) can lead to changes in the social structure of the society. Some of the ways in which economic factors have acted as drivers of social change include:

1. The rise in material means of livelihood led to the birth of the institutions of marriage and family, which led to the idea of possessions/wealth for the family.
2. In the agricultural stage, the social organization grew more complex, as people settled down at a particular place for raising crops. It led to stability and a rise of villages. The division of labour led to stratification or division in society based on economic factors, i.e., classes. Institutions like kingship and feudalism also came up during this period.
3. Agricultural surplus in Western nations led to the industrial stage and with scientific advancements, machine system of production came into existence. Industrial revolution led to changes in every structure of the society. These changes were:
 - (a) Migration to cities led to urbanization.
 - (b) The extended family system was replaced by the nuclear family.
 - (c) Women joined the labour force, leading to changes in gender roles and relations.
 - (d) Industrial revolution led to a change in society as lords and serfs were replaced by industrialist and workers.
 - (e) The rise of nation states, as kingship declined in this era.
 - (f) It led to many movements around the world like the Russian Revolution.
 - (g) New ideologies like socialism/capitalism came up.
 - (h) More and more ways of entertainment came to be developed.

Economic factors have been and continue to be very important factors of social change but they are not the only determinants of social change (as Marx said), as these changes were in conjunction with the technological and other changes in the society.

4.2.2 Dialectical Materialism

Although Marx himself never used the term, many Marxists consider dialectical materialism as the theoretical source of several strands of Marxism. Joseph Dietzgen first used the term in 1887; however, it was only after Georgi Plekhanov - the father of Russian Marxism - used the term that it became a part of common usage in Marxian analysis.

Dialectical materialism refers to the societal and economic transformation born of material forces. Essentially, the concept of dialectical materialism suggests that all of material forces. Essentially, the concept of dialectical materialism suggests that all of historical growth and change results from the struggle of opposites. To put it another way, history is the creation of class struggle, i.e., the class struggle between the capitalist and landowning classes, on the one hand, and the proletariat and peasantry, on the other. Dialectical materialism or 'dianat' follows the Hegelian principle of philosophy of history, which is the growth of thesis into anti-thesis that is sublated by synthesis. This synthesis preserves the thesis and the anti-thesis and simultaneously rises above them both.

Law of dialectics

Marxism is a fundamentally materialist philosophy because its foundation is the belief that the overall account of everything is matter which is the characteristic of reality. Another important aspect of Marxian analysis is the belief that matter is independent in forming the course of nature which detaches dialectical materialism.

NOTES

NOTES

According to Engels, 'all nature, from the smallest thing to the biggest, from a grain of sand to the sun, from the protista to man, is in a constant state of coming into being and going out of being, in a constant flux, in a ceaseless state of movement and change.' Thus, the fundamental suggestion of dialectics is that everything is in a continuous process of change, motion and development. Even when there is an appearance that no change is taking place, actually, matter is always changing. Molecules, atoms and subatomic particles are always on the move, continually changing places. Therefore, dialectics is essentially a dynamic understanding of the phenomena and processes which occur at all levels of both organic and inorganic matter.

Using Hegel's 'Science of Logic', Engels derived the three laws of dialectics. Through the laws Engels tries to respond to the problems associated with both nature and humanity. Marxian analysis uses the laws to answer queries such as:

- What is the starting point of energy or activity start in nature?
- Why does the continuous proration in the number of galaxies, solar system, planets, animals and all the realms of nature take place?
- When does the mind begin to become aware of things?
- Why is society regulated and in which direction is such regulation headed?
- Does the study of the past include an ending; if it is then what will it be?

The three laws of dialectics are as follows:

Law of opposites

Marx and Engels began with the impression that everything in reality is a combination of opposites. An illustration of this point is that electricity is made up of a positive and negative charge. Moreover, any student of science can tell you that atoms are made up of protons and electrons that are united, but essentially are opposing forces. Engels' conclusion is that everything 'contains two mutually incompatible and exclusive but nevertheless equally essential and indispensable parts or aspects'. The essential idea is that this coming together of opposites in the natural world is the trait which makes every unit auto-dynamic in nature. It also ensures a nonstop drive for movement and transformation. As Hegel stated, 'contradiction in nature is the root of all motion and of all life'.

This dichotomy more often than not exists in the natural world. In space, gravity drives every molecule to the core of a star allowing it to be held collectively, at the same time, extremely high temperatures force the molecules to stay as far away from the core as possible. If either of any of the two pulls is totally successful, the star does not survive. If extremely high temperature is reached, the star blows up into a supernova. On the other hand, a black hole or a neutron star is the result if gravitational pull is successful in pulling molecules to the core of a star. Similarly, live beings endeavour to stabilize inside and outside forces to sustain the state of homeostasis, i.e., the stabilization of contrasting powers, like acidity and alkalinity.

Law of negation

According to the law of negation, there is a predisposition in the environment towards continuously raising the numerical amount of all things. Marx and Engels state that to organize, to move forward or to replicate a superior number, creatures are inclined in the direction of negating themselves. The nature of opposing forces is such that it is inclined to negate the thing itself, at the same time this negation results in divergence in every

part and gives them movement. Consequently, creatures progress because of this energetic course of beginning and obliteration. This law can also be framed as the sequence of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

To illustrate the law of negation, Engels frequently referred to the example of the barley seed. The barley seed in the natural state sprouts (which is the death of a seed or negation) and produces a plant, which grows into ripeness. After the plant becomes ripe, it is itself negated after giving birth to barley seeds. In the social world, class also illustrates the law of negation. Historically speaking, the nobility was wiped out by the bourgeoisie revolution; this also helped create the proletariat. In Marxian analysis, this proletariat will eventually wipe out the bourgeoisie. Thus, this law suggests that every class produces its own 'gravediggers', its heirs, no sooner than it finishes laying to rest its originator.

Law of transformation

The law of transformation states that constant quantitative growth leads to changes in quality by 'leaps' in the environment, resulting in the production of a totally new variety or creature. This is the way in which 'quantitative development becomes qualitative change'. In the process of transformation, the rendering null and void of quality affecting quantity is also permitted.

This law has many similarities to the theory of evolution. Marxian analysis suggests that creatures in the course of quantitative growth are in addition essentially able to 'leap' to new appearances and stages of realism. The law is shown by the example of a volcanic eruption after the process of years of pressure building up. When the magma cools down after an eruption, it turns the unproductive land into productive land. In the social world, years of stress among contrasting classes or groups in society become the cause of an uprising. The law also occurs in reverse. For example, the introduction of better agriculture tools (changing quality) to farmland help in producing bigger amount (changing quantity) of agriculture output.

4.3 MARXIST PERSPECTIVES ON INDIAN SOCIETY

Let us now look at the different views of Marxist thinkers on Indian society.

4.3.1 Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee

Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee, called DP by his friends and comrades, was born in 1894 in a middle class Bengali family that had a fairly long tradition of intellectual pursuits. He is considered as one of the founding fathers of sociology in India. Mukherjee started his career at Bangabasi College, Calcutta, however, it was at Lucknow University where he established himself as a sociologist of great repute. He stayed at Lucknow University for over 30 years. He was also a visiting professor of sociology at the International Institute of Social Studies, in the Hague, for a year. After retiring from Lucknow University, he became Chair of Economics, at the University of Aligarh, a place that he occupied with great honour till the end of his academic life.

D.P. Mukherjee was a professed Marxist or 'Marxologist' as he preferred to call himself. He was interested in a wide array of subjects - from music and fine arts as his peculiar creations of the Indian culture to the Indian tradition in relation to modernity. He tried to analyse Indian social history from a dialectical frame of reference. His work attempted a dialectical interpretation of the encounter between Indian tradition and

NOTES

Check Your Progress

1. According to Marx, how does a change in the relationship of production occur?
2. What constitutes the superstructure of a society?
3. What does the concept of dialectical materialism suggest?

NOTES

modernity, which unleashed many forces of cultural contradiction during the period when the British ruled India. According to Mukherjee, the encouragement of the capitalist mode of production on the indigenous Indian mode of production created mass poverty and depravation in India. He also enquired into the role of art and culture in order to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor in India. Even though he was influenced by the Marxist school of thought, it did not diminish his interest in Indian tradition. Mukherjee advocated group action instead of rationalistic approach to life and reality.

Mukherji's dialectical approach suggested that tradition and modernity, colonialism and nationalism, individualism and collectivism could be understood as dialectically opposed to each other. All through his work he maintained that traditions are central to the understanding of Indian society. His concept of tradition appeared for the first time in 1942 when his book *Modern Indian Culture: A Sociological Study* was published. Marxism, according to D.P. Mukherjee, helped to understand the historical developments well but it could not offer a satisfactory solution to human problems. That solution was to be found in the regeneration and reinterpretation of India's national culture. In fact, he was opposed to the positivism of modern social sciences that reduced individuals to biological or psychological units. He attempted a dialectical interpretation of the encounter between the Indian tradition and modernity which unleashed many forces of cultural contradiction during the colonial era. Within the broad spectrum of the Marxist worldview and the dialectical approach, Mukherjee strove, however, to maintain the separate identity of his own views. He focused more on the historical specificity of India's cultural and social transformation which was characterized less by 'class struggle' and more by value assimilation and cultural synthesis that resulted from the encounter between tradition and modernity.

According to Mukherjee, the primary task of sociology is to understand the specific nature of the forces that sustain a particular society over the time. For this reason, he emphasized that sociologists of India must know the nature of tradition. Sociology, however, is never a defence of status quo. He asserted that 'Sociology should ultimately show the way out of the social system by analyzing the process of transformation'. Mukherji's understanding of the Indian social system has merit as it shows that the Indian society is changing but without much disintegration.

Trained as an economist, Mukherjee noted that the professional economists had failed to see the economic development in India in terms of its historical and cultural specificities. His dialecticism was rooted in humanism which cuts across narrow ethnic or national considerations. Western progress was devoid of humanism. He argued that Marxism produced an idea of a desirable and higher stage in the development of human society. In that higher stage, personality becomes integrated with others in society through a planned, socially directed, collective endeavour for historically understood end, which means a socialist order.

Expressing doubts about the success of the analysis of Indian society by the Marxists, Mukherjee argued that Indian traditional history cannot be explained in terms of class conflict because here there is a caste tradition and no such type of class relation has emerged sharply as Marxists have used to explain Indian social process.

D.P. Mukherjee did not attempt to construct a general system theory or moral philosophy for global social transformation. He used a notion of dialectics which was Marxist in formulation but still left it to individual social scientists to innovate upon its categories commensurate with their own cultural tradition. In his *Diversities* (1958),

which contains most of his theoretical papers, Mukherjee strongly argued for the use of history in social analysis. For Indian sociological practice, the notion of 'tradition' occupies an important analytic place, according to Mukherjee, because the dialectics of class formation, class conflict and the structural tension in Indian society bear the stamp of the historical contexts of its traditions and symbols. The sociological model that D.P. Mukherjee puts forward is a synthesis between Dilthey and Marx: for him, history matters in sociological analysis, the modes of production and related social relationships constitute essentials of historical forces, but its outcome is tempered also by tradition which provides these processes a specific contextuality.

D. P. Mukherjee preferred the historical-dialectical mode of sociological analysis rather than empirical-positivistic one.

4.3.2 R.K. Mukherjee

Radha Kamal Mukherjee was born in a Bengali Brahmin family in Berhampur, West Bengal in 1889. He completed his education from Presidency College, Calcutta (now Kolkata). He is considered one of the pioneers of Indian sociological theories. R.K. Mukherjee has contributed in areas such as:

- General theory of society
- Developing interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach to studying society
- Sociology of values/social structure of values
- Social ecology and regional sociology

Mukherjee considered the question of value as an important aspect of sociology. He also argued that social science gives us knowledge and if we employ this knowledge for the betterment of man, then definitely one must create value. His basic sociological ambition was to work for a better social order. Mukherjee's basic sociological idea was to develop a general theory of society. He proposed a few measures so that a borderless society can be formed. He advised sociologists to break the obstructions between physical and social sciences; to avoid distinction between social and psychological aspects; to encourage continuous exchange of ideas among the social sciences and between the social and physical sciences. These measures will help human personality to better interact with the surrounding social environment. He discouraged specialization and compartmentalization within disciplines as they provide a parochial view of man's social behaviour.

R.K. Mukherjee had emphasized an interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary approach to study and comprehend human life. This was the fundamental reason for the development of this general theory of society. In a further analysis of the general theory of society, he explains the value of a universal civilization. He maintains that civilization is the bigger picture, of which culture is a part. He promotes studying the development of human civilization through the study of biological evolution, spiritual and universal dimensions. Let us discuss his views in detail.

(i) Biological evolution

Evolution has helped man form better and complex societies, in which they decide and control the environment. Animals, on the other hand, have limitations in their ability to affect and change the environment. Humans are able to rise above conflicts and strife and attain cooperation to achieve higher goals in life and resultant social change.

NOTES

NOTES

(ii) Universalization

Within the realm of social psychology, people are classified according to their race, ethnicity and nation. Humans are often thought of as slaves to their egos. All their actions are meant to achieve their own selfish interests. However, Mukherjee maintained that human beings have the potential to achieve universalization and forget their petty interests for the common good. This would help people to connect to others over a collective perspective. One may start looking at oneself as a member of a nation. Ethical relativism, according to Mukherjee, does not have relevance in our present times. Ethical relevance is the difference of values among societies. Instead, human beings should vie for ethical universalism that helps maintain unity among the human beings. Under ethical universalism, people feel free to disregard rules and norms created for attainment of parochial individual interests.

(iii) Spiritual dimension

Mukherjee maintained that there is a spiritual angle to civilization. Human beings have always moved up the ladder of spirituality by overcoming material and physical limitations. He commended Indian and Chinese civilizations as these have managed to become and remain stable since the 6th century BC. These civilizations have thrived in the face of adversity as their values help nurture their quest for spiritualism.

In his work *Community and Society in India*, published in 1979, he argued that the true place of values in human life and progress can be understood only when we consider the natural history of value. Thus, the psychological function of values lies in orienting and directing the behaviour and evolution of animals capable of mental construction and experience, that is, value creation and communication. Values as adaptive mechanisms play a significant evolutionary role in life, mind and cosmos. In his argument, Mukherjee asserts that social sciences, which are the proper study of mankind, cannot do without a consideration of values. This is, however, completely disregarded by the social sciences governed by subjectivism, phenomenism and physicalist assumptions and procedures. The latter help bring about a complete separation of the social sciences from one another and an unwarranted neglect of the unity and wholeness of man and his value experience. The discredit of human values and value-scale, the divorce between human ideals and norms and social action and policy and rigid, watertight demarcation between the social sciences constitute together a crisis in the modern knowledge of man and society.

The theoretical framework for the study of mankind should be such that the nexus of valuation can restore the general unity of the social sciences now concerned with the various aspects of his impulses, behaviour and strivings. The present divided treatment of social phenomena by the different social sciences with their independent, non-interacting fields go against the human experience, to put it another way, human impulses and values interact and cannot be dealt with in isolation. Hopefully, there is a trend today towards the discovery of the unity of knowledge. The unity of the social sciences comprises a common core of meanings and values based on an interchange and coordination of the fundamental nations and methods of the various social studies dealing with man, his behaviour and culture. The interdisciplinary approach in social analysis affords the highest promise not only for the unification of the social sciences but also for the clarification of universal values for all mankind.

Social science and ethical values

Rationality, Mukherjee argues, in individual behaviour or intelligence in the social world, selects and consciously strives for more enduring and harmonious universal values. In fact, mankind not only seeks various relatively stable or institutionalized values, but is always conscious of a universal scale or hierarchy of value. The definition or selection of institutionalized values and the description of social relations and behaviour pattern for their attainment are the concerns of the various social sciences. Each social science is concerned with an appraisal of the effectiveness of behaviour patterns in creating, maintaining and developing values. So, family structure for the sociologist, governmental structure for the political scientist, economic organization for the economist and the structure of law for the jurist are treated by the social scientist as objective data. The social scientist does not pass judgment on institutionalized values, but must take them as given; he may then analyse their efforts on social behaviour, and thus treat these values as cause of social behaviour.

He also argued that social scientific inquiries must, obviously, be concerned with the social consequences of human behaviour which is the result of moral decisions made by individuals. According to Mukherjee, the social sciences are not only concerned with values as they are presented in established institutions of society, but also with human choice and evaluation of moral alternatives, i.e., with ethics. Ethics for man should be naturalistic, or based on scientific grounding itself and not on blind and rigid conformity to institutional values, but value-preferences, based on different social consequences of human behaviour, stemming from different alternative and complementary sets of institutional values regarded as social facts. Ethics implies intelligent and far-sighted appraisal of psychological and social facts that are enmeshed with values and value judgments. In a sense, judgments of social facts and institutions and moral judgments do not logically exclude each other. Ethics, in the second place, are universalist and transcendent, embodying universal values for all mankind. Human history reveals an overall trend of universality in social and moral development, realizing an unlimited, forward oriented unity and wholeness of mankind.

In his work *Institutional Theory of Economics*, Mukherjee argued that Indian economy is following the model of Western economics. This model does not take into account the prevalent caste system in banking, handicrafts and local businesses. Western economics stresses mostly on industrial centres and economic markets. Mukherjee's argument was that in an ancient civilization like India, ignoring caste frameworks within the social structure is actually not advisable. He also argued that in India, economic exchange is influenced by traditional networks. The various castes and guilds in this country have been operating in an environment of mutual cooperation and harmony in the economic market. He argued that the economic values of India should be understood with reference to the existing social norms.

While discussing social ecology, he maintained that this discipline needs to be studied along with various other social sciences. The ecological aspect is composed, primarily, of geographical, geological and biological factors that work hand-in-hand. The ecology of a society is also influenced by its political, social and economic perspectives. Thus, ecology may be defined as the study of the interactions of various aspects of man and his environment. According to Mukherjee, the scope of human ecology as explained in his book *Regional Sociology* are 'a synoptic study of the balance of plant, animal and human communities, which are systems of correlated working part in the organization of the region'. The ecological relations of the lower animals are very similar to that of the

NOTES

NOTES

human beings. However, culture plays a vital role in case of man. While studying human ecology, examining regional influence, varied social habits, traditions and values is important. The intricate interactions between man and the region he resides in is dealt with by social ecology. The growth in ecological regions depend on the residents' response to it and the challenges that the environment poses.

Regional basis of values and symbols

R.K. Mukherjee maintained that society is 'the sum of structures and functions through which man orients himself to the three dimensions or levels of his environment'. These three levels are moral, psycho-social and ecological. Thus, society 'fulfils the basic requirements of sustenance, status and value fulfilment.' Socially accepted goals or desires that are adopted by individuals through socialization and conditioning are known as values. Values create set standards, aspirations and preferences in a social system. The basic concept of value cuts across desires, goals, ideals and norms. Values help man to channel his desires and goals towards a specific direction. Man can thus fight his physical desires and inner conflicts and choose the correct path. By following the path of values, individual actors successfully achieve peaceful coexistence with fellow humans. The fundamental issue in modern societies is to make and maintain values that would be followed by all members of the society. Values should have a two-fold object: to lead to holistic development of human individuality and nurture solidarity and harmony among the members.

The West developed the ideology of metaphysical individualism. However, this ideology makes man isolated from his group and dissects only his needs and preferences. Social sciences have generally ignored the human values that are shared by human beings and have, instead, focused only on those that were competitive. These sciences have also ignored the integral nature of these values that accelerate development of social culture. These parochial divisions create an artificial divide between practical sociology and metaphysics and ethics. While values are the core subject of the study of ethics, empirical/practical sociology examines social structure and function. The difference between these two has been promoted by Western social sciences. Mukherjee propounds the existence of a gradation of values while talking about theorization of sociology. This gradation is noticed on four levels of social integration.

Certain economic values like integrity, reciprocity, consideration, fairness, and so on, may be exhibited in the economic circle. Within society, justice and equity need to be shown among members. Solidarity, cooperation, unconditional and natural love and social responsibility are the basic social values that must be displayed within a social structure. These values are required if the world society needs to be reconstructed.

Mukherjee has pronounced the existence of disvalues to be associated with values. Both social shortcomings and individual lags are responsible for the expression of disvalues. Individuals as well as institutions can show these disvalues too; for example criminals or organized criminal activities. He contends that ethics have a global existence in his work *Dynamics of Moral and Dimensions of Human Evolution*. In order to attain universal brotherhood, man must rise above petty selfish interests. In this world of violence and discords, this is absolutely essential.

Conservation and synthesis of values and ideals by institution

In Mukerjee's work, difference between groups, traditions, and institutions have been portrayed as a nuclei of the major values. He argued that man, as he is physically

endowed and a social being, seeks values not singly but collectively. He forms groups and institutions that represent methods and mechanisms for the satisfaction, promotion and transmission of values. Every basic interest and value of mankind constitutes the nucleus of formation of groups and institutions. Groups grow from individuals, cohere together for the satisfaction of the basic values; while the mass of institutions is called into being for standardizing, organizing and directing group relationships and activities for the satisfaction and fostering of these values. Groups are episodes in man's adaptation emerging out of the ordering and fulfilment of specific human values that become the common ends or goals of the associated individuals.

As the system of values becomes stable and continuous, groups crystallize into institutions by which we understand social relationships, attitudes, and habits that are more or less enduring and have obtained social approval. Institutions, accordingly, represent the more definite, formal, and sanctioned social relationships and behaviours; the more stable integrations of both values and adaptation techniques that provide the standardized ideas, attitudes, and purposive controls for the fulfilment and promotion of values. He also argues that institutions are embodiments of the major values of man and society. They give definition and meaning to values for the individual who can mature his self only insofar as he can reflect these in his social activities and relationships. It is in this manner that values become a part of the structure of man's developed and organized self.

Groups may be temporary and group values may be shifting, but in so far as groups develop into institutions, group values are tested, renewed, and consolidated by the experience of generations. Institutions combine the results of deliberation, memory, organization, and judgment on individual and social experience for generations and thus generate ideal values. Such ideal values of institutions outlast the lives of both individuals and groups; while at the same time may be infinitely enriched by the contributions of the latter. Values are defined by institutions in a broad and general manner leaving ample scope for the variety and flexibility of individual strivings and behaviour. The mind of the socially fashioned individual constantly recreates and modifies the pattern of social values in terms of the self. Institutional values are also systematically assisted in their fulfilment in daily life by the fixation and elaboration of means and programmes, conventions, habits, morals, and schemes of action for the individual involving specific rights and duties according to his role, position, and status.

Man's interests, values, and ideals are made definite and permanent as his duties in life, and character stabilize by finding his role and position in institutional life. Man can enter into and fully participate in the totality of values, both concrete and ideal, of a society and culture only in and through institutions that are embodiments of social experience of generations guiding man in his evolutionary advance. This is the biological significance of institutions. Concretely, institutions are the agencies for the fulfilment of the essential and universal biological values, such as food, marriage, family, and protection, economic values such as wealth, property, standard of living and security, social values such as status, honour, and prestige, and spiritual values, such as aesthetic appreciation, knowledge, and security amidst the uncertain and the inexplicable. It is because man can fulfil and foster values mainly through the instrumentality of institutions that these possess authority and sanctity.

Mukherjee also emphasized that human values are derived social values. He argued that man is mentally so constituted that his major urges and desires blend with one another and with his social dispositions. Thus, most values integrate desires and

NOTES

NOTES

interests at different levels with social urges. Human values are essentially social products. These can be satisfied only in and through man's groups and institutions. The values that groups and institutions fulfil do not represent egocentric primary desires in the raw, such as food, sex, and aggression but are secondary or derived values. Institutions stand for a certain discipline and control of man's primitive impulses and desires, a certain degree of socialization that transforms his blind, explosive, and disruptive urges into large and stable interests and values. It is not mere sexual values that create the institutions of family and marriage institutions. Sexual and parental desires, hunger and food, play and repose, all intermingle in the composite secondary values of the family that also extend into and overlap, due to the interplay of the social impulses, with the values of kinship.

Similarly, economic values are secondary and derived values, not to be attributed to the operation of single primary drives like food-getting, appropriation and possession, curiosity or constructiveness. All these mingle together and also mingle with the social impulses in combinations that vary and that are often difficult to trace, comprising the permanent derivative economic values of economic adequacy and standard of living, security, and power. Similarly, man's primary tendencies of aggression and sympathy, dominance and subordination merge together for fashioning the derivative social values of status and prestige. Here also institutions embody large and universal derived values. Finally, in the case of the values connected with the aesthetic, religious, and ecclesiastical institutions, it is even more difficult to single out the threads which connect them with the elemental urges of human nature. Such institutions are integrations and ordered expressions of the impulses of play, creation, assertion, and gregariousness, but in the imaginative values arising out of the harmonies of sound, colour, matter, and movement as in art and in those arising out of man's ordered relationships with the unknown and the bewildering, these elemental human satisfactions are very much in the background.

Mukherjee also argues that human values involve orderly relationships of persons and objects. All institutions, accordingly, give fulfilment to secondary or derived values in which some definite ordering or integration of the primary urges and interests is implied for the sake of their durable satisfaction in man's social setting. By blending, by ordering, satisfactions and values become relatively stable. On the other hand, the same process involves orderly relationships of persons and objects.

Underlying the institution of the family are both the integration of sex with food-getting, parental, and social urges and the idea of ordered relations of the sexes and the family groups. In wealth, property and other economic institutions, we have the pattern of fundamental human urges such as those of food-getting, appropriation, possession, aggression, and constructiveness mingled in different combinations, and with the notion of orderly economic relationships and transactions by the regulation of competition and cooperation and of ownership or control of material resources and implements of production and distribution and exchange.

In status, there are similarly a definite integration and combination of the impulses of aggression and sympathy, dominance and submission as well as the notion of systematic distribution of social rank, power, and prestige relationships. Every institution stereotypes values and sentiments and standardizes forms of social relationship and activity. In other words, the institutional values are the only values, the institutional relations the only legitimate relations, and the institutional ways of action the moral ways in society. Thus arises what is called the institutional fallacy according to which man hides his conscience behind the institutional feelings, beliefs, and habits.

The chief reasons why the institutional fallacy persists in all societies are the institutional determination of his attitudes and social actions and relations and his rationalization in respect to his own behaviour and institutional standards that saves him from psychic conflicts. Due to the chronic antagonism between individual wishes or scale of preferences and institutional values, he sometimes adores and condemns, extols and decries the institution. For there is no escape for the average man from the institution, since he finds reward, convenience, security and self-status in institutional conformity. On the other hand, the institution lays down norms and standards only in a general manner permitting some amount of divergence of individual behaviour and mode of fulfilment of values.

Institutions derive their stability from integration of biological, social, and ideal values. Man's values are concentrated and integrated in institutions, as these become his goals, lead him away from the mere physical values that are disapproved and come under various taboos and prohibitions in life and society. The familial values standardize and stabilize the desires and satisfactions of sex that no longer run the tumultuous course of brutal lust. The biological, the economic, the social, and the ideal values fuse and interpenetrate. The result is that even such an explosive and disruptive impulse like sex, which also constantly changes in its aim and direction, develops into a deep, stable, and tender attachment that becomes the seat of realization of many ideal values.

In economic and social values, which are ordered and guaranteed by economic and social institutions, the values that are fixed in the minds of people and determine their goals and activities grow out of primary and universal urges as well, but the biological urges and values are here hardly recognizable. Hunger, the desires for appropriation and possession, curiosity and constructiveness are hardly manifest in the vast complex economic apparatus providing for the production, acquisition, and distribution of food and other necessary economic goods and services that ensure economic sufficiency; yet these original impulses furnish the drives for the newly fashioned, derived economic values of standard of living, wealth, property, and economic power mingling as they do now with the social impulses and the interests of social order, security, and well-being.

Man's social values are even more varied and complex; woven as these are by threads of various kinds and grades of urges and satisfactions. Among the most important of these are gregariousness, sympathy, protection, dominance, and submission, which are, however, not found in the raw but blend and integrate with one another and with the various types of biological as well as ideal values. The process of valuation, then, is undoubtedly the work of man's groups and institutions that create derived or secondary values through:

- (i) the ordering and integration of the biological, the social, and the ideal satisfactions in each case, thereby giving values both intensity and stability.
- (ii) through the ordering and standardization of the activities and relationships of the persons and groups concerned.

Institutional values lose their stability and unity, and disintegrate, contributing also to the break-up of the solidarity of the group, as the biological, the social, and the ideal phases of satisfaction fail to cohere or dissociate. The familial values lapse and the family group sunders as a result of brutal lust and aggression unchecked by the social impulses or any ideal satisfactions. On the other hand, where the sex impulses, home-making, and other interests cannot obtain adequate fulfilment due to the dominance of economic values and the desire to maintain an artificial standard of living for the class as

NOTES

NOTES

an economic goal, there is a similar dissociation of the familial values. Economic values lapse at the time of an extreme food crisis or famine due to the magnification of the hunger impulse among the famine-stricken mass that excitedly hunt for and seize food, unmindful of social and even familial relationships and obligations. These are extreme instances of the pursuit of mere biological values to the exclusion of the social and ideal values, spelling social unsettlement and disruption. The solidarity of society depends upon the network of institutional values surrounding human life and behaviour and fixing in human minds social habits or ways of living in which biological values no longer fulfil themselves in brutal egocentric satisfactions but coalesce with the social and the ideal values. Man's social advance is possible only on the foundation of relatively fixed habits, attitudes and ways of living that make his choice of subordination of lower to higher values easy and automatic involving scarcely any mental effort.

4.3.3 A.R. Desai

One of the most prominent Marxist sociologists of India, Akshay Ramanlal Desai was born in Nadiad, Gujarat in 1915. His early years were shaped by the ideas of his father Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai, who was a well-known litterateur of the time. As a student, the younger Desai was an active part of the student movements in Baroda, Surat and Bombay. Desai attended the University of Bombay and worked on his doctoral thesis under the guidance of the sociologist G.S. Ghurye. He obtained his PhD in 1946 and married Neera Desai in 1947. Neera Desai was an academic who is considered a pioneer in the field of women studies in India. In the 1960s, Desai developed the field of political sociology in India.

A.R. Desai was deeply influenced by the Marxist school of thought which he used to understand the diverse aspects of Indian social reality. In 1969, Desai edited a volume on *Rural Sociology in India*, which was a major turning point and pacesetter in the field of agrarian studies. He also published an anthology in 1979 that included studies on peasant struggles, which had also been carried out by historians and social scientists of diverse orientations. Some of his other important works include *The Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (1948); *Slums and Urbanization of India* (1970, 1972); *State and Society in India* (1975), *India's Path of Development* (1984), and so on.

Desai closely examined the theories of Marx and Engels, as well as Trotsky, and tried to use the Marxist framework to comprehend the different aspects of the complex Indian social reality. In India, Desai is considered to be one of the forerunners in introducing the modern Marxist method to empirical investigations involving bibliographical and field research. Thus, his primary contribution to Indian sociology was his stress on the Marxist approach and his use of the dialectical method to study Indian society. Desai stated that the Marxist method helped one to raise pertinent questions, conduct researches in the correct direction, articulate adequate hypotheses, evolve proper concepts, adopt and combine suitable research techniques and locate the central tendencies of transformation with its major implications.

Desai's analysis of Indian society was radically different from other Indian sociologists. Desai rejected any interpretations of tradition with reference to religion, rituals and festivities. As a doctrinaire Marxist, for Desai, tradition was basically a secular phenomenon that originates and develops in social institutions like the family and the village. Desai also does not find the origin of tradition in western culture. He believed that the emerging contradictions in the Indian process of social transformation arose primarily from the linkages between the capitalist bourgeoisie, the rural petty-bourgeoisie as well as a state apparatus that was drawn from similar social roots. As a Marxist

thinker, property relations was the most vital relationship in his analysis of society, as well as the nature of society that he strived for. However, for Desai this approach did not 'demand a crude reducing of every phenomenon to economic factors. It does not deny the autonomy, or prevalence of distinct institutional and normative features peculiar to a particular society'.

Moreover, in his studies of nationalism, analysis of rural social structure, the nature of economic and social policies of change in India and the structure of the state and society, Desai tried to expose the contradictions and anomalies in policies and process of change resulting from the capitalistic – bourgeoisie interlocking of interest in Indian society. According to Desai, the polarization of class interests, especially of the bourgeoisie in India, is the foundation of modern society in India. It is thus inherent in the class contradictions and the logic of its dialectics. This class contradiction has been thoroughly examined by Desai in several of his writings.

Desai applied market methods in his treatment of Indian social structure and its processes. In his books introduction to *Rural Sociology in India* Desai suggests that he makes explicit use of the historical-systematic and Marxist methods of analysis for the understanding of rural society and its problems. He also refers to the contribution of a few American sociologists who contributed to the systematic methodology for the study of the rural and urban phenomena. The central thrust of his analysis of agrarian society was to suggest how the state transformed the agrarian structure from pre-capitalist to capitalist relationships. This occurred as a result of state intervention through various legislations and developmental programmes. As he stated, 'the overall thrust of the agrarian policy of the rulers has been to eliminate parasitic, absentee intermediaries in the form of various categories of zamindars and absentee landlords and to create in their place classes of agricultural capitalists, rich farmers and viable middle proprietors directly linked to the state'. Desai believes that the consequence of these policies is that sharp differentiations have taken place among the peasant class, and the condition of small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers has deteriorated.

4.4 MARXIAN ANALYSIS ON THE TRANSITION FROM FEUDALISM TO CAPITALISM

The mode of production is a core element of the Marxist account of history. In his historical materialism, Karl Marx saw the history of development in five distinct phases that are characterized by dominant mode of production. The mode of production is that are characterized by dominant mode of production. These two interact comprised of the productive forces and the relations of production. These two interact and influence each other, and both develop in the course of the historical development of society. In Marxian dialectics, the mode of production is also called the Epoch or Era. The productive forces are always changing, for people are constantly improving the instrument of labour and accumulating diverse experiences in the process of production. A specific level of development of the productive forces requires corresponding relations of production. This is sometimes also described as the economic law, discovered by Marx, which says that the relations of production correspond to the character and level of development of the productive forces. Thus, the concept of the mode of production provides the economic basis of social relations. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* Marx wrote:

In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of

NOTES

Check Your Progress

4. What does D.P. Mukerji's dialectical approach suggest?
5. According to D.P. Mukherjee, what is the primary task of sociology?
6. How has evolution helped differentiate man from animals?
7. What is R.K. Mukerjee's argument in his work *Community and Society in India*?
8. What is R.K. Mukerjee's meaning of ethics?
9. According to R.K. Mukherjee, what are the chief reasons why institutional fallacy persists?
10. What does A.R. Desai believe is the foundation of modern society in India?

NOTES

production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production, these relations turn into their fetters...then comes the period of social revolution.

The concept of the mode of production has been matter of fiery debate amongst scholars. The scholars who have further elaborated this concept include Engels, Mao Zedong, Gramsci, Raul Prebisch and Celso Furtado. Joseph Stalin delineated and defined dialectical and historical materialism as the world outlook of Marxism-Leninism and as a method to study society and its history through his philosophy of 'dianat'. Antonio Gramsci proposed a 'philosophy of praxis'. Mao Zedong, in his essay *On Contradiction*, rejected Engels' 'laws of dialectics' as oversimplified and insisted on the complexity of contradiction. Mao's text inspired Louis Althusser's work on contradiction, which was a driving theme in his well-known essay *For Marx*. Althusser attempted to nuance the Marxist concept of contradiction by borrowing the concept of 'over-determination' from psychoanalysis. He criticized the Stalinist 'teleological' reading of Marx as a return to Hegel's idealism in which philosophy superseded reality. Another school of thought, led by Italian philosopher Ludovico Geymonat, constructed a 'historical epistemology' from dialectical materialism. Thus we see that there are various interpretations of dialectical materialism which lead to further debates on the mode of production.

Marx on the Origin of Capitalism

Through his 'historical materialism', Karl Marx provides a detailed analysis of the genesis of the capitalist mode of production, its internal working and its future evolution. Marx presented his thoughts on the emergence of capitalism in an essay entitled *The Origins and Development of Capitalism*. For Marx, as a direct consequence of the discovery, with the East Indies and China, the 16th and 17th century were periods of intense capital accumulation. As a result, contrasting with the feudalism that preceded it, a process in the development of commercial capitalism began. Such a process resulted in the rise of a new class within medieval European society, i.e., the capitalist class. Marx termed the

According to Marx, the feudal mode of production consisted of landowners, peasantry and middle level of artisans. Artisans were organized into craft guilds, with entire towns often dedicated to the one craft. Thus, the division of labour was across various specialized guilds. The social relations between peasants and landowners, apprentices and masters, etc., was of a hierarchical patron-client type relationship, with the patron providing protection and sustenance to their client, in return for the dedicated service and loyalty of that client. Marx argued that the emergence of commercial capitalism consequently led to the development of a merchant class. The merchant class' increasing power challenged the existing ruling class, the land-owning feudal lords, and also the social order underpinning it. For Marx, from the beginning, two types of producers emerged—the revolutionary merchant whose production mode was in opposition to the craft guilds and agrarian economy, and the transitional merchant, who continued to maintain direct possession of production through bringing independent

craftsmen under his control, but not disenfranchising them from the means of production. According to Marx, such transitional merchants were obstacles to the real capitalist mode of production, and it was just a matter of time before they disappeared.

The change from feudal exploitation to capitalist exploitation involved a drastic shift in the servitude of the peasant-labourer, and importantly, the separation of the labourer from the soil. The expansion of world trade as a consequence of European advance into the Americas and East Asia prompted the emerging capitalist mode of production, and led to a corresponding increase in the need for trade goods. The feudalistic modes of production and social class relationships that existed in Europe hampered the production of such trade goods. To meet the demand for trade goods, the mode through which such products were produced needed to improve. This necessarily involved changing the relationship between the product and the producer. Under feudalism, the landlord would take a portion of the harvest from the peasant population under his control. The peasants themselves remained in contact with the means of production. On the other hand, capitalist exploitation required that the labourer be separated—or alienated—from the means of production, becoming a 'free' labourer; free to be exploited as a wage labourer, rather than as a chattel of the feudal lord. Thus the existing feudal relationships needed to be broken down in order to produce a pool of free labourers that capitalists could exploit under the new modes of production. For Marx, such a change in the nature of the servitude was a progression, abolishing as it did serfdom, and creating the free labourer who was not bound to the economic structure of feudal society.

Along with this change of the mode of production from feudal to capitalist, was the change in the nature of the product. Products became commodities under the capitalist mode of production—products did not just have a use value, but an exchange value as well—in fact products were produced especially as exchange goods, i.e., trade goods. The use value of the product becomes incidental to and separate from its value as a trade good. Commodity production could only occur using the capitalist means of production, isolating the worker as a supplier of commodity labour. According to Marx, the capitalist mode of production was 'an epoch-making mode of exploitation' through 'its organization of labour and its stupendous technical progress.' Thus, all nations would be induced to adopt the bourgeois mode of production by the productive forces emerging out of the industrial revolution.

Thus for Marx, capitalism was a mode of production that uniquely combined private ownership of the means of production, commodity production with profit principle and a competitive, dynamic and expanding market. Marx admired capitalism as a superior economic system than feudalism because it could overcome basic human needs. Importantly, Marx viewed capitalism as a historical inevitability. However, Marx's ideas of 'alienation' and 'surplus value' saw inherent contradictions in the capitalist mode of production which would lead to the intensification of class struggle and ultimately would result in the fall of the capitalist mode of production itself.

4.4.1 D.D. Kosambi

Damodar Dharmananda Kosambi was born in Portuguese held Goa in 1907. His father was a scholar who had studied ancient Indian texts with a particular emphasis on Buddhism and its literature in the Pali language. Kosambi emulated his father by developing an intense interest in the ancient history of India. He left India for the United States when he was young and graduated from Harvard University in 1929. In the United States, he excelled in the field of mathematics having studied under the American mathematician George David Birkhoff. After graduating from Harvard, Kosambi came back to India

NOTES

and taught mathematics in Benaras Hindu University and Ferguson College. He also taught mathematics at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR). He died in 1966 and was posthumously awarded the Hari Om Ashram Award by the University Grant Commission in 1980.

NOTES

Kosambi is known for being a Marxist historian who specialised in ancient India. Kosambi utilized the historical materialist approach in his work. In fact, he is considered to be the 'patriarch of the Marxist school of Indian historiography'. In the field of history, Kosambi's best known work was *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* published in 1956. Kosambi's approach to history was realistic and scientific. He thought of history in terms of the dynamics of socio-economic formations rather than just a chronological narration of 'episodes' or the achievements of a few great men – kings, warriors or saints. His approach to history can be summed up in his own words. In *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* Kosambi writes:

The light-hearted sneer 'India has had some episodes, but no history' is used to justify lack of study, grasp, intelligence on the part of foreign writers about India's past. The considerations that follow will prove that it is precisely the episodes — lists of dynasties and kings, tales of war and battle spiced with anecdote, which fill school texts — that are missing from Indian records. Here, for the first time, we have to reconstruct a history without episodes, which means that it cannot be the same type of history as in the European tradition.

While staying within the framework of Marxian analysis, Kosambi developed a new method and introduced new perspectives to the comprehension of Indian history – a complete change both in content and methodology. Kosambi rejected the mechanical application of the concept of historical materialism and suggested through his study that Indian society had a series of parallel forms qualitatively different from their western counterparts and thus did not need to be categorised necessarily into the classical modes of production.

Kosambi's analysis of Indian history helped established that Indian society also had its own history and its own stages of development and made social change the basis of periodisation of Indian history. During his life time, Kosambi was critical of the policies of Nehru, which, according to him, promoted capitalism in the guise of democratic socialism. Kosambi was an enthusiast of the Chinese revolution and its ideals, and, in addition, a leading activist in the World Peace Movement. According to the historian Irfan Habib, 'D. D. Kosambi and R.S. Sharma, together with Daniel Thorner, brought peasants into the study of Indian history for the first time.'

Transition from feudalism to capitalism

The Marxist analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism generated substantial interest in Indian academia, particularly among Marxist scholars. Thus we see a volume of literature in India mostly concerned with the origin of the feudal system, the comparison of the Indian feudal system with the European system, and a complete denial of the existence of feudalism in India. D.D. Kosambi, one of the earliest scholars in India concerned with the theme, analysed the existence of feudalism in Indian history. In his *Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Kosambi propounded the concept of feudalism from above and feudalism from below and also compared the Indian and European system. Another Indian historian, R.S. Sharma made a full scale study of the subject in his *Indian Feudalism*. On the other hand, scholars such as Harbans Mukhia questioned the existence of feudalism in India.

D.D. Kosambi analysed the existence of feudalism in Indian history through his 'concept of feudalism from above and feudalism from below'. According to Kosambi, feudalism from above meant a state where an emperor or a powerful king levied tributes on his subordinates, who did what they liked within their own territories as long as they paid the paramount ruler. These subordinate rulers might even have been tribal chiefs who once ruled the land by direct administration without the intermediary of a class which was in effect a part of the land owning strata. According to Kosambi, this category of 'feudalism from above' was found in the formation of most of the Indian states and kingdoms. For Kosambi, 'feudalism from below' meant the next stage where a class of land owners developed within the village between the state and peasantry. This class was subject to military service and hence claimed a direct relationship with state power. Taxes were collected by small intermediaries who passed on a fraction to the feudal lords or the monarch.

Kosambi found some similar characteristics between both European and Indian feudalism. Both feudal systems had low levels of technology in which the instruments of production were simple and generally inexpensive. In both feudal systems, the act of production was largely individual in character and the division of labour was at a very primitive level of development. In both systems, the production of immediate need of a household or a village community and not for a wider market existed. Moreover, political decentralization was common to both India and Europe.

4.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The noted sociologist and philosopher, Karl Marx gave the most important theory to show how the economy was a major factor in social change.
- Marx explained that economy constitutes the basic structure of society. This basic structure consists of the means of production (raw material, labour, machines and so on.) and the relationship of production.
- Change in the means and relationship of production, consequently, leads to the change in various institutions, i.e., in the superstructure of society. This change in the relationship of production occurs as a result of a conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed class, the haves and the have-nots, the ruling and the ruled class.
- Many Marxists considered dialectical materialism as the theoretical source of several strands of Marxism. Marx never used the term dialectical materialism which refers to the societal and economic transformation born of the material forces.
- Marxism is a fundamentally materialist philosophy because the foundation of it is the belief that the overall account of everything is matter which is characteristic of reality. If empirical study is able to identify the whole aspects of matter, therefore, matter is accepted as the beginning and ending of all reality.
- Marxism believes that everything 'contains two mutually incompatible and exclusive but nevertheless equally essential and indispensable parts or aspects'. The essential idea is that this union of opposites in natural world is the feature which makes every unit auto-dynamic in nature along with ensuring a continuous drive for movement and transformation.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

11. In Marxian analysis, what does the mode of production comprise of?
12. What does Kosambi mean by feudalism from above?

NOTES

- The law of negation was formed to explain this predisposition of natural world. Accordingly, Marx and Engels state that to organize to move forward or replicate a superior number, creatures are inclined in the direction of negating themselves.
- The law of transformation states that constant quantitative growth leads to changes in quality by 'leaps' in the environment, resulting in production of a totally new variety or creature. This is the way in which 'quantitative development becomes qualitative change'.
- D.P. Mukherjee, a professed Marxist or 'Marxologist' as he preferred to call himself, analysed Indian social history from a dialectical frame of reference.
- According to Mukherjee, the encouragement of the capitalist mode of production on the indigenous Indian mode of production created mass poverty and deprivation in India.
- Mukerji's dialectical approach suggested that tradition and modernity, colonialism and nationalism, individualism and collectivism could be understood as dialectically opposed to each other.
- D. P. Mukherjee preferred the historical-dialectical mode of sociological analysis rather than empirical-positivistic one.
- R.K. Mukherjee considered the question of value as an important aspect of sociology. He also argued that social science gives us knowledge and if we employ this knowledge for the betterment of man, then definitely one must create a value. His basic sociological ambition was to work for a better social order.
- R.K. Mukherjee promotes studying the development of human civilization through the study of biological evolution, spiritual and universal dimensions.
- R.K. Mukherjee maintained that society is 'the sum of structures and functions through which man orients himself to the three dimensions or levels of his environment'. These three levels are moral, psycho-social and ecological. Thus, society 'fulfils the basic requirements of sustenance, status and value fulfilment.'
- One of the most prominent Marxist sociologists of India, Akshay Ramanlal Desai was born in Nadiad, Gujarat in 1915.
- Desai's analysis of Indian society was radically different from other Indian sociologists. Desai rejected any interpretations of tradition with reference to religion, rituals and festivities.
- As a doctrinaire Marxist, for Desai, tradition was basically a secular phenomenon that originates and develops in social institutions like the family and the village.
- The mode of production is a core element of the Marxist account of history. In his historical materialism, Karl Marx saw the history of development in five distinct phases that are characterized by dominant mode of production.
- For Marx, the mode of production is comprised of the productive forces and the relations of production. These two interact and influence each other, and both develop in the course of the historical development of society.
- The Marxist analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism generated substantial interest in Indian academia, particularly among Marxist scholars.
- Damodar Dharmananda Kosambi was born in Portuguese held Goa in 1907.

NOTES

- Kosambi is known for being a Marxist historian who specialised in ancient India. Kosambi utilized the historical materialist approach in his work. In fact, he is considered to be the 'patriarch of the Marxist school of Indian historiography'.
- Kosambi's analysis of Indian history helped established that Indian society also had its own history and its own stages of development and made social change the basis of periodisation of Indian history.
- In his *Introduction to the study of Indian History*, Kosambi propounded the concept of feudalism from above and feudalism from below and also compared the Indian and European system.

4.6 KEY TERMS

- **Bourgeoisie:** In Marxist contexts, it refers to the capitalist class who own most of society's wealth and means of production.
- **Historical materialism:** Historical materialism is a methodological approach to the study of human societies and their development over time first articulated by Karl Marx as the materialist conception of history
- **Dialectical materialism:** It is a Marxist that suggests that political and historical events result from the conflict of social forces and are interpretable as a series of contradictions and their solutions. The conflict is seen as caused by material needs
- **Diamat:** Diamat was a social theory coined by the 19th century philosopher Joseph Dietzgen. It emphasized commodities and the effects of their exchange over time. 'Diamat' is based upon three dialectical laws: 1. the identity of opposites; 2. the transition from quantity to quality; 3. the negation of negation. Joseph Stalin formulated the 'Soviet Philosophy of Diamat' and called it a 'proletarian conception of the world'. The basic idea of diamat is that every economic order grows to a state of maximum efficiency, while at the same time developing internal contradictions or weaknesses that contribute to its decay.
- **Proletariat:** It refers to working-class people regarded collectively; it is often used with reference to Marxism.

4.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. According to Marx, a change in the relationship of production occurs as a result of a conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed class, the haves and the have-nots, the ruling and the ruled class.
2. Institutions like the family, education, religion, polity, and so on, constitute the superstructure.
3. The concept of dialectical materialism suggests that all historical growth and change results from the struggle of opposites. To put it another way, history is the creation of class struggle, i.e., the class struggle between the capitalist and landowning classes, on the one hand, and the proletariat and peasantry, on the other.

NOTES

4. Dialectical approach suggested that tradition and modernity, colonialism and nationalism, individualism and collectivism could be understood as dialectically opposed to each other.
5. According to Mukherjee, the primary task of sociology is to understand the specific nature of the forces that sustain a particular society over the time.
6. Evolution has helped man form better and complex societies, in which they decide and control the environment. Animals, on the other hand, have limitations in their ability to affect and change the environment.
7. In R.K. Mukherjee work *Community and Society in India*, published in 1979, he argued that the true place of values in human life and progress can be understood only when we consider the natural history of value.
8. Ethics for man should be naturalistic, or based on scientific grounding itself and not on blind and rigid conformity to institutional values, but value-preferences, based on different social consequences of human behaviour, stemming from different alternative and complementary sets of institutional values regarded as social facts.
9. The chief reasons why the institutional fallacy persists in all societies are the institutional determination of his attitudes and social actions and relations and his rationalization in respect to his own behaviour and institutional standards that saves him from psychic conflicts.
10. According to Desai, the polarization of class interests, especially of the bourgeoisie in India, is the foundation of modern society in India.
11. In Marxian analysis, the mode of production is comprised of the productive forces and the relations of production. These two interact and influence each other, and both develop in the course of the historical development of society.
12. According to Kosambi, feudalism from above meant a state where an emperor or a powerful king levied tributes on his subordinates, who did what they liked within their own territories as long as they paid the paramount ruler. These subordinate rulers might even have been tribal chiefs who once ruled the land by direct administration without the intermediary of a class which was in effect a part of the land owning strata.

4.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the three laws of dialectics?
2. Write a short note on the Marxist critique of the concept of dialectical materialism.
3. What are the three levels of man's environment according to R.K. Mukherjee?
4. Discuss A.R. Desai's interpretation of tradition.
5. What do you think of Radha Kamal Mukherjee's opinion about values?
6. How does D.D. Kosambi analyse feudalism in India?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the Marxist theory of social change.
2. Examine the Marxist concept of dialectical materialism.
3. D.P. Mukherjee emphasized that sociologists of India must know the nature of tradition. Discuss.
4. What is the basic approach viewed by Radha Kamal Mukherjee to explain Indian society?
5. R.K. Mukherjee promotes studying the development of human civilization through the study of biological evolution, spiritual and universal dimensions. Discuss.
6. Describe how Marx describes the origin of capitalism.

4.9 FURTHER READING

- Mukherjee, D.P. 1958. *Diversities: Essays in Economics, Sociology and Other Social Problems*. Delhi: Popular Publishing House.
- Mukherjee, R.K. 1965. *The Sociologist and Social Change in India Today*. Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.
- Calhoun, Craig J. 2002. *Classical Sociological Theory*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Abraham, Francis M. and John Henry Morgan. 1985. *Sociological Thought*. Chennai: Macmillan India.
- Aron, Raymond. 1965. *Main Currents in Sociological Thought, Vol. I and II*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.

NOTES

UNIT 5 SUBALTERN PERSPECTIVES

Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Unit Objectives
- 5.2 Contribution of Ambedkar to Indian Society
 - 5.2.1 Influences on the Life and Thoughts of Ambedkar
- 5.3 Socio-Political Thoughts of Ambedkar
 - 5.3.1 Ambedkar's Idea of Democratic Socialism
 - 5.3.2 Ambedkar and Indian Democracy
 - 5.3.3 Ambedkar's Views on Economic Development and Planning
- 5.4 Role of Reason in the Philosophy of Ambedkar
 - 5.4.1 Ambedkar's Views on Religion
 - 5.4.2 Ambedkar and Buddhism
- 5.5 Ambedkar and Marxism
- 5.6 Ambedkar's Views on Caste and Untouchability
- 5.7 Ambedkar as the Chief Architect of the Indian Constitution
- 5.8 Disparity in the Socio-Political Views of Gandhi and Ambedkar
- 5.9 Ranajit Guha
- 5.10 Summary
- 5.11 Key Terms
- 5.12 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 5.13 Questions and Exercises
- 5.14 Further Reading

NOTES

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learned about Marxist perspectives on Indian society. The final unit of the book will turn to subaltern perspectives of Indian society, especially the thoughts of Dr. Bhimrao Ramjee Ambedkar and Ranajit Guha.

B. R. Ambedkar undoubtedly ranks with the greatest leaders of modern India. He was well-known not only as the chief architect of the Constitution, but also as a great activist and reformist, a disciplined radical and revolutionary. He was a social revolutionary, a profound scholar, a charismatic leader of the downtrodden masses. Being a friend, philosopher and guide of the downtrodden in India, he continuously fought against evil and dreaded customs, blind beliefs and superstition of the Hindu society. This was made clear by Sri Prakash Chandra when he wrote, 'At a time when Indians were awakening from their plight and struggle for freedom, the ripples of renaissance spirit touched the depressed classes too. The stir found the instrument of reformation in Bhimrao. Responding to the call, he strode forward definitely fighting for a better deal for the depressed classes, displaying rare crusading spirit, achieving in the process the right to be given a place among the builders of India'. He was to concentrate the force of his protestant and reformist spirit on the age-old abuses and disabilities of the untouchable sections of Indian society. He denounced the caste system and fought relentlessly to establish a society based on the democratic ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. He firmly believed that the democratic society in India would only be responsible when the hierarchical structure of *varna* system is dismantled and the downtrodden untouchables are given equal status with other members of the society.

The concluding sections of the unit will provide a brief synopsis of the thoughts of Ranajit Guha and David Hardiman.

NOTES

5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Evaluate the contribution of Ambedkar to the reformation of Indian society
- Explain the concept of democratic socialism of Ambedkar
- Discuss the influence of Buddhism and Marxism on Ambedkar
- Explain Ambedkar's views on caste and untouchability
- Distinguish between the socio-political thoughts of Gandhi and Ambedkar
- Discuss Guha's analysis of tribal insurgencies in colonial India

5.2 CONTRIBUTION OF AMBEDKAR TO INDIAN SOCIETY

B.R. Ambedkar was certainly not the first to have started the work of social emancipation and political mobilization of the millions of people of the depressed classes, but he was the most effective in highlighting the inhuman treatment to which they were subjected to in Hindu society. His work was qualitatively different from that of his predecessors. He stood for the social liberation, economic emancipation and political advancement of the down-trodden millions. He, however, counselled the oppressed people not to be compliant and obedient either to inequality or justice. He wanted them to fight against the forces of oppression and exploitation and remodel society in accordance with the norms and provisions as enshrined in the Constitution of India.

Ambedkar was the symbol of the non-Brahmin social reform movement in modern India. As part of the general national awakening and democratic consciousness, Ambedkar's message succeeded in carrying the message of reform to classes which had so far been untouched by it. He combined in himself the role of a social reformer, a political leader and a spiritual guide of the untouchables. He played a unique role in shaping the mind and the political outlook of his community. His socio-political philosophy is India's most enlightened and modern gift to the weaker and backward section of our society. It has the potential to benefit and serve the larger interests of mankind.

Ambedkar's mission throughout life had been an uncanny desire to secure justice – social, economic and political for the disadvantaged sections of the Indian society. In his writings, an alternative socio-economic and political framework emerges, wherein the pragmatic and visionary aspects of his thinking meet on even ground. His social philosophy emanates in liberty, equality and fraternity. According to him, these three ideals were inherent in the teachings of Buddha. This trinity of ideals had a bearing in the Constituent Assembly where he delineated and emphasized the need for social democracy. While defining the basis of the Indian Constitution, he was conscious that the contents must be related to the interests of the weaker sections of society. In his scholarly pursuits as well as in his political activities, Ambedkar was driven by a desire to comprehend the vital issues of his time and to find solutions for the problems of Indian society. He raised certain pressing issues that no one was willing to take up or deal with and made sure that

they were not ignored and trampled over by the so called 'upper classes'. Ambedkar planned his programmes to bring the downtrodden millions of India from a state of dehumanization and slavery into one of equality through the use of modern methods based on education and the exercise of legal and political rights.

Ambedkar organized and inaugurated a number of conferences, attended a large number of meetings, started newspapers and wrote articles, editorials and books. The main theme in all these activities was the emancipation of the lowly, the poor and the untouchables. He repeatedly asked the Hindus to change their ways. Yet, despite his repeated requests, atrocities imposed on the untouchables continued and they were treated as less than human beings.

Ambedkar relentlessly fought for the cause of the depressed and the deprived of the Indian society and this brought him to develop his philosophy of humanism which centres around the problems of man. As stated by Dr. Jatava, 'Ambedkar's social humanism is a philosophical thought in which man's social situation and the analysis of its problems have been given utmost importance....Man's dignity, protection of equal rights, values of individuality, welfare of common people, freedom of expression, just social order, right relations based on fraternity, man's all round development, man's liberty to express himself in the interest of new construction and perennial movement based activeness of the exploited people are some of the main features of Ambedkar's social humanism..... Ambedkar's humanism has been a movement for social freedom of the oppressed and expressed and exploited, and it has advocated that people must remain conscious and awake for each other's just interests, respect and rights'. Thus, we see how his dynamic and democratic humanism aims at liberating man from the bonds of social malaise.

5.2.1 Influences on the Life and Thoughts of Ambedkar

Ambedkar was a social revolutionary and the most renowned militant champion of the untouchables. He vehemently denounced the inequalities which Brahmanical Hinduism heaped upon the untouchables and fought for the cause of social equality. He experienced the injustices of being a member of a disadvantaged group of society. His aim was to establish an equitable social order in a pluralistic multi-religious and class-caste ridden Indian society. He was closely acquainted with western political tradition, especially with liberation and at the same time quite well versed in ancient Hindu and Buddhist literature. He was influenced by Indian as well as western intellectual and the moral ideas of many great thinkers like Gautam Buddha, Jyotiba Phule, John Dewey (his mentor at Columbia University), Karl Marx, Justice M.G. Ranade, and so on.

The ideas of John Dewey, Edwin R.A Seligman, the Fabians and British idealists had a deep impact on Ambedkar. He borrowed his notion of religion from Edmund Burke, the theory of government from J.S. Mill and Jefferson and the notion of social liberty from Booker T. Washington. Ambedkar was affected by the Indian social system and ideologies and was influenced by the Western modernism. He used the methodology and strategy derived from the West to analyze Indian society. Though he admired the ideals of western liberalism and Marxism, he perceived their perfection in Buddhism. All the above said thinkers influenced Ambedkar in one way or another and shaped as well as reshaped his thinking process, convictions, and pragmatic approach to social justice. In order to understand the life and thoughts of Ambedkar one has to understand the influences of these personalities on Ambedkar.

NOTES

NOTES

Ambedkar had great reverence for the life and message of Buddha. He appreciated Lord Buddha's belief in man's capacity to achieve salvation without extraneous aid. He regarded Buddha as his master and his teachings as the complete antithesis of Hinduism. Lord Buddha revolted against traditional Hinduism. According to Ambedkar, it was a powerful revolt against Brahmanism leading to the rejection of liberty, equality and fraternity. Buddhism attempted to restore the law of reason and rationalism in the life of the Indian people by doing away with prayers, rituals and sacrifices. Buddha fervently followed the doctrine of egalitarianism and humanism and his message was for all. Ambedkar was greatly fascinated by the personality and philosophical profoundness of the founder of Buddhism. Buddha's indomitable faith in the capacity of man to shape his own destiny appears to have had a lasting influence on Ambedkar. Buddha's principles and philosophy had an immense impact on Ambedkar and this was proved by his conversion to Buddhism and his pragmatic attitude in his perception of social justice.

Mahatma Phule, the Martin Luther of Maharashtra, was considered by Ambedkar as one of the greatest of our social reformers. He described Phule as 'the greatest shudra of modern India'. Ambedkar remarked that Mahatma Phule made the lower classes of Hindus conscious of their plight and preached to India that social democracy was more vital than independence from foreign rule. Phule brought Ambedkar closer to the liberal and reformist traditions of Maharashtra. Under Phule's influence Ambedkar overcame the limitations of the liberal reformist movement by consciously becoming the man of the masses and forging a political organization to bring the masses together. Ambedkar not only believed in the driving force of principles and policies but gave equal importance to the work of implementing them. His main achievement was his positive contribution to the radical reformist theory and practice in Maharashtra. Here also we find Mahatma Phule's influence on Dr. Ambedkar. Ambedkar continued the revolutionary work started by Jyotibha Phule.

Both Gandhi and Ambedkar were heroic and the very embodiment of revolt against the unjust social order existing in India. Both were critical of the evils of the Hindu social system, especially untouchability, and were determined to uproot the evils while leaving the foundations of Indian culture undisturbed. As made clear by the historian Bipin Chandra, 'Both share in common a total opposition to caste oppression and caste discrimination and commitment to transform the social, economic and cultural conditions of Harijans'. Gandhi was against untouchability and wanted to abolish it with the help of adult franchise combined with a moral and social drive. In this context we see that Ambedkar's approach was not radically different from that of Gandhi. Ambedkar was an enemy of the caste system and he stood for its total liquidation like Gandhi. He believed that the caste system would have to go if untouchability was to be eradicated. Though Gandhi favoured *varna vyavastha* in his early days, by 1935, he declared that the caste system would have to go and admitted that the *varna vyavastha* that he favoured earlier was non-existent in practice. Like Ambedkar, he asserted that Hinduism had to become casteless if it was to survive. Above all these similarities one must point out that although the goals pursued by Gandhi and Ambedkar were almost the same, their strategies were different and this we will study in detail in a later unit.

M.G. Ranade was another great person who influenced Ambedkar. Both of them strove for the removal of all the evils prevailing in Hindu society and its reorganization. Like Ranade, Ambedkar also regarded the advent of the British in India as providential and responsible for the intellectual awakening of India and the introduction of the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity. The British made Indians feel ashamed of their social

customs and moral code and forced upon them the revaluation of social values besides giving a common system of law and government. According to Ambedkar, the age of Ranade was honest and more enlightened. Leaders like Ranade engaged themselves in studying and examining the facts of life and moulded their lives accordingly. Ambedkar held that Ranade was a great man not only by the standards of his time, but according to any standard. Ranade's life was nothing but a relentless struggle against social injustice, social evils and for social reforms. He struggled to create rights to vitalize the conscience of Hindu society which had become moribund and morbid. Ambedkar also followed his path and both of them wanted to create the ideal social democracy.

John Dewey was Ambedkar's mentor at Columbia University in USA and his *Philosophy of Instrumentalism* made Ambedkar pragmatic in his approach towards a critical analysis of the concrete problems facing humanity. John Dewey left an indelible mark on Ambedkar through his realistic, integrative and pragmatic approaches to systematically analyzing the problems concerning politics, economics, society, religion and history. Dewey perceived these problems piecemeal and through idealism.

Besides the above mentioned influences of great thinkers, Ambedkar's own bitter experiences went a long way in moulding his life, perception and ideas. Ambedkar bore the brunt of caste discrimination and often faced humiliation for belonging to a lower caste. It may be concluded that it was his own bitter experiences and the influence of the above great thinkers that made him take a stand against Hinduism and the Hindu social order as he believed that it stood in the way of establishment of an egalitarian society.

5.3 SOCIO-POLITICAL THOUGHTS OF AMBEDKAR

The eradication of untouchability and the caste system was the mission of Ambedkar's life. He analyzed every problem of Indian society – economic, social, political, cultural and educational, keeping this mission in mind. He held that each of these problems had a caste dimension and the caste system made the depressed classes, mainly the untouchables, social outcasts, economically slaves and politically handicapped. They were oppressed, exploited and marginalized in every walk of life. For Ambedkar, safeguarding the interest of the depressed classes was of paramount importance because nobody had championed the cause of this deprived lot before. Keeping this in mind, let us now try to analyze the important tenets of his socio-political thought.

5.3.1 Ambedkar's Idea of Democratic Socialism

Democracy occupied a central place in Ambedkar's ideological map. He was a true and sincere democrat and his major contribution to political thinking was to focus on the reliance of social democracy to political democracy. He believed that without social reforms, political reforms are meaningless since the state is ultimately a social institution. He warned that as long as there was inequality on the social and economic plane, there could be no political democracy. He firmly believed that political progress would be impossible without a reformed and enlightened society. This is why he believed that social reforms should precede political reforms.

Ambedkar refers to democracy as a system which brings about fundamental changes in the social and economic life of the people without resorting to disputes and bloodshed. He desired to remove contradictions created by economic and social inequalities. He viewed democracy as a mode of associated living in which there would

NOTES

Check Your Progress

1. Name three people who influenced Ambedkar.
2. Who did Ambedkar borrow his notion of social liberty from?
3. Who was considered to be the Martin Luther of Maharashtra?
4. What was the main goal that Ambedkar and Gandhi had in common?

NOTES

be no discrimination on social and economic grounds. He sounded a note of warning that democracy should not become a slogan or a mere form of government. He considered it to be a way of life through which social justice can be established.

According to Ambedkar, the essential requirements for the successful working of a democracy are:

- There must be no glaring inequality in society.
- There must be statutory provisions to protect the interests of the oppressed classes.
- There must be equality in law and administration and there should not be tyranny of the majority over the minority.
- An effective opposition which is an important factor in the working of a successful democracy.
- A moral order, without which democracy cannot sustain.

Ambedkar visualized the economic welfare of the people through the combination of state socialism with parliamentary democracy. Though he was a great admirer of the parliamentary system of government till 1947, he later thought that a non-parliamentary executive would suit India better. He pointed out that the representative nature of the executive does not necessarily ensure the rights for the minorities. In a parliamentary democracy, the elected majority works according to its own manifesto. Parliamentary democracy seemed a must to him in order to protect individual freedom, as otherwise there were chances of it turning into a dictatorship. Ambedkar's solution for this was to retain parliamentary democracy and prescriptive state socialism according to the law of the Constitution so that it will be beyond the reach of a parliamentary majority to suspend, amend or abrogate it. In one of the speeches in the Constituent Assembly in 1949, Ambedkar pointed out that for the operation and survival of democracy, the people should hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving social and economic objectives.

5.3.2 Ambedkar and Indian Democracy

In the Indian situation where the society is caste-ridden and the loyalties and interests are caste bound, any democratic government is bound to degenerate into a communal majority rule. This majority would be incapable of articulating and representing the interests of every member of society. Ambedkar exhorted the people to give up hero-worship and to eventual dictatorship. Hence, he repeatedly insisted on the need to banish hero-worship from the Indian political scenario. Ambedkar wanted the people of India to develop a sense of national solidarity. He held that the operation of caste in politics would vitiate the whole political atmosphere and the democratic institutions and processes into one nation. Ambedkar viewed nationalism as an emotional feeling that has great strength. In a discriminating society, the spirit of oneness cannot come into existence. He believed not only in political integrity and independence but also in social integrity. His nationalism was not aggressive nationalism, for he knew it would become irrational and give birth to intolerance. He held that political parties are indispensable for democracy. There should be at least two parties to prevent a democratic government from becoming despotic. Under a one party government, the danger of tyranny and misdirection to public affairs cannot be ruled out.

Ambedkar wanted a change in the life pattern of the untouchables. His work in public life developed in three directions: first, awakening and organizing the untouchables,

second, securing political representations for the untouchables and third, encouraging the depressed classes to educate themselves. He knew that without political rights and political power, the elevation of the depressed classes would not be possible. For the achievement of political rights for them, Ambedkar submitted many petitions and memoranda for representation in the legislature and sought reservations in various fields of employment. He organized the Independent Labour Party for the landless peasants, agriculturists and the workers. In 1942, he formed another political party - All India Scheduled Caste Federation (AISC) which stressed that since the Scheduled Castes did not possess social and economic power, political power should be seized by them. In 1956, Ambedkar visualized the establishment of the Republican Party of India, as an opposition party which would join hands with other political groups in order to solve the problems of the untouchables. He also fought for the rights of women and this is a significant aspect of his social reform activity.

Ambedkar repeatedly stated that power was necessary to protect the rights of the people. He held that right must exist before the power is set up and it would be a serious error to reverse the order of precedence. He was of the opinion that rights are protected not only by law but also by the 'social and moral conscience of society'. If rights are opposed by the community, no one can guarantee them in the real sense of the term. On the other hand, if social conscience recognizes the rights enacted by the law, it will be safer and more secure. Hence it was absolutely necessary that a social organization is free from rigid social barriers.

5.3.3 Ambedkar's Views on Economic Development and Planning

As an academic economist, Ambedkar has made significant contributions to the various fields of economics. In the early period (1915-25) his focus was mainly centred on themes like public finance, monetary and international economics. But his economic writings in the later period dealt with a wide range of interrelated issues including perspectives on economic development and planning, the economic system, political economy of the caste system, etc. Ambedkar's concept of democracy was reconciled with his concept of socialism. In a democracy, individual rights are indispensable and they can be protected by socialism. Individual rights are, to a certain extent, dependent upon the economic structure of society. He emphasized the need to strengthen the social and economic foundation for a smooth functioning of democracy. He advocated State Socialism in which the State would control the basic industries and economic exploitation could be avoided to a great extent. He recommended economic planning. As stated earlier, his concept of state socialism is constitutional state socialism along with parliamentary democracy. This combination was necessary to ensure that social and economic organizations would be more egalitarian and political means would thus become more meaningful for the poor and underprivileged.

Ambedkar argued for an important place to be given to the labour and depressed classes in the planned economic development of the country. He wanted to develop programmes through planned economic development and translate them into simpler terms so that the common man could understand peace, housing, clothing, education, good health, and so on. He laid great responsibility on the State to provide the poor with facilities for their growth according to their needs. Though he wanted agriculture to be the primary industry in our country, he also wanted industries to be developed so as to rectify the imbalanced economy of India. Ambedkar emphasized industrial development as a solution to the problem of agricultural development. He believed that development

NOTES

NOTES

Check Your Progress

5. What are the two salient points required for the successful working of a democracy?
6. Up until what point was Ambedkar an admirer of the Parliamentary system of Government?
7. What did Ambedkar consider a better alternative to the Parliamentary system for India?
8. What two demands did Ambedkar want fulfilled for the untouchables?
9. Why did Ambedkar consider industrial development as a solution to the problem of agricultural development?
10. What was the main feature of Ambedkar's model of democratic socialism?

of the industrial sector was necessary to reduce the surplus labour in agriculture and to create favourable conditions for production. Ambedkar attributed industrialization with a key role to play, favoured economic planning, particularly in infrastructure and the social service sector, set up progressive labour laws and planning with focus on labourers and the down-trodden masses of India. He made a call for 'State Socialism' involving nationalization of basic and key industries such as insurance and agricultural land. He favoured a switch over to socialism through democratic means. He, in his economic vision, supported modern civilization and scientific development. He emphasized on the active role and participation of the State in economic and social development through the instrument of planning. He favoured special planning for the depressed classes and policy of reservation for protecting against discrimination and promoting their effective participation in the economic and social sphere. As suggested by Bhalachandra Munekar, the main features of Ambedkar's model of democratic socialism may be summed up as:

- Basic freedom to the individual vis-à-vis the State to be guaranteed by the Constitution.
- Nationalization of the means of production such as land and key enterprises.
- Recognition of the role of private industries.
- Economic planning.
- No discrimination among citizens on the basis of caste, gender or religion.
- Democratic/Constitutional means for social change/transformation.

Ambedkar always wanted democracy to work towards socialism. He felt that to strengthen the foundations of democracy in India a new cultural basis was required and that Buddhism met such a need. The above analysis clearly indicates that the economic philosophy of Ambedkar is value-oriented, and his economic ideas, may well be applied in Indian society with special reference to the pitiable conditions of the Scheduled Castes with the suffering of these people, and therefore, he believed in a positive approach to mitigate their socio-economic miseries.

5.4 ROLE OF REASON IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF AMBEDKAR

Supremacy of reason was a cardinal principle in Ambedkar's philosophy. His own criticism of the sacred literature and the past was based on this principle. He believed that Hindus were not free to follow this reason. On the other hand, the behaviour of the Hindus must conform to the sanctions laid down by Manu, Veda, Smriti and Sadachar. He wrote, 'Rationalism as a canon of interpreting the Vedas and Smriti is absolutely condemned by Manu'. It was considered to be as wicked as atheism and the punishment for it was excommunication. In case of any conflict between the Veda and Smriti or between the Smriti and Sruti, the solution was not based on reason. No attempt was made to find out which of them accorded with reason. In Ambedkar's opinion, there was hardly ever any reflective thought to be found in Hinduism.

Ambedkar's attack on the sacred literature and norms of the Hindus was in fact an attack on the graded inequality sanctioned by them. Though he accepted the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* in the early days of his life, in his later life, he criticized the *Gita* as a religious and political book which upheld the teachings of the Vedas and raised the

Brahmins to a superior position. In another place, he described the *Gita* as 'an irresponsible book of ethics, a compromise of all errors'. He also found in it the social philosophy based on the *Triguna* of *Samkhya* system which was a cruel pervasion of the philosophy of Kapila and which created the caste system and graded inequality a part and parcel of Hindu social life. Through these criticisms he wanted to show the Hindus that it is the doctrines contained in their sacred books which are responsible for the decline and fall of their society. The question of the removal of the institution of untouchability inevitably led him to the criticism of the sacred books. Ambedkar, after a careful review of the sacred literature of the Hindus, felt convinced that no reverence was due to it. His predecessors were not so acutely conscious of this logical necessity. They never aimed at rejecting the sacred books as Ambedkar did. The difference between Ambedkar and the earlier social reformers was in the manner of their approach to the sacred books and in the purpose for which these books were used. The attitude of Ambedkar was radical and revolutionary and that of other social reforms was melioristic.

5.4.1 Ambedkar's Views on Religion

The concept of religion, for Ambedkar, is quite different from the traditional one. The traditional meaning of religion is some sort of belief in supernatural power. He did not consider the concept of God, soul and heaven as essential to religion. His view of religion is social and secular, and human morality is the key to this. For him, morality arises from the direct necessity for man to love man. It does not require the sanction of God. In his opinion, it is not to please God that man has to be moral, but it is for his own good. According to Dr. Jatava, 'Religion as morality, morality as love of man for man, and love of man as brotherhood is the essence of Ambedkar's humanism The fundamental purpose of Ambedkar's humanism is to reconstruct human society by establishing right relations between man and man as the basis of liberty, equality and fraternity'. Ambedkar acknowledged the power of religion and upheld its need, but there is no place in his religion for God and the transcendent. He subscribed to a secular religion, moving away from established religions and geared towards the sacred. He felt that since human beings are part of this world, the primary role of religion is to safeguard the moral domain.

Religion, according to Ambedkar, was essential for man as well as society. He considered it an instrument for the upliftment of the individual. He said, '..... I agree with Burke when he says that true religion is the foundation of society, the basis on which all true civil government rests, and both their sanctions. Consequently when I urge that these ancient rules of life be annulled, I am anxious that its place shall be taken by a religion of principles which alone can lay claim to being a true religion'. He held that religion alone gave hope of a better life to the poor and so they cling to it and find solace in it.

Ambedkar exhorted his people to cultivate an enlightened view of religion and not to be lured by the traits of Hinduism like toleration and bhakti or to be attracted by the saints. He held that the saints were ineffective in the abolition of the caste system because they did not attack the caste system. In fact, many of them were staunch believers in this system. He asked the common man not to resign himself to his fate and accept his position as a divine dispensation. According to him, 'Bhakti made their nerves soft, delicate and yielding'. Ambedkar wanted to root out this disease from their minds.

Ambedkar was of the opinion that religion is an important element in education, in social organization and in the promotion of the spirit of devotion to the common good, but

NOTES

NOTES

only when it shows utmost liberalism and acts upon the principle of secularism. He understood that it is not possible to annihilate religious systems from the Indian soil. So the only remedy for this, according to him, was that they should be more liberal and should improve social conditions of all without any sectarian feelings.

Ambedkar's view of religion was that it should be in accord with reason and morality and the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. It should not ennoble and sanctify poverty but offer its followers prosperity and salvation in this world instead of in the next. But Hinduism never adheres to the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity and practices partiality towards some of its followers. So Ambedkar through his social reform movements was consistently attacking the criminal indifference of the people towards the dangerous effects of the social institutions of Hinduism. The rigid orthodoxy of Hindus led him to give up any hope of reforming Hinduism and to advocate Buddhist *Dhamma* instead.

5.4.2 Ambedkar and Buddhism

In Ambedkar's view, the real remedy to untouchability is to replace the social relations governed by the caste system of Hinduism by the one based on equality, justice and fraternity. It is in this context, he favoured the social philosophy of Buddha, which he thought would help to restructure the social, cultural and political relations to promote the well-being of majority of people. He described Buddha as 'the greatest teacher of mankind who taught the noblest doctrine of love'. He considered Buddhism as the religion of modern era which would eventually be embraced by the whole world.

It was K.A. Keluskar, a well-known Marathi writer and social reformer, who presented Ambedkar a book called *Life of Gautama Buddha*. He read the book with great curiosity and learnt how Buddha had through selfless service improved the lot of the entire community. He was impressed by all that he had studied about the life of Gautam Buddha. Ambedkar studied Buddhism and did a lot of research on the subject. He analyzed the various aspects of Buddhism as a movement against dogmatism, conservatism and social inequality. Ambedkar's research work on the social history of Buddhism, *The Untouchables*, was published in 1948. According to him, the origin of untouchability was the result of a struggle between Brahmanism and Buddhism. In comparison to Hinduism, Ambedkar analyzed the merits of Buddhism which had widely influenced the people during ancient times.

It was natural for Ambedkar to seek refuge in Buddha, because, as he knew, the Buddha was the only philosopher, who brought about a social revolution and welcomed people from the shudra and untouchable communities into his fold. Ambedkar also accepted people from the lower castes in the same way as the Buddha had. Buddha's humanism was the main factor that attracted Ambedkar and made him a true disciple of the Master, the enlightened one. After a lot of research, he accepted the Buddhism and its trisaran—Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha on 14th October, 1956, in Nagaur along with more than two lakhs of men and women. According to Ambedkar, 'Buddhism is a part and parcel of Bharatiya culture. I have taken care that my conversion will not harm the tradition of culture and history of this land'. This act was the first of many mass conversions of low caste Hindus to Buddhism. The conversion of Ambedkar and his followers to Buddhism was an unprecedented historical event. Such a big conversion had not taken place since the time of Ashoka the Great. They took refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, and then took vows for *Panchsheel* of not to kill, not to steal, not to tell lies, not to consume liquor and not to indulge in adultery.

Ambedkar explained that the purpose of Dhamma is not to delineate the origin of the world but to reconstruct the world. In Dhamma, there is no place for prayers, pilgrimages, rituals, ceremonies or sacrifices. Buddha also taught *prajna* (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism), *karuna* (love), and *samata* (equality). Buddhism does not recognize caste and affords a full scope for progress. The Buddha never claimed his teachings to be infallible. He also did not claim divinity for himself or for his religion. The basis of Buddhism is reason and a rational way to eradicate suffering.

The Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha are known as 'Tri Saran,' Triratna or the 'Triple Gems'. The trisaran is the underlying source of unity behind all the Buddhist sects the world over. It is an emotional source of bringing together the entire community of Buddhists. When pronounced by the Upasakas or Bhikkus, their sounds pacify our mind and elevate it. It creates a feeling of brotherhood, of mutual love and sympathy. In fact, the triple gems bring all the Buddhists together and bind them in sacred bond. A refugee of the triple gem is also duty bound to liberate the people living in the lower levels of existence from suffering. As a true refugee in the triple gem, Ambedkar not only challenged the *varna vyavastha* of Hindu society, but also the validity of the superiority of the Brahmins.

The Dhamma is known as the 'true refuge', for it is the wisdom by means of which we attain *Nirvana*. The meaning of the word 'Dhamma' is to hold one from falling into low states of existence. Taking refuge in the Dhamma means the taking refuge in the *Ten Parmitas* which are the forms of spiritual practices by which one learns true submission and they are also the basis for attaining the cessation of suffering. The word 'Sanga' means 'inseparable'. It also means 'those who have the wish for liberation or Nirvana'. Any individual can enter Sangha, if he has faith in both the Buddha and the Dhamma. It is a home, where one could learn the lessons of right knowledge and right conduct. The aim of Sangha is to achieve the ideals of the Dhamma into practice. The Sangha is open to all, and there is no barrier of caste and community, if anyone wishes to take refuge in the Dhamma. The discriminations based upon the being of man or woman, rich or poor, low or high, do not have any place in the Sangha. All members of the Sangha are equal and are bound by the feelings of fellowship.

Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha all generate a pervasive feeling of unity. According to Ambedkar, a sense of universality prevails in them because without social brotherhood or spiritual unity, there is little hope of creating peace and harmony in the world. The triple gems touch the hearts of all those who feel oneness among human beings irrespective of their creed and colour.

'The Buddha and His Dhamma' by Ambedkar

Ambedkar analyzed the basic tenets of Buddhism in his magnum opus, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, published posthumously in 1957. He wrote it with the intention of creating a single text for new Buddhists to read and follow. He wanted to simplify the teachings of the Buddha that they might be easily understood by oppressed communities, specifically dalits. He made the triple gem widely known and acceptable through his work. Ambedkar conceived it as the gospel of Buddhism as well as a defence against its critics. While embracing Buddhism, Ambedkar told the vast gathering that he was renouncing Hindu religion in his native land in order to continue his work for the revival of Buddhism and for the welfare of mankind. In theory, *The Buddha and His Dhamma* serves as the philosophical, ideological, and religious templates for Buddhists. It is a true guide for all the Buddhists. It is the best basis for propagating the Dhamma, at least in India.

NOTES

NOTES

In a short passage excerpted from *The Buddha and His Dhamma* Ambedkar asserted that the contemporary relevance of Buddha's message. He made it clear that for the present world Buddhism is the only religion which can save it from the dangers of the nuclear age. As stated by Valerian Rodrigues, '*The Buddha and His Dhamma* highlights the central issues that concerned him throughout his life and demarcate his view sharply from that of his adversaries. The work contains the central teachings of Buddha along with a commentary built into it. The commentary transposes the Buddha's teachings to the present and suggests its contemporary relevance with respect to the problems that confront humanity. He saw Buddhism as an ideology that engages with the world, privileging the poor and exploited. Ambedkar also upheld the superiority of Buddhism over other religions especially Islam and Christianity'. He thus established the hegemony of Buddhism with a new foundation.

The Maha Bodhi, a famous Buddhist journal in India, however, opined that *The Buddha and His Dhamma* was a dangerous book. Ambedkar's interpretation of Buddhism as merely a social system, was not a correct interpretation of Buddhism but a new orientation. The title, pleaded this reviewer, should be changed from the 'Buddha And His Dhamma' to that of 'Ambedkar And His Dhamma'; for Ambedkar preached non-Dhamma as Dhamma for motives of political and social reform.

5.5 AMBEDKAR AND MARXISM

Along with Buddhism, the other ideology that deeply attracted Ambedkar in the 1950s was Marxism. In November 1956, he made a trip to Nepal to attend the World Buddhist Conference and there he spoke on Karl Marx and Buddha. He showed extraordinary interest in Marxism during the 1950s and he started working on a book titled *India and Communism*, which however, did not make much progress. Ambedkar held that he had come to a conclusion that the present or future generation would have ultimately to choose between the gospel of Buddha and the gospel of Karl Marx. On another occasion, while he was talking to Mr. Crowley, a leader of the scheduled castes, he opined that, 'if soon, and added that the alternative, if democracy did not work in India, was something of communism'. According to him, Marx's philosophy was the satisfying philosophy for the lower orders.

Speaking on the topic *Buddha and Karl Marx*, Ambedkar stated that the goal of Buddha and Marx was the same. According to Valerian Rodrigues, 'He (Ambedkar) is to transform the world; there is a conflict between class and class; private ownership of property begets sorrow and exploitation, and good society requires that private property be collectivized. He found that on all these four issues Buddha is in agreement with Marx. He, however, rejected the inevitability of socialism, the economic interpretation of history; the thesis on pauperization of the proletariat; dictatorship of the proletariat; withering away of the state, and the strategy of violence as a means to seize power'. Marx said that private property was the root cause of sorrow. It resulted in exploitation, suffering and enslavement. Buddha also wanted to abolish *Dukkha* (sorrow) and the expression of sorrow was used in Buddhist literature in the sense of property.

Ambedkar's basic religious outlook came in the way of a proper assessment of Marxism. According to him, Buddhism and communism differed from each other in their means to achieve the same goal. Communism adopted violent methods to abolish private

property. But Buddhism stressed on non-violent means to achieve the goal. Buddha's method was different and it wanted to change the mind of man. His way was not to force people to do what they did not like to do even though it was good for them. His way was to alter the disposition of men so that they would voluntarily do what they would not otherwise do. The Marxist way was based on force. Moreover, the Buddhist system was a democratic system, whereas the communist system was based on dictatorship. Therefore, Ambedkar considered the Buddhist method as the safest and the soundest. The Buddhist method of bringing about a change was superior to the Marxist method because Buddha believed in persuasion, moral teaching and love. Ambedkar regarded Buddhism as a moral and tolerant alternative to Marxism. To sum up, we can say that Ambedkar asserted that Buddhism could provide the missing dimensions for socialism and for this there was an urgent need for discussion between Marxism and Buddhism.

5.6 AMBEDKAR'S VIEWS ON CASTE AND UNTOUCHABILITY

Untouchability, which is a unique social institution was a great barrier, according to Ambedkar, in the formation of an equitable order of society and hence his major writings were concerned with untouchability and the caste system. According to him, one of the major weaknesses of Hinduism was the caste system and its segregation of untouchability. Caste is not a physical thing, but a state of mind. Ambedkar held that religion which has inculcated the notion of caste is to be blamed for this belief. He believed that the caste system is not merely division of labour and it has disorganized and demoralized the Hindus. The caste and caste consciousness has served to keep alive the memory of past feuds between castes and has prevented solidarity. Virtue and morality become caste ridden and caste bound. So Ambedkar opposed untouchability and stood for a radical change in the socio-political system to bring about an equitable society. He denounced the caste system and fought relentlessly to establish a society based on the democratic ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. For this he wanted the varna system to be dismantled. Ambedkar believed that eradication of caste system should be centred in the social reforms.

Ambedkar's life was shaped and influenced by bitter and discriminatory personal experiences of being a dalit. He, therefore, wanted to enquire into the origin and development of the caste system and the practice of untouchability. His rational enquiry of the Hindu religion led him to the conclusion that varna and caste system originated in the Vedic culture. Ambedkar argued that graded inequality is the normative anchor of the caste system. Graded inequality restricts the reach of equality to the members of the caste. According to Ambedkar, *Chaturvarna* presupposes the classification of the people into four definite categories, the Shudras being the lowest category. They were denied all rights and privileges including that of securing education. Ambedkar found caste to be a fixture of the Hindu religion.

Ambedkar had serious disagreements with Gandhi on the notion of caste. Gandhi upheld varna system as the basis of social organization based on a division of labour. Ambedkar however felt that the principle underlying Gandhi's conception of varna is the same as that of caste, i.e., assigning social agents on the basis of birth rather than worth. It led to upholding graded inequality and denial of freedom and equality.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

11. What was Ambedkar's main criticism of Hindu literature?
12. What was the main concept of religion for Ambedkar?
13. What was Ambedkar's main criticism of Hinduism?
14. Who introduced Ambedkar to Buddha and his teachings?
15. When did Ambedkar convert to Buddhism?
16. What are the Triple Gems of Buddhism?
17. When was *The Buddha and His Dhamma* published?

NOTES

It is said that the institution of untouchability is a corollary institution of the caste system of Hindu society. V.S. Nargolkar states, 'Untouchability is largely an out-growth of the system of caste and caste in its turn is the illegitimate child of the concept of varna'. Justice Nasrullah Beg is also of the opinion that, 'the evil of untouchability is not a separate institution by itself. It is a corollary of the institution of caste system warp and weft of the Hindu society'. As stated above, many scholars and writers are of the opinion that untouchability is a corollary of the caste system. But when we go into the details of caste system we find that the above observations are not very relevant.

On the basis of the different definitions of caste, the main features seem to be:

- Segmented division of society based on hierarchy
- Restriction on feeding and social interest
- Civil and religious disabilities and privileges of the different sections
- Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation
- Restriction on marriage

Here we find that there is no mention of untouchability. Though the caste system generates a feeling of superiority among the higher class and a feeling of inferiority among the lower class, it has nothing to do with 'untouchability'. Ambedkar rightly observed this in his work, *Caste in India, their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*, 'the idea of pollution has been attached to the institution of caste only because the caste that enjoys the highest rank is the priestly class, while we know that priest and purity are old associates. We may therefore conclude that the idea of pollution is a characteristic of caste only in so far as caste has a religious flavour'. Hence, we can say that untouchability is not a corollary of the caste system.

The caste system divides the Hindu society into four varnas whereas untouchability divides the Hindu society into 'touchable' and 'untouchable'. The high class Brahmins and observe 'untouchability'. This led Dr. R.K. Kshirsagar to write, 'undoubtedly, caste system has consolidated the institution of untouchability by enforcement of several disabilities and restrictions under the fictitious belief of 'purity'. As such caste and untouchability are so intertwined with each other that one cannot safely bifurcate them. However, the minutest observation reveals that the reality is different, both are separate institutions, at least at their inception'. Hence, we can say that untouchability and caste system, though closely related, are different in nature. Untouchability, we can say, has been mainly a creation of the people than any scripture or divine being.

According to Ambedkar, the caste system has been a blot on Hinduism and it has robbed the Hindu religion of its vitality and brilliance. Untouchability is the worst feature of the caste system and it is deeply embedded in the minds of Hindu society. Ambedkar held that it acted as a powerful barrier against the emotional integration of the people of India as their entire outlook was coloured by it. It had divided the Indian society into high born and low born castes and untouchability continued to exercise a predominant hold on the social life of Indian society, especially the Hindus. According to Mahatma Gandhi, 'untouchability is phenomenon which is peculiar to Hinduism only and it has got no warrant either in reason or in shastras'. When we look into details, we see that untouchability had initially originated in the contempt and hatred of Buddhism by the Brahmanic forces which became a part of Hindu social habit and later a part of Hindu religion. Here we should not forget the fact that untouchability during the earlier days

was not so rigorous. But as time went by it became more injurious, humiliating and inhuman in nature.

Ambedkar had fully realized the meaning of caste and untouchability in his childhood and adolescent life. He experienced the anguish resulting from the discrimination based on the low and high of the Hindu social system. Social criticism is the foundation of Ambedkar's philosophy and action. It revolves around the humiliation he and other members of the repressed class underwent in India as untouchables. He fought for the liberation of all people who were systematically separated and segregated from the mainstream. He found the caste system to be an outdated, impracticable, irrational and superstitious social practice. He narrated the damages done by the caste system on society and set out to make with the annihilation of caste as his goal. His prime concern was the establishment of an egalitarian society and he fought consistently for human dignity and social equality.

The most important part of Ambedkar's career was, in a nutshell, to secure social and political equality. He, therefore, pleaded the realization of economic and social democracy in India, for political democracy was unreal unless preceded by economic democracy and social democracy. According to K.L. Bhatia, '.....to Ambedkar social democracy means to enable every person to lead an all-round life involving as much the cultivation of the mind as also the satisfaction of basic physical wants. This has been the aim of human society. The cultivation of the mind depends on *Saddhamma* – the combination of *Pradhva*, *Sila*, *Karuna* and *Maitri*. *Saddhamma* means the eradication and amelioration of all social barriers between man and man, the worth and not the birth is the measure of man, it promotes equality; it kindles in man the spirit of fraternity. This is, on the one hand, the way of life based on liberty, equality and fraternity; this is, on the other hand, the way of attaining a government based on social democracy which is the cornerstone as well as a milestone of social justice'. Social justice therefore, means justice which is not confined to a fortunate few, but takes within its sweep large masses of disadvantaged and underprivileged segments of the society.

Ambedkar felt that caste system wrought injustice to the lower caste by denying them basic human rights and preventing them from rising to the cultural level of higher castes. So the untouchables remained uncivilized and backward. This prevented the feeling of fraternity in Indian society. The lower caste were not treated as equals in society and were discriminated against as untouchables. Untouchability, according to Ambedkar, meant the imposition of social disabilities on a person by reason of their birth into a certain caste. They were prohibited from using public roads, wells, schools, shops, and other public utilities. They were not allowed to come into the mainstream of social life. The upper castes treated them as lowly and polluting groups. According to Ambedkar, 'untouchability is the notion of defilement, pollution, contamination and the ways and means of getting rid of that defilement. It is a case of permanent, hereditary stain which nothing can cleanse'. Thus, the practice of untouchability reinforced inequality and Ambedkar foresaw that only a casteless society that has inner strength can defend itself and also attain the goal of independence. The solution that Ambedkar proposed was the 'annihilation of caste'. He suggested inter-caste marriage and inter-dining for the purpose although the latter by itself is too weak to forge any enduring bonds. Further, he felt that hereditary priesthood should be abolished and it should 'remain open to all the co-religionists endowed with appropriate qualifications as certified by the state'. He felt that the Hindus would not accept these suggestions.

NOTES

NOTES

Ambedkar saw and studied that the social and economic conditions of the untouchable people were very deplorable and pitiable. The poverty along with untouchability ruined their life. He started his mission to uplift them to the level of human beings. He advocated that their social and economic conditions must be improved and they should not be treated as untouchables. He stood firmly for their human rights and for a respectful place for them in Hindu society. Ambedkar knew that unless the depressed classes did not get their share in the political power, their subjugation would not end. In the second 'Round Table Conference' Ambedkar succeeded in convincing the British authorities of the need for a separate electorate for the depressed classes and got it. A separate electorate would mean that untouchables would vote for their own candidates and be allotted their votes separate from the Hindu majority. The 'McDonald Award', known as 'Communal Award', granted the depressed classes separate electorate. Gandhi felt that separate electorate would separate the Harijans from the Hindus. The thought that the Hindus would be divided pained him grievously. Gandhi vehemently criticized the principle of separate electorate and began to fast unto death against it. It created a political stir in the country. Ambedkar was threatened with dire consequences, if Gandhi died. In order to save the life of Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar signed the agreement known as Poona Pact, on 24th September 1931. This agreement scrapped the separate electorates.

Due to public pressure and the persuasion by national leaders, Ambedkar finally agreed to be satisfied with greater representation through reservation instead of separate electorate. Gail Omvedt in her article, *Dalits: Miles To Go* wrote, '...even though he accepted the compromise of the Poona Pact, he believed till the end that the elected Dalits would simply become stooges of the upper caste-dominated parties.' Disturbed by Gandhi's attitude towards untouchables, Ambedkar wrote a book entitled *Annihilation of Caste* and made a historic announcement at Yeola that the untouchables would denounce the Hindu society to accept another religion.

In October 1936, Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party as he felt the need for having a political organization for the labourers and the depressed. It struggled for attaining human status for the workers belonging to the depressed classes. The party won 15 out of 17 seats in the Bombay Provincial Assembly elections and Ambedkar himself got elected in it. In 1942, he was nominated as a member of the Governor General's Executive by the British Government, as in-charge of the Labour department. In 1946, Ambedkar founded the People's Education Society which started a number of schools and colleges for the students of depressed classes. In August 1947, he was elected as the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee. When India became independent, Ambedkar became the first law minister of independent India. He once said that he took charge of the above posts not for any individual gain but to safeguard the larger interest of the depressed classes.

5.7 AMBEDKAR AS THE CHIEF ARCHITECT OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

As stated above, the Constituent Assembly made Ambedkar the Chairman of the Drafting Committee to draft the Constitution for an independent India. It was a rare honour for an 'untouchable' in India. His study of law, economics and politics, international level exposures and experiences within the nation made him the right person for this task. Nehru recognized his talent and constitutional knowledge. Ambedkar studied the

Constitutions of many countries and reflected on them from the Indian context. He also coordinated the thoughts of other members of the Draft Committee and brought out the best for India. In spite of his deteriorating health, after working day and night, he brought the work to completion. His sincere effort was to make the Constitution truly democratic, republican and secularist. The Constitution has the impression of Ambedkar's philosophy of life inherent in the principle of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. To the best of his ability, he safeguarded the interest of the depressed classes. He stressed the need for parliamentary democracy along with state socialism for the welfare of all. That is why he was called 'the Chief Architect of the Constitution'.

Social justice is the signature tune of the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar as the Chairman of the drafting committee acted in the best interest of the depressed classes by introducing laws and Acts for the promotion of social justice. Ambedkar proceeded on the assumption that justice will not be done to the depressed classes by an orthodox Hindu majority in free India, therefore, for a healthy growth of society the depressed classes must have separate electorate along with special constitutional safeguards and protection. It was largely due to Ambedkar's efforts for the cause of the depressed classes that the framers of Indian Constitution provided special safeguards in favour of scheduled castes, scheduled Tribes and other backward classes. They wished to give special favours to the weaker sections and also bid goodbye to casteism and communalism. Protective discrimination is aimed at balancing the benefits of a social welfare state between the haves and have-nots. It was primarily designed to uplift the backward sections of the society without harming the interests of the advanced sections of the society. Thus, Ambedkar wanted to lay down the foundation of a just and secular society which he thought was necessary for the creation of an ethos in which depressed classes can feel safe and secure. Emphasis was laid on this because our struggle for freedom has not only been political but also economic and social. The task of democracy would be fulfilled only by achieving the social and economic dimensions of democracy. Ambedkar opined that, 'the first condition which I think is a condition precedent for the successful working of a democracy is that there must be no glaring inequalities in the society. There must not be an oppressed class. There must not be a class which has got all the privileges and a class which has got all the burdens to carry...'. Its spirit was reflected in the *Directive Principles of State Policy* of the Constitution. Thus, we see that Ambedkar included in the Constitution all his dreams through the *Directive Principles of the State Policy*. His social thoughts are reflected in the fundamental rights. Ambedkar had to compromise his vision with many other forces such as recommendations of various committees and the policies of the Congress Party. Nevertheless, in spite of these compromises what he was able to achieve for the minority depressed classes was very significant.

Ambedkar also wanted to reform the entire Hindu society and for that purpose, he prepared and introduced the Hindu Code Bill in Parliament on 5th February 1951. The concept of social justice that Ambedkar envisioned was incomplete without emancipation of women. In his vision of the constitutional scheme, women had a definite place as had the depressed classes as a whole. He was a champion of women's rights and felt instinctively that the weaker sections and weaker sex in India had a common platform of protest. He fought vigorously for the passage of this bill as it was most significant for women's rights in respect of marriage and inheritance. But it could not be passed due to the opposition of the conservative Hindu Congress Members of the Parliament. Although a member of Nehru-cabinet, he always expressed independent views regarding the fate of the downtrodden masses. He, at times, criticized the

NOTES

Check Your Progress

18. Name two features of the caste system.
19. What does Saddhamma mean?
20. Name two solutions that Ambedkar suggested for the formation of a casteless society.
21. Which legislature passed by the British awarded the untouchables with a separate electorate?
22. Why was the Poona Pact signed?

NOTES

Government for not doing much for these people. It had already created some difference between him and Prime Minister Nehru. Ultimately, when the Hindu Code Bill was not passed in the Parliament, he resigned from the Cabinet on September 27, 1951.

Dr. Ambedkar, who was reverentially called Babasaheb, had an uncanny ability to attract the downtrodden to his presence. He spoke the language of people and so he was easily understood by the common man. The mighty and the lowly, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the illiterate and the educated all thronged to listen to him, because he had fought for their dignity, liberty and equality. His mission in life was to awaken the oppressed masses, to educate them and make them rise and fight for their respectful place in the society. He was able to bring about qualitative changes in their life. Therefore, we can sum up that his life was really a dedication and service to that part of humanity which had been ignored and crushed for centuries in our country. Ambedkar dreamt of a strong and united India, an India of peace, prosperity and progress and an India in which political, social and economic freedoms were available to all without any discrimination on the grounds of caste, religion or sex.

However, in spite the efforts initiated by Ambedkar, even after six decades of democratic functioning there are still excluded groups in India who face marginalization. Even though under Nehru's leadership, a path of gradual social transformation leading to a more egalitarian society was aimed for, lack of education, employment, caste based economic discrimination, and so on, resulted in a substantial level of marginalization and exclusion of some disadvantaged sections in India after independence. A section of them still continue to pursue traditional caste occupations such as weaving along with agriculture. Though some of them are employed well, their number is relatively very small. In the social realm a group of people still suffer from exclusion and their dwellings are located in rural areas and slums and many of them are denied even basic amenities.

As stated by Sudha Pai in her article *Disadvantaged Sections: Process of Continuity and Change*, 'PD (Protective Discrimination) enshrined in the Constitution aimed at inclusion of SCs into society and polity, promoting participation and providing protection against discrimination. But the unequal economic structure of society reinforced by uneven distribution of gains in the post-independence period, under a predominantly capitalist system of development meant that a small "creamy layer" has made use of the opportunities'. This points to the fact that though there are some significant changes taking place for greater inclusion of marginalized groups this is affecting only a small section of the groups while a vast majority still suffers from exclusion. Very often we come across instances of caste oppression, exploitation of tribals, dalits and women and this gives us a clear picture of social exclusion in our country.

The marginalized and excluded groups can overcome their difficulties only if they are made aware of their rights and provided with dignity and self-confidence through education and political empowerment so that they can assert themselves against the domination and oppression they are subjected to. This was made clear by Ms. Neelam Pathania when she stated that, 'In the Indian context, social justice meant taking of collective measures for the upliftment of the down-trodden and the weaker sections like women, which could not be achieved merely by providing for, or conceding them equal rights; something more was needed to bring them at par with other sections of the society, like, for instance, equitable distribution of wealth, and allied measures, to ensure their economic independence, provision of free education, and all sorts of encouragement for them to acquire the same, so that their vision is widened to look at the world around.

and a desire to live a dignified life of a human being is originated in them, and they themselves are psychologically prepared to treat themselves equal to any other human being, and all such measures as may promote their participation in the legislative, administrative and judicial processes of the country, till, of course, they are in a position to compete on their own, so that they consider and treat themselves to be a part of the system'. If we want them to contribute to the development of the nation and to the reconstruction of the society it becomes imperative that the disequilibrium suffered by them is removed. What is needed at present is education in a real sense, which can help to change the very attitude of the people by broadening their mental horizons. A comprehensive democracy including social and economic democracy along with political democracy as envisaged by Ambedkar will enable us to meet this challenge and help us to improve the conditions of the marginalized and excluded groups.

5.8 DISPARITY IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL VIEWS OF GANDHI AND AMBEDKAR

Ambedkar and Gandhi started work for the eradication of untouchability and social evils existing in the society around the same period and they even worked together for a short spell. Gandhi was a towering figure in Indian politics and Ambedkar had great respect for him for he effectively voiced the concerns of the downtrodden and espoused the removal of untouchability. Ambedkar agreed with Gandhi on the issue of non-violence. He, like Gandhi, stood firm on the issue of purity of means, which to him was an important differentiating feature between Buddhism and Marxism. Both Gandhi and Ambedkar regarded religion as necessary for men and society. The concept of religion, for Ambedkar however, is quite different from the traditional one. The traditional meaning of religion is a belief in the supernatural. But Ambedkar did not consider the concept of God, soul and heaven as essential to a religion. Like Gandhi, human morality is the soul of Ambedkar's concept of religion. Both of them were humanists and great champions of the downtrodden masses. Both of them looked at the problem of untouchability from two different viewpoints. Gandhi had a keen sense of justice and human dignity, but it was conditioned by his religious convictions. Ambedkar's views were shaped by personal experience of the inequalities of the caste system. He had personally suffered the humiliations and insults meted out to an untouchable by a caste ridden society. So he initiated activities through his own separate and distinct platform.

Though Gandhi opposed the practice of untouchability, he thought that it had no connection with the caste system. Till 1922, he supported the caste system. Ambedkar quotes Gandhi on this issue, 'I believe that Hindu society has been able to stand because it is founded on the caste system. Caste has a readymade means for spreading primary education, caste has a political basis. Caste can perform judicial function. I believe that inter-dining or inter-marriages are not necessary for promoting national unity. The caste system cannot be said to be bad because it does not allow inter-dining or inter-marriage between different castes. To destroy caste system and adopt Western European social system means that Hindus must give up the principle of hereditary occupation which is the soul of caste system. The caste system is a natural order of society. This being my view I am opposed to all those who are out to destroy the caste system'. But later Gandhi became critical of caste system and suggested an alternate to it. He said, 'The best remedy is that small castes should fuse themselves into a big caste. There should be four such big castes so that we may reproduce the old system of four varnas'. But

NOTES

Check Your Progress

23. What is protective discrimination aimed at?
24. Why did Ambedkar introduce the Hindu Code Bill in 1951?
25. Why did Ambedkar resign from the Cabinet in 1951?

NOTES

Gandhi's concept of varna system is based on the principle of hereditary occupation. He had faith in the varna system and did not think it essential to end the varna system to eradicate the practice of untouchability. He considered the varna system as an ideal form of social organization.

To Gandhi, varna does not stand for any inequality. He views all varnas as equal because they are all important for the community. This system brings material well-being to society and spiritual freedom to individuals, according to Gandhi. As he believed in the spiritual oneness of all life, he opposed untouchability and considered it an impassable barrier in the path of India's progress. For Gandhi, *swaraj* was not possible without the removal of untouchability as for him the definition of *swaraj* was, 'freedom for the nearest of our countrymen'. He wrote, 'An untouchable is outside the pale of respectable society. He is hardly treated as a human being. He is an outcaste hurled into an abyss by his fellow-being occupying the same platform. The difference, therefore, is somewhat analogous to the difference between heaven and hell'. He viewed this as a moral problem.

As a practical social reformer, Gandhi pointed out that inter-dining or inter-caste marriage does not help in the removal of untouchability. He strongly felt that the real cure lies in bringing about a change of heart in society. That is why he was not enthusiastic about popularizing these practices. He was also against the operating of separate schools or institutions for Harijans as these further perpetuate feelings of separation and inferiority. Gandhi also disapproved of the idea of a separate electorate for untouchables for he believed that the untouchables were part of the Hindu society and a separate electorate may divide the Hindu society.

Ambedkar, on the other hand, considered caste and the caste system as the major weakness of Hinduism. He believed that it was not merely based on a division of labour. It was a division of labourers into unnatural and watertight compartments. It disorganized and demoralized the Hindus. Ambedkar argued that social evils like sati, child-marriage and prohibition on widow-remarriage were the outcome of the caste system. He was against the graded inequality underlying the caste system. He was to caste initially and later opposing it while still upholding varna. Ambedkar, however, felt that the principle underlying Gandhi's conception of varna was the same as that of caste, i.e., assigning social agents on the basis of birth rather than worth. According to him, *chaturvarna* divided the society into castes and sub-castes and they lost open door character and became self-enclosed units. Prohibition of inter-marriages or endogamy further accentuated the caste divisions. Gail Omvedt observed, 'On the question of caste, Ambedkar directly challenged both Gandhi and Nehru and other socialists. He saw Gandhi's project of reforming caste and eradicating untouchability but maintaining *swadharma* as illusory; *Ramarajya* was to him simply medieval backwardness'. One of Ambedkar's most important arguments against Hinduism was untouchability because it did not let Hindus act as a community. Ambedkar initially believed that Gandhian intervention would push forward the social reforms agenda. But later he realized that Gandhi had succumbed to the pressures of traditional beliefs and instead of social transformation became the agent of orthodoxy. Ambedkar felt that Gandhi's strategy for the abolition of untouchability placed the 'untouchability' at the behest of the caste Hindus. Later, their relation worsened and after 1933, Ambedkar fought a relentless battle against Gandhi, although they continued to share a number of concerns.

Ambedkar was fighting for the recognition that 'untouchables' were a separate element in India, and therefore, should be provided with appropriate constitutional safeguards. He suggested his own strategies to confront untouchability and always warned the untouchables not to fall into the trap of Gandhism. He exhorted them to fight for

NOTES

political power. He aimed at securing political power for the untouchables. He demanded rightful representation of the depressed classes in the legislative council and demanded a separate electorate for them in the 'First Round Table Conference'. However, Gandhi disapproved of the idea of a separate electorate for untouchables as he believed that it would only divide the Hindu society further and began a fast unto death against this till this idea was scrapped. Instead, a provision for a reserved joint electorate was put forward to give a larger share of seats to the depressed classes than what was promised by the communal award. But Ambedkar's dislike towards the Congress and Gandhi continued. He felt that the issue of untouchability and the caste system had been relegated to the background by the Congress. He started work outside the Congress party and his views in this regard were expressed in his works, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables* and *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchable*. These works familiarize one with Ambedkar's reservations about Gandhi's prescriptions towards the problems faced by the depressed classes. He was opposed to the paternalistic attitude of Gandhi and other Congress leaders towards the depressed classes and he repeatedly stated that the Congress had done nothing to help these people in their struggle against the Hindu orthodoxy. He was against the Gandhian suggestion of treating untouchability as a religious problem, but in no way did he want any division within the Hindus for the greater cause of political emancipation. To him, more than untouchability, it was important to understand the problem of untouchability. He therefore demanded a special electorate for the depressed classes so that they would select their own representation in the legislative bodies to protect their interests.

Ambedkar held that political democracy in India required as education, enlightenment, elevation of the lower classes and the guarantee of the fundamental rights to them without which *swaraj* would be a new slavery for them. He asserted that without fulfilling these conditions, India would not be called a democracy. He always defended democracy as it was capable of bringing out revolutionary changes in the economic and social life of the people without bloodshed. But he pointed out that for the operation and survival of democracy, the people should hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving social and economic objectives. It meant abandoning the method of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and Satyagraha. He viewed democracy as a mode of associated living in which there would be no discrimination on social and economic grounds. It should be supported by the social base that is essential for its successful operation.

One of the solutions suggested by Ambedkar for the removal of caste barriers and untouchability in the Hindu society was inter-caste marriages and inter-dining, although the latter by itself is too weak a method to forge any enduring bonds. He called upon the Hindus to annihilate the caste barrier which is a great hindrance to social solidarity and to set up a new social order based on the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. He suggested inter-caste marriages as one of the solutions to the problem. He firmly believed that if the caste Hindus are freed from the thralldom of the *shastras* and their minds are cleaned of the perpetual notions founded on the *shastras*, they would inter-dine and inter-marry without any hesitation. Thus, he held that society must be based on reason and not on the deplorable traditions of the caste system. And this, he reiterated, was only possible by the education of the masses. As it is stated by Neelam Pathania, 'Ambedkar had the vision of a statesman. He could realize that the cherished goal of freedom movement could not be achieved, and if achieved, the accomplishment could not be lasting, unless every section of the society was integrated in mind and conduct, and that was not possible unless the downtrodden and depressed classes were assured equality

Self-Instructional Material

To Gandhi, one way of removing the curse of untouchability was to bring about a change in our attitude as he considered it an amoral problem. He believed that it could be mitigated only by a change in the hearts and minds of caste Hindus. He was not in favour of legislative measures in favour of backward classes for the upliftment of untouchables. He felt that one cannot remove untouchability by enforcing laws. On the other hand, what Ambedkar sought was a legal remedy to these social problems. It is to Ambedkar's credit that his struggle for the real freedom of India's millions of untouchables resulted in a national consensus in favour of the abolition of untouchability and the granting of certain constitutional safeguards for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In order to remove social inequalities and achieve the goal of social justice the unique device of the reservation system was built into the Constitution. This protective discrimination was aimed at balancing the benefits of society between the haves and the have-nots. It was mainly designed to uplift the backward sections of society without harming the interest of the caste Hindus and other advanced sections of the society.

harming the interest of the caste Hindus and other advanced sections of the society.

harming the interest of the caste Hindus and other advanced sections of the society.

Barriers to the internet

- ...the interest of the caste Hindus and other advanced sections of the society

harming the interests of

- ...the interest of the caste Hindus and other advanced sections of the society.

harming the interest of the caste Hindus and other advanced sections of the society.

MF-instructions

of their own.

of their own

of their own.

of their own.

of their own.

of their own.

Self-Instructional

- Self-Instructional
-
- Material

NOTES

5.10 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Dr. Bhimrao Ramjee Ambedkar was well-known not only as the chief architect of the Constitution or as a legal luminary, but also as a great activist and reformist, a disciplined radical and revolutionary.
- Ambedkar continuously fought against evil and dreaded customs, blind beliefs and superstitions of the Hindu society.
- Ambedkar planned his programmes to bring the downtrodden millions of India from a state of dehumanization and slavery into one of equality through the use of modern methods based on education and the exercise of legal and political rights.
- Ambedkar was influenced by Indian as well as western intellectual and moral ideas of many great thinkers like Gautam Buddha, Jyotiba Phule, John Dewey (his mentor at Columbia University), Karl Marx, Justice Ranade, etc.
- Ambedkar had great reverence for the life and message of Buddha. He appreciated Lord Buddha's belief in man's capacity to work out his salvation without extraneous aid.
- Both Gandhi and Ambedkar were heroic and the very embodiment and symbols of revolt against the unjust social order existing in India. Both were critical of the evils of the Hindu social system, especially untouchability and were determined to uproot the evils while leaving the foundations of Indian culture undisturbed.
- In Ambedkar's ideological map, democracy occupied the critical place. He was a true and sincere democrat and his major contribution to political thinking was to focus the relevance of social democracy to political democracy.
- Ambedkar was a great admirer of the parliamentary system of government till 1947, but later he thought that a non-parliamentary executive would suit India better. He pointed out that the representative nature of the executive did not necessarily ensure the right to the minorities.
- Ambedkar wanted a change in the life pattern of the untouchables and he knew that without political rights and political power, the elevation of the depressed classes would not be possible.
- Ambedkar repeatedly stated that power was necessary to protect the rights of the people. He held that right must exist before the power is set up and it would be serious error to reverse the order of precedence.
- The concept of religion, for Ambedkar is quite different from the traditional one. The traditional meaning of religion is some sort of belief in supernatural power. He did not consider the concept of God, soul and heaven as essential to religion.
- The rigid orthodoxy of Hinduism led Ambedkar to give up any hope of reforming it and to advocate Buddhist Dhamma instead.
- In Ambedkar's view the real remedy to untouchability is to replace the social relations governed by the caste system of Hinduism by the one based on equality, justice and fraternity.
- Ambedkar analyzed the basic tenets of Buddhism in his magnum opus - *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, published posthumously in 1957.

- Ambedkar wrote it with the intention of creating a single text for new Buddhists to read and follow. It is a true guide for all the Buddhists. It is the best basis for propagating the Dhamma at least in India.
- According to Ambedkar/ one of the major weaknesses of Hinduism is caste system and its untouchability. He believed that the caste system is not merely division of labour and it has disorganized and demoralized the Hindus.
- Ambedkar found the caste system an outdated, impracticable, irrational and a superstitious social practice and he set the annihilation of caste as his goal.
- Ambedkar felt that unless the depressed classes do not get share in the political power, their subjugation would not end. In 1918 he demanded separate electorate to the untouchables.
- The Constitution was a reflection of Ambedkar's philosophy of life inherent in the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity and he sought to safeguard the interests of the depressed classes to the best of his ability. That is why he was called the 'Chief Architect of the Constitution.'
- In spite of the efforts initiated by Ambedkar, even after six decades of democratic functioning since independence there are still excluded groups in India who still face marginalization.
- There was a common ground for Gandhi and Ambedkar in their concern for the problems of untouchability, and they worked for its eradication, it was just that their methodologies differed.
- Though Gandhi opposed the practice of untouchability, he thought that it had no connection with Hindu social organization, namely, the caste system.
- Gandhi did not believe that inter-dining or inter-caste marriages would help in the removal of untouchability. He strongly felt that the real cure lies in the change of heart. One of the solutions suggested by Ambedkar for the removal of caste and untouchability in the Hindu society was inter-caste marriages and inter-dining.
- Ambedkar, on the other hand, considered caste and caste system as the major weakness of Hinduism. He believed that it was not merely a division of labour.
- Gandhi disapproved of the idea of a separate electorate for untouchables as he believed that it would divide the Hindu society.
- Ambedkar sought a legal remedy to their social problems and to remove social inequalities and achieve the goal of social justice he devised the reservation system into the Constitution.
- An important approach to the study of tribal movements has been suggested by Ranajit Guha. This approach has been termed as subaltern historiography.

5.11 KEY TERMS

- **Caste system:** A hierarchically arranged social division of labour which is determined by the birth of a person.
- **Untouchables:** In Hindu society those who did not belong to the upper caste groups were called outcastes and they were made to carry out the menial work of society.
- **Meliorist:** A doctrine that the world may be improved by human effort.

NOTES

NOTES

- **Rationalism:** Any philosophy magnifying the role played by unaided reason, in the acquisition and justification of knowledge.
- **Conservative:** One who desires to preserve institutions of his country against change and innovation.
- **Ostracism:** It refers to social boycotting.
- **Orthodoxy:** It means holding conventional or currently accepted beliefs especially in religion.

5.12 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Three people who influenced Ambedkar were Gautam Buddha, John Dewey and Jyotiba Phule.
2. Ambedkar borrowed his notion of social liberty from Booker T. Washington.
3. Mahatma Jotiba Phule was considered to be the Martin Luther of Maharashtra.
4. The main goal that Ambedkar and Gandhi had in common was the abolishment of untouchability.
5. Two salient points required for the successful working of a democracy are, there must be no glaring inequality in society and there should be an effective opposition party to keep the party in power in check.
6. Ambedkar was a great admirer of the Parliamentary system of Government till 1947.
7. Ambedkar considered non-parliamentary executive a better alternative to the Parliamentary system for India.
8. Ambedkar wanted the untouchables to have political representation and also educate themselves so that they were aware of their rights.
9. Ambedkar believed that development of the industrial sector was necessary to reduce the surplus labour in agriculture and to create favourable conditions for production.
10. The main feature of Ambedkar's model of democratic socialism was that basic freedom to the individual vis-à-vis the State to be guaranteed by the Constitution.
11. Ambedkar's main criticism was that there was hardly ever any reflective thought to be found in Hinduism. They just blindly followed the writings in their literature, where nothing was based on any fathomable reason.
12. Ambedkar did not consider the concept of God, soul and heaven as essential to religion. For him, human morality was the basis of a religion.
13. Ambedkar's main criticism was that Hinduism never adheres to the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity and practices partiality towards some of its followers.
14. K.A. Keluskar, presented Ambedkar a book called *Life of Gautama Buddha* and introduced Ambedkar to Buddha and his teachings.
15. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism on 14th October 1956.
16. Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha are the Triple Gems of Buddhism.
17. The Buddha and His Dhamma was published posthumously in 1957.

18. Two features of the caste system are first, that it is based on hierarchy and second, there is a lack of unrestricted choice of occupation.
19. Saddharma means the eradication and amelioration of all social barriers between man.
20. Inter-caste marriage and inter-dining were two solutions Ambedkar suggested for the formation of a caste less society.
21. The McDonald award awarded the untouchables with a separate electorate.
22. The Poona Pact was signed by Ambedkar agreeing to scrap the separate electorates.
23. Protective discrimination is aimed at balancing the benefits of a social welfare state between the haves and have-nots.
24. Ambedkar introduced the Hindu Code Bill to help reform the entire Hindu society.
25. Ambedkar resigned from the Cabinet in 1951 due to differences with Nehru and the scrapping of the Hindu Code Bill was the last straw.
26. Reservation is a unique device introduced into the Constitution. It sought protective discrimination in favour of certain castes and class of persons.
27. Mahatma Gandhi opposed Ambedkar's demand for a separate electorate for untouchables.
28. To establish an egalitarian society, Gandhi wanted to abolish untouchability and Ambedkar wanted to do away with the caste system.

5.13 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the requirements of a successful democracy according to Ambedkar?
2. State the main features of Ambedkar's model of democratic socialism as summed up by Bhalachandra Munekar.
3. What was Ambedkar's concept of religion?
4. Give reasons for Ambedkar wanting a separate electorate for the untouchables.
5. Differentiate between Gandhi and Ambedkar's viewpoints of untouchability.
6. Why was Gandhi not keen to popularize inter-marriage and inter-dining?
7. Why did Gandhi disapprove of the idea of a separate electorate?
8. What is subaltern historiography?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Examine the role of reason in the philosophy of Ambedkar.
2. Critically examine Ambedkar's views on religion, especially his view on Buddhism.
3. 'Dr. Ambedkar's humanism has been a movement for social freedom of the oppressed and exploited'. Substantiate your views.
4. What was the effect of Marxism on the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar?
5. Critically examine Ambedkar's views on caste and untouchability.

NOTES