BASOC301
SOCIETY IN INDIA-I

BA (SOCIOLOGY)

5TH SEMESTER

Rajiv Gandhi University
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SOCIETY IN INDIA

BASOC 301

Fifth Semester

Part-I

RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY

Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

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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

Society of India

Syllabi	Mapping in Book
UNIT 1 **Unity in Diversity:** Types of Diversity-Ethnic Racial, Religious, Linguistic, Economic, Regional and Caste; Types of Unity-Cultural, Political, Geographical, Social and Religious; Unity and Diversity.	**Unit 1** Unity in Diversity
UNIT 2 **The Structure and Composition of Indian Society (I):** Villages, Towns, Cities; Rural-Urban Linkages;	**Unit 2:** The Structure and Composition of Indian Society (I)
UNIT 3 **The Structure and Composition of Indian Society (II):** Tribes; Weaker Section, Dalits, Women and Minorities.	**Unit 3: The** Structure and Composition of Indian Society (II)
UNIT 4 **Basic Institutions of Indian Society:** Caste; Class, Kinship, Family, Marriage and Religion.	**Unit 4:** Basic Institutions of Indian Society**.**

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In India, languages, religions, dance, music, architecture, food and customs differ from place to place. However, they possess a unity in diversity. The culture of India is a mix of these varied sub-cultures. India happens to be the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Family plays an important role in the Indian culture. For generations, India has had a prevailing tradition of the joint family system. Rig-Vedic Sanskrit is one of the oldest languages of the world. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the oldest preserved and well known epics of India. Family, religion, caste, class and kinship constitute the basic institutions of the Indian society.

After Independence, the Indian society has undergoing gradual transformation. The rural landscape has evolved with the coming up of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Still, Indian society is plagued by several problems such as poverty, dowry, gender inequality, human trafficking and communalism. In addition to these problems, India is also going through issues such as development induced displacement, regional disparities, climate change and sustainable development. There are a number of factors which are responsible for continuity and change in Indian society namely, globalization, industrialization, urbanization and modernization.

This book, *Society in India*, has been written in the Self-Instructional Mode (SIM) wherein each unit begins with an 'Introduction' to the topic followed by an outline of the 'Unit Objectives'. The detailed content is then presented in a simple and an organized manner, interspersed with 'Check Your Progress' questions to test the understanding of the students. A 'Summary' along with a list of 'Key Terms' and a set of 'Questions and Exercises' is also provided at the end of each unit for effective recapitulation.

UNIT 1 UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Structure

1.0 INTRODUCTION

India is a land of diversities. Myriad languages, religions, ethnic groups, cultures, customs, food habits and attires are its prized possessions. It is a truly plural state and absorbs all pluralities into itself. The adage 'unity in diversity' sits pretty on her. Despite the numerous diversities, the country stands as one and all its citizens are proud citizens of one glorious nation.

Despite numerous foreign invasions in its history and foreign rule at various times in the past, the country never lost its unique identity. It stood firm during such onslaughts and attained independence in 1947. The idea of a united India was kept alive by its founding fathers who gave it a written and popular Constitution that secured for its citizens fundamental rights. It also gives its people secularism and protects the religious and linguistic minorities.

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the concept of religious diversity in India
- Analyse the existence of linguistic and regional diversity in India
- Interpret the meaning of 'Unity in Diversity'
- Explain the types of unity existing in India

1.2 RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN INDIA

Religious pluralism is usually used as a synonym for religious tolerance, although both the concepts have distinct meanings. Religious tolerance means that each person is entitled to his own set of religious beliefs without having to conform to some societal

standard. Religious pluralism, on the other hand, includes religious tolerance. Thus, it is a broader term that asserts that religious truths and values exist in many different doctrines.

Some theologists argue that God created all the religions of the world in order to speak to people in ways that most appeal or relate to their circumstances in life. As such, all religions have originated from the same source. As a theological argument, religious pluralism suggests that if all religions are from the same original source, then they all must be having a common truth. This argument stresses upon the similarities between religions and relies upon common stories, figures and doctrines.

People, who identify themselves as practitioners of religious pluralism, often mean that they have developed their own spiritual doctrine on a wide variety of traditional religious beliefs. Instead of subscribing to one religion, pluralists pick and choose those beliefs from various religions that are similar to their own beliefs.

The concept of religious pluralism is tricky, especially when subjected to scientific and logical analysis. Most religions contradict the position accepted in another religion and this leaves the pluralists caught in the middle of some arguments. Religious pluralism aims to unite people by rising above the differences arising from various religious beliefs. Historically, such efforts have met with varying degrees of success. Nonetheless, such efforts are praiseworthy.

Religions in India

There are a number of religions with substantial followers in India. Some of them are briefly discussed as follows:

- **Hinduism:** The Hindu religion or Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world. It is supposed to have developed about 5,000 years ago in India and is followed by various racial and ethnic groups. Hinduism is the third largest religion of the world after Christianity and Islam.

  Hinduism is the most dominant religion in India today. More than 80 per cent of Indians are Hindus, which means that about 960 million people are followers of Hinduism in India. This figure could touch a billion if you include all the Hindus in the world. But Hinduism or Indian Hinduism should not be perceived as a threat by anyone, especially our neighbouring countries. Hinduism offers a great deal of space for every religion and is very tolerant of other faiths.

  Hinduism does not have any united system of belief. It is programmed in a declaration of faith. It comprises the plurality of religious phenomena originating from and based on the Vedic traditions. Hinduism describes a religious mainstream that evolved organically and spread over a huge territory having considerable ethnic and cultural diversity. This mainstream came up both by innovation from within, and by incorporation of external traditions or cults into the Hindu fold. The result is a huge variety of religious traditions that range from different small and unsophisticated cults to major religious movements with millions of adherents.

- **Islam**: Islam originated in the Arabian Peninsula. The basic unifying agent in Islamic civilization was Prophet Mohammed (AD 570–632). Mohammed's message did not contain anything new. It had been narrated by a long line of Jewish prophets from Noah to Mohammed, who was the last of God's chosen prophets.

  Islam came to India quite early. Infact, the Islamic influence was initially felt in the early AD seventh century with the advent of Arab traders. The spread of

Islam in India was basically due to Sufism, as a lot of Sufi beliefs found their parallels in Indian philosophical literature.

Some of the sufi saints who preached in India are Hazrat Khwaja Muin-ud-din Chishti, Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, Nizam-ud-din Auliya, Shah Jalal, Amir Khusro, etc.

Islam basically spread during the reign of Muslim leaders in the medieval period. The Mughals took a lot of initiatives to spread this religion. As a result, it is the second largest religion of India.

- **Christianity**: Christianity is the largest religion in the world with more than two billion followers. It has dominated western culture for centuries and remains the most important religion of Europe. Christianity discusses the life of Jesus Christ.

  Jesus's teachings focussed on the following themes:
    o Kingdom of God
    o Love of God
    o Love of neighbour

  His teachings and his growing popularity with the masses was seen as a threat to Jewish religious leaders and the Roman Government. This led to his execution by crucifixion. Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead three days after his burial. The most typical belief of mainstream Christianity is the doctrine of the Trinity, which views the one God as consisting of the following three persons:
    o The Father
    o The Son
    o The Holy Spirit

Bible is the sacred text of Christianity. It consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Most of the Christians consider the Bible as divinely inspired and authoritative.

In India, Christianity is one of the prominent religions. At present there are about 25 million Christians in India. It is interesting to note that the Christian population in India is more than the entire population of Australia and New Zealand.

- **Sikhism:** Sikhism is the fifth largest organized religion in the world. It is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak and his nine successive Gurus. This organization of religious doctrine is known as the *Gurmat*. Guru Nanak founded Sikhism. He is generally depicted as a reconciler of the two religious traditions.

  The chief belief of Sikhism is faith in *Wahe Guru*. The Sikhs call their God *Wahe Guru*, which means that God is great. Sikhism recommends the pursuit of salvation by trained, personal meditation on the name and content of God. The followers of Sikhism are bound to follow the instructions of the ten Sikh Gurus as well as the Holy scripture, which is known as the *Guru Granth Sahib*. This scripture includes selected works of devotees from different socio-economic and religious backgrounds.

  The key belief of Sikhism is that God exists as a real entity and not merely as an idea or a design.

- **Buddhism:** Buddhism was found in India. Gautam Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, kept his teachings limited to *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*. Buddhism is an ethical arrangement, a way of life that leads towards a particular goal.

The essence of Buddha's preaching is the four noble truths. These four truths are as follows:

(i) Acceptance of sufferings

(ii) Knowing the cause of sufferings

(iii) Bringing the sufferings to an end

(iv) Using the eight fold path as a mechanism for release from sufferings

Buddhism has been divided into many philosophical schools and has a vast literature. Buddha was primarily an ethical teacher and a social reformer rather than a theoretical philosopher. He referred to a number of metaphysical views prevalent during his times and condemned them as futile.

- **Jainism:** Jainism also took its birth in India. Vardhaman Mahaveer was the founder of Jainism. Like Buddhism, Jainism also had its origin in the idea of non-acceptance of the Vedic authority of Hinduism.

  The Jains believe that there are twenty four great circles of time and in each circle, one great prophet comes to the world. These prophets are known as *Tirthankaras*. Vardhaman Mahaveer is recognized as the twenty fourth and last *Tirthankara*.

  There are two main sects in Jainism–*Digambara* and *Svetambara*. Jainism believes that all nature is alive. It states that everything from rocks to insects have a soul known as *jiva*.

- **Judaism:** Judaism is the oldest of the three great monotheistic religions of the world along with Islam and Christianity. It is the religion and way of life of the Jewish people.

  The basic tenets of Judaism have originated from the *Torah*, which are the first five books of the Bible. The most important tenet of Judaism is that there is only one eternal God who desires that all people must do what is just and merciful. It also says that each person must be respected and loved as all of them are God's creations.

  Judaism was one of the first foreign religions to arrive in India. About three quarters of its followers in India today are residing in Manipur, Mizoram and Mumbai.

- **Zoroastrianism:** It is the ancient, pre-Islamic religion of Iran. It still exists there in isolated areas and in India. The descendants of the Zoroastrian Persian immigrants are known as Parsis in India. The population of Parsis is very less in India and they are mostly concentrated in Mumbai.

  This religion was founded by the Iranian prophet and reformer Zoroaster in the sixth century BC. Zoroastrianism contains both monotheistic and dualistic features. Its concepts of one God, judgment, heaven and hell, etc., greatly influenced the major Western religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Equality of Religions in India

Throughout its history, India has observed the principle of equality of all religions and has treated the followers of every religion equally. Even when we were not a Republic and were ruled by hereditary rulers who belonged to a particular religion, these rulers did not impose their religion on their citizens. Rather, they allowed the followers of all religions to freely profess and practise their own respective faiths. There might have been some

aberrations in between, but generally this tradition of religious tolerance prevailed. This age-old tradition was inherited by the country at the time of its independence on 15th August, 1947 and was embedded into its Constitution (in the form of secularism), which was adopted a little over two years later.

India is the home to the largest number of Hindus, and of the second largest number of Muslims, in the entire world. It is also home to millions of Buddhists and Christians. Besides, there are sizable numbers of followers of several other religions like Jainism, Sikhism, Judaism, etc. In the pluralistic and multi-religions society of India, religious tolerance and religious values have always had, and continue to have, a strong influence.

In all other South Asian countries surrounding India, one religion has an official or an otherwise privileged status, for example, Buddhism in Bhutan and Sri Lanka, Hinduism in Nepal, and Islam in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Maldives. In this South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) group of nations, India stands out as the only secular state having no state religion and no single officially patronized religion. Religion-state relations in this country are indeed unique in every sense of the term.

Unlike other SAARC nations, where it is mandated by law or convention that the head of the State must belong to a particular religion, that position in India can be occupied by any citizen irrespective of religion or caste. Despite the overwhelming predominance of Hindus in India, in sixty-one years of the post-Constitution era, the country has had four Presidents, three Vice-Presidents and a Prime Minister belonging to minority religions.

Whenever a head of the State or Government dies while occupying a position, his or her last rites are performed under the management of the Government. It is done with full State honours. However, this is invariably done in accordance with the rites of the religion of the deceased. On all such occasions, the Government and the official media arrange and broadcast all-religion prayers.

Unity in Diversity

There have been various judicial decisions wherein religious pluralism has been emphasized as the quintessence of the Indian society.

The Apex court's description of India as a mosaic representing a synthesis of different religions and cultures only put a seal of affirmation on what indeed has always been the ground reality in this country.

The law in the secular India of our times respects religious beliefs and practices. It ensures religious liberty but keeps it within internationally recognized limits. It prohibits abuse and misuse of religion and religious sensitivities and provides laws and statutory mechanisms for controlling and managing specific religious and religion-related affairs. On the whole, modern India remains a deeply religious country and spirituality continues to be an integral part of the social order. India's secular Constitution and constitutionally sanctioned legislation are, therefore, sensitive enough to this ground reality.

Secularism

Let us try and understand the concept of secularism as it exists in India. Secularism is a basic feature of the Indian Constitution, which cannot be changed even by the Parliament. There is no state religion and the state is prohibited against discrimination on the basis of religion. Secularism ensures that religion does not determine state policy. It insulates public policy-making from the influence of religion and, thereby, eliminates any bias or

discrimination that can creep into this process. Secularism is a very important aspect of the Indian way of life and governance. It has helped in promoting communal harmony and in keeping national integration at the forefront. Communal harmony can prevail only when you ensure equality of status among people and equal opportunity for everyone as conceived in the Constitution of India.

Notwithstanding the adoption of secularism, India has witnessed horrifying communal riots at times. In this context, it is commonly felt that secularism is the solution to such religious violence in India, especially with regard to conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. On the contrary, secularism is fiercely contested by a variety of groups.

It is important for us to know that, historically, notions of secularism and tolerance originated as solutions to problems related to the religious strife in the West. Therefore, it is important for religious studies to develop an understanding of those problems that secularism and tolerance can solve, and whether or not these are also the problems Indian society faces with regard to religious pluralism.

Religious Conversion in India

Religious conversion has become a controversial issue in contemporary India. One side of the debate on religious conversion is represented by those who claim that conversion and proselytization are basic and inalienable human rights. The other side claims that the conversion activities of Christianity and Islam violate the integrity of Hindu traditions and disturb the social peace in a plural India. The two positions on conversion are considered to be incompatible and are governed by feelings of mutual incomprehension, unease and resentment.

This problem has to be addressed in a very proactive and forceful way to protect the secular character of the country. While conversion might be an integral part of a few religions, the Government must ensure that nobody changes his/her religion under threat or inducement. At the same time, anyone wishing to change his/her religion voluntarily must get the full protection of the State. Such steps would only ensure the sanctity of our pluralism and strengthen Indian society.

1.2.1 LINGUISTIC AND REGIONAL 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, Maithili, Manipuri, Nepali, Santhali and Sindhi were recognized later. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had remarked, 'The makers of the Constitution were wise in 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 Bhasha Research and Publication Centre (BRPC), Vadodara conducted the People's Linguistic Survey of India. The survey was completed in 2013 and it identified 860 Indian languages, with Arunachal Pradesh having the maximum. At least 300 languages are no longer traceable since independence, according to the survey. As many as 40 crore people in India can communicate in Hindi. It was found that Hindi as a language has gained popularity more than English and anything communicated in the language which is popular among the masses, would have a better reception.

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'.

Table 1.1 provides a list of 22 languages arranged in descending order of speakers' strength. Originally among the scheduled languages, the speakers of Hindi had the highest percentage (41.03 per cent). 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.

Table 1.1 *Scheduled Languages in Descending Order of Speakers' Strength, 2001*

Sl. No.	Language	Percentage of Total Population
1	Hindi	41.03
2	Bengali	8.11
3	Telugu	7.19
4	Marathi	6.99
5	Tamil	5.91
6	Urdu	5.01
7	Gujarati	4.48
8	Kannada	3.69
9	Malayalam	3.21
10	Oriya	3.21
11	Punjabi	2.83
12	Assamese	1.28
13	Maithili	1.18
14	Santhali	0.63
15	Kashmiri	0.54
16	Nepali	0.28
17	Sindhi	0.25
18	Konkani	0.24
19	Dogri	0.22

20	Manipuri	0.14
21	Bodo	0.13
22	Sanskrit	N

Source: 2010-11, Office of The Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

* Excludes figures of Paomata, Mao-Maram and Purul sub-divisions of Senapati district of Manipur for 2001.

** The percentage of speakers of each language for 2001 has been worked out on the total population of India excluding the population of Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul sub-divisions of Senapati district of Manipur due to cancellation of census results. N - Stands for negligible.

Though all the languages spoken in India are different from each other, yet they may be grouped into four linguistic families; the Austric Family (Nishada), Dravidian family (Dravida), Sino-Tibetan Family (Kirata) and Indo-European Family (Arya). The languages of the Austric family are spoken by tribal people in Meghalaya, Andaman and Nicobar Islands 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 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-Aryan (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 protection and encouragement 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. The Telengana issue in 2009 is an important example where there was a demand for a separate linguistic province. Telangana was formed in 2014. 'Language also becomes a diversifying factor when it is used as a vote bank for politics'. (Kamraj Nadar) Slogans like 'Tamil Nadu for Tamils', 'Maharashtra for Marathis', 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 and a national language generates national sentiment.

1.2.2   Ethnic and Racial Diversity

Racial classification is a system used to categorize humans into large and distinct groups. This research is conducted through various characteristics such as phenotypic characteristics, genetic features, heredity, geography, ethnicity and social status.

The basic characteristics or distinguishing traits used to classify people into various races are:

- Looks or phenotypic characteristics or physical features and body type
- Region or place of origin
- Ethnic as well as social status in society

Fig. 1.1 Different Physical Traits of People Belonging to Different Ethnic/Racial Backgrounds

From the following sections, it will be clear why racial classification is important and how it is used for various studies targeting humans. But the main point of emphasis here is that though racial classification was introduced to make human identification easier, in today's world racial classification has taken the form of racism itself. Certain discriminatory behavioural practices have been associated with this deeply political concept. Some political parties have been found guilty of using racial classification as a weapon to influence people for and against each other. This affects the material lives of people and in a way reinforces the negative side of 'races' into their minds. The beauty and true meaning of the classification thus gets ignored. We as citizens of India should try to ignore the use of such classifications and put them to appropriate use rather than getting politically influenced and deceived.

Benefits of Racial Classification

Racial classification was introduced way back in the early years of the twentieth century as a tool for taxonomic studies of human beings. This includes use of identifying features to ease certain researches. Benefits or utility areas of racial classification include the following:

- **Forensic studies:** Like identification of skeletons from bone structures. This is known as forensic anthropology.
- **Biomedical research:** A way of relating diseases to phenotypic and genotypic characteristics.

- **Medicine and gene therapy research:** Finding new treatment methods, targeted towards a particular population or race.
- **Psychology and sociology studies** also use racial categories to understand and relate to human behaviour.
- In some countries, profiling of suspects is done on basis of their race.

Benefits of racial classification are tremendous and foreseeing the same our early thinkers had evolved this into a way of categorizing humans. Over time certain social and economic factors have crept in and changed the concept of racial classification. As a result, racism can be seen, observed and overheard today. At times, racial biases interfere with our thoughts and create discrimination between various races. This mindset tends to gives more power, better status and better recognition to some races while marginalising others and regarding them as inferior or backward. This has even been the cause of tragic instances like slavery, genocide and discrimination. This kind of thought process must be discouraged. Only then can we fully understand the significance of racial classification.

Racial Classification

From the above discussion, the basis of forming races can be understood. But it should be made clear that while physical characteristics influence a person's belongingness to a race, there is no possibility of strict boundaries to any of the races. Hundreds of phenotypic characteristics have been identified as distinguishing features but it is not always possible to have a strict group of set of characteristics in one race. Intermixing is possible and very much noticed. Thus, while identifying and listing features, the majority rule applies. There might be groups of people with characteristics of more than one race. In earlier times when caste system was followed almost all over the country, strict rigidities pertaining to non-allowance of inter-caste marriages helped maintain purity of genes. That is the phenotypic characters in one racial group could be easily related to the generalised characters of the group. With time as more and more people are entering into inter-caste marriages, the rigidity of determining physical characteristics is fading. Racial classification is based on secondary physical features. Here, a brief difference between primary and secondary characteristics is to be understood. All human beings share some similar basic structural forms and features which include the following:

- Upright posture
- Gripping fingers
- No bony eyebrows
- Well developed and well formed feet
- Separate and prominent features like chin and forehead
- Complex brain activity

All the above contribute to primary features and are common to all human beings. Apart from these, descriptive features, like those used to describe the above or the personality and nature of a human being comprise secondary features. These include skin colour, shape of eyes, neck formation and height, broad or narrow shoulders etc. Therefore, uniformity in primary characters and variations in secondary characters is important.

The variation in secondary features is attributed to wide-ranging environmental, social and other related factors.
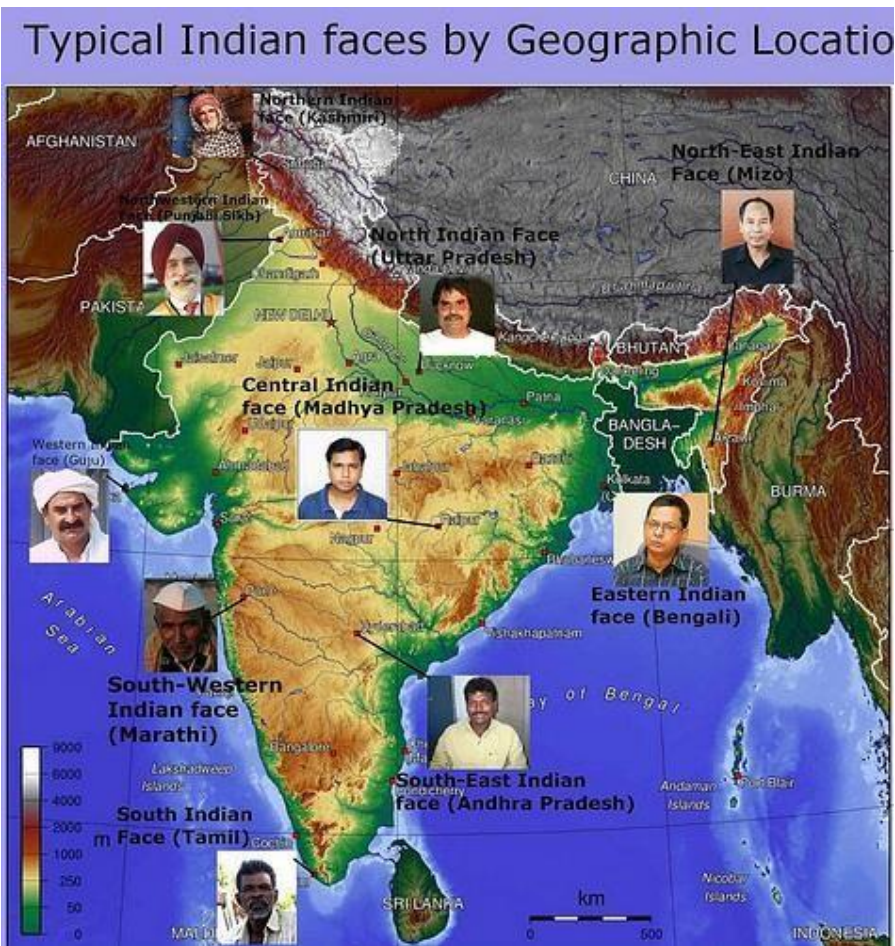
Fig. 1.2 Typical Indian Faces by Geographic Location

Polycentric Racial Classification

As per the polycentric theory of evolution (by Franz Weidenreich of USA), the development of modern man took place in separate regions, independent of the existence of others. This separate development led to varying characteristics. As per the same theory, man in these regions evolved from the influence of the oldest inhabitants of those regions. They adapted themselves in such a manner that they were able to adopt certain characteristics of their ancestors thereby making a mark for themselves as a distinct race. Different regions of development became the different centres of the origin of races. This is why the origin of race is considered to be polycentric. As per this approach of classification, four major races have been observed. Table 1.2 provides a brief study of the varied races and their identifying features.

Table 1.2 *Four Major Races as per the Polycentric Racial Classification System*

S. No	Name of the Race	Identifying features
1	**Caucasoid or Eropoid** Non-Indian origin	Skin: White Hair (medium to thin) of lighter shades Head – broad to long Nose- medium to long Non projecting jaw No pragnathism seen High forehead Thin to medium lips Medium to tall in height and Eye colour is usually light.
2	**Negroid** Non-Indian origin	Skin- dark brown to black Hair- woolly and frizzy usually black Prominent head formation with protruding features especially ear lobes; Round head; Broad to flat nose with low or broad bridge; Marked prognathism observed; Thick and averted lips; Either very short or tall in stature; Eye colour compliments hair (dark brown to black).
3	**Australoid** Usually found in South and Central India	Skin- medium to dark brown in colour; Curly and wavy hair which are medium to dark brown in colour; Narrow and long head; Broad nose with marked root and thick tip; Medium to pronounced pragnathism observed; Short face and receding chin; Fuller lips and medium to dark brown eyes; Eye brow ridges are broad and prominent; Height is medium to tall.
4	**Mongoloids** Usually inhabitants of North-Eastern parts of India.	Skin- yellow or yellow brown; Hair-brown to brown black; Straight and coarse hair; Predominantly broad head; Medium to broad nose with low or medium nose bridge; Face is medium to very broad with broad and flat cheek bones; Lips are thin; Eyes are brown to dark brown; Eyes shape is oblique with narrow opening slit; Short to medium height;

Table 1.2 gives an account of four major races identified as per the polycentric racial classification system. Alongside the name of the races, a brief list of identifying feature has also been given.

Monocentric Racial Classification

Monocentric classification was given by Henri Victor, G. Olivier (France), Francis Howell (USA), Kenneth Oakley (Britain), and V P Yakimov of USSR. The founders of this classification had a view that all human beings originated in a single region and developed into various races only after spreading out into various regions. This is how the different races came into existence, as per the anthropologists with monocentric view.

Racial Classification in India

India has witnessed immigration on a large scale. Each group entering into the country has come with the specific traits of its own racial group. This has added to the diversity of characteristics observed in our land. Several studies and attempts have tried to acknowledge the actual characteristics of the dominant racial groups in India. Several European anthropologists have made attempts to classify the same. Some important ones have been mentioned in the Table 1.3. Although no two classifications are the same, some similarities nevertheless can be seen. In terms of feasibility and application, each of the mentioned classification have considerable weight age.

Table 1.3 *Varied Classifications to Identify Racial Groups Prominent in India Along with their Year of Attempt*

S. No	Name of classification	Year of attempt
1	Risley's Classification	1951
2	Giufrida-Ruggari's Classification	1921
3	Haddon's Classification	1924
4	V. Eickstedt's Classification	1934, Improvised in 1952
5	Guha's Classification (most widely used)	1935, Improvised in 1937
6	Roy's classification	1938
7	Sarkar's Classification	1958, Improvised in 1961
8	Biasutti's Classification	1959
9	Roginskij and Levin Classification	1963
10	Buchi's Classification	1968
11	Bowles's Classification	1977

Racial Groups in India

Based on Guha's classification, which is the most widely used racial classification system, racial distribution chart of the people of India has been made. This distribution has been depicted in Figure 1.3.
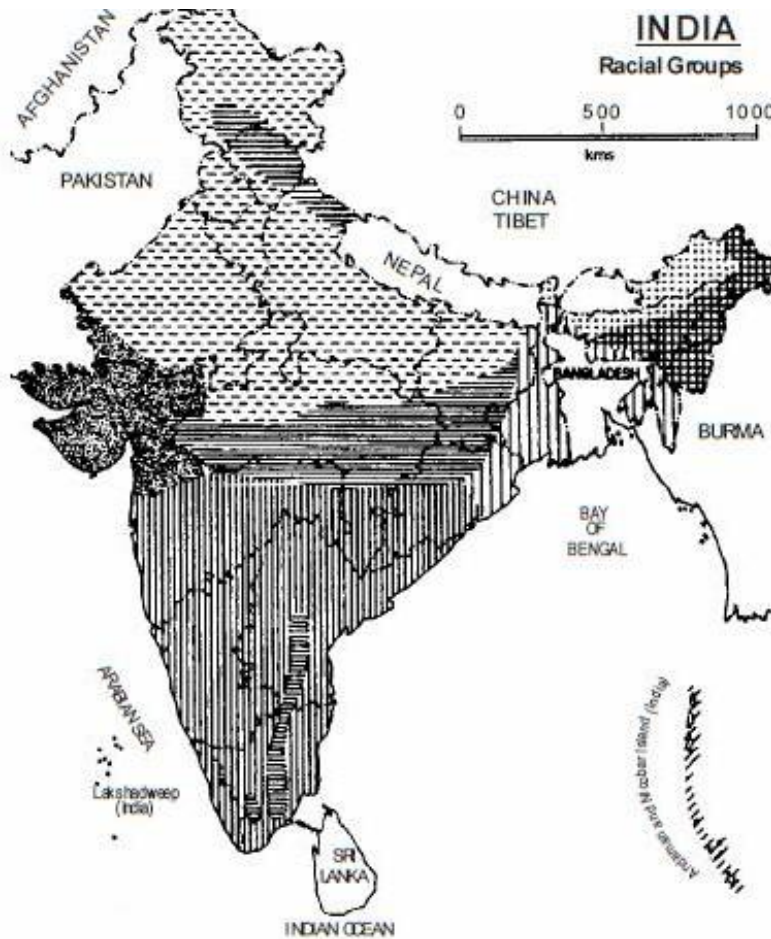

Fig. 1.3 *A Pictorial Representation of Racial Domination in Different Regions*

Races depicted in figure 1.3 include the following:

- **Negritos**
- **Proto-Austroloids**
- **Paleo-mediterraneons** (long head, medium to tall in height, long and narrow face structure, vertical forehead, brow to dark brown skin colour)
- **Alpo-dineries** (light to medium colour of skin, round head, hook nose and acrocephalic)
- **Orientos** (broad, head, broad face and medium stature)
- Mediterraneons
- **Proto-nordics** (pure to near blond, long head, fair skin, delicate nose, prominent chin and blue eyes)
- **Tibeto-Mongoloids**
- **Paleo-Mongoloids**

The above mentioned list describes the list of races found prominently in India. The names in the list are evident that the races have been formed upon intermixing of the major groups. Thus, giving rise to new races or ethnic groups describing features of each of the above and other minority groups or races found in India is out of the scope of this book, however, Figure 1.2 gives the reader an idea about the major races prominent in Indian society. In the following paragraphs, you will study in brief regarding the major contributing races of Indian society.

Negritos: It is the oldest race or oldest type of human beings who survived changing times. Studies prove, Negritos were the first inhabitants of South East Asian regions. Some hints or traces of the presence of Negritos can be observed in the hilly regions especially in the hills of South India, Assam, Burma and Bengal.

Proto-Austroloids are known to belong to the West. Prominent in chota Nagpur are the tribes of South India and some parts of Central India. These are sometimes referred to as the original inhabitants of the country and, thus, given the name 'Adi-Basis'.

Mongloid: Mongoloid races or Mongoloid element is prevalent in groups of people belonging to Northern as well as North Eastern parts of India especially the Himalayan range. Even Eastern Bengal has seen prevalence of racial groups with Mongoloid elements. Other than this, Mongolian features have also been observed in the tribes of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

Other prominent racial elements visible in Indian society are:

Paleo-Mediterranean, traces from historical excavations have revealed their early arrival in India. The features or traits similar to Paleo-Mediterraneans have been seen among people of North India.

1.3 Caste

The Indian caste system is characterized by several unique identifying features and at the same time, each caste has specific features or characteristics that distinguish it from other castes. Though the caste system came about for functional purposes and to clearly demarcate division of labour for orderly functioning of society, through the ages it degenerated into an exploitative and discriminatory tool and became a social evil plaguing Indian society. Through its long existence since 1500 BCE, the caste system came to acquire the following characteristics:

- **Caste system is hereditary:** The caste of an individual is strictly determined by his heredity, i.e. the caste into which he or she is born. It is not within individual power to change one's caste status.

- **Caste system is endogamous:** Marriages are allowed only within the caste and inter-caste marriages are strictly prohibited. Marrying below one's caste is considered a sin.

- **Caste system is hierarchal:** The Indian caste system is governed by a rigid hierarchy and a system of superiority and subordination. As per this hierarchy, Brahmins enjoy the highest status followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the lowermost are the Shudras.

- **The caste determines the occupations:** The occupation of a person is governed by his caste, and as mentioned earlier, it is also hereditary. As defined in the Vedas and the Upanishads, each caste has a specific role and thus, members of each caste have to pursue jobs or occupations specified for their caste. Defined occupations include the following34

:

  (i) Brahmins: Teaching, guiding, conducting religious rituals and so forth.
  (ii) Kshatriyas: Governance, warfare, management and so forth.
  (iii) Vaishyas: Trading, service category jobs and craftsmanship.
  (iv) Shudras: Menial jobs like shoemaking, cleaning, gardening and so forth.

A farmer's son will become a farmer, a warrior's son has to be a warrior and a sweeper's son can never aspire to a higher vocation.

- **Untouchability is practised:** The caste system is marked by extensive discrimination and exploitation. The Shudras and the untouchables were not only exploited economically and physically, but socially too, they were shunned upon. Even if the shadow of a low caste person fell on a Brahmin, the latter was said to have been polluted. Lower castes are also not allowed to use common worship places or educational institutions or even the cremation grounds of those used by the higher castes of society.

- **Caste System is reinforced by religious beliefs:** The Hindu religious beliefs play a significant role in reinforcing the caste system. The religious texts and scriptures assign a superior role to the Brahmins and so, reverence and awe is accorded to them. This religious support has helped in maintaining the rigidity of the caste system.

However, it needs to be clarified here that these characteristics were present in the caste system as it was traditionally practised ages ago. Through centuries of social reform, advent of modern education, era of urbanization and industrialization and improvement in literacy and awareness levels of the people, the traditional caste system has been largely marginalized. It is no longer followed rigidly and people are free to choose the occupation for which they are best suited. The hierarchical lines are also greatly blurred. A Brahmin priest still gets respect and reverence and a sweeper is still shunned but a professional, say a corporate employee may belong to any caste and his social status will be determined by his inter-personal skills, his quality of work and other factors and not by his caste.

Regional Diversity of the Caste System

Though caste system is mostly associated with Hindus and Hinduism but it is also a fact that it has been found to be practised in various other regions as well. Caste-based divisions have also been observed among Buddhists, Muslims and Christians. Similarly, existence of the caste system is not confined to India alone; the same is followed in other parts of the world like Yemen, some parts of Spain (in Christian colonies) and among Buddhists of Japan.

But even within India, there are wide regional variations as far as the practice of caste system is concerned. According to the well known sociologist, Babul Roy, 'The Caste system of even a small region is extraordinarily complex. For instance, a local caste-group claiming to be Kshatriya may actually be a tribal or near-tribal group or of a low caste which acquired political power in the recent past. The local trading caste might be similar in its culture to one in the 'Shudra' category and far removed from the Sanskritized Vaishya of the Varna system. Castes included in the Shudra category might not only be servants, but landowners wielding a lot of power over everyone including local Brahmins.' The text book model of the four-fold classification of Varna in some sense is found in the North – the heartland of Hindu India, whereas in Dravidian south, the castes are mainly grouped into the opposition of Brahmins and non-Brahmins. So is the case in Himalayan states and in eastern and extreme north-eastern India. In south, there are no genuine Kshatriyas and Vaishyas; these two categories only refer to the local castes that have recently claimed Kshatriya or Vaishya status by virtue of their occupation and marital tradition, and the claim is seriously disputed by others.

Roy's research found that in Bengal, the different merchant castes did not constitute a single group nor did they enjoy equivalent status. In Assam, the Kalita is an influential cultivating caste, unique to this region. The Ganak (astrologer) enjoys higher social position in Assam then in Bengal. Regional variations have also been observed in the degree of caste-based discrimination and disabilities. The rigidity with which the caste system is followed also varies across regions.

Caste and Relationships

In the ancient and medieval times when the caste system was rigidly followed, a person's caste determined the nature of his social interactions and relationships with other members of society.

The three major areas of life that were dominated by caste were marriage, meals and religious worship. Marriage outside one's caste lines was strictly forbidden. In fact, most people married within their own sub-caste. Regarding meals, offering food to a Brahmin was considered a privilege and a pious act. Anyone could accept food from a person of lower caste. If an untouchable dared to draw water from a public well, the water was considered to be polluted and nobody else could use it. For religious worship, the priestly class or Brahmins conducted religious rituals and services. This included occasions like marriages, births, festivals, as well as funerals.

The Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas had full rights to worship, but Shudras were not allowed to enter temples or offer sacrifices to the gods. The untouchables were barred entirely from worshipping. In some regions, untouchables had to hold their footwear in their hands when a Brahmin passed and in certain other regions, they had to lie face down at a distance.

Caste and Occupations

As has been mentioned in earlier sections, the caste system is essentially a functional categorization that was devised to ease division of labour. It placed people in occupational groups according to the status of their caste in the hierarchy.

India's caste system has four main classes (also called *varnas*) based on birth and profession. In descending order, the classes are as follows:

- **Brahmin:** Engaged in scriptural education and teaching, essential for the continuation of knowledge and conducting religious rituals and sacrifices. Other castes considered Brahmins to be the medium between them and the gods.
- **Kshatriya:** Engaged in all forms of public service, including administration, maintenance of law and order and defence.
- **Vaishya:** Engaged in commercial activities as traders and businessmen.
- **Shudra:** Engaged in semi-skilled, unskilled and menial jobs.

Though originally conceived to provide orderliness to society, the problem with this system was that under its rigidity, the lower castes were prevented from aspiring to climb higher, and, therefore, economic progress was restricted.

1.4 Economic

We will now discuss the socio-economic classification or classes existing in Indian society. The rural population forms a dominant part of Indian society and, thus, we will begin our discussion of class hierarchy with this section of society.

In rural areas or Indian villages, a clear demarcation between class and caste is not present. Caste and class categories arise from one another and overlap. Caste decides a person's occupation and based on the same his economic position and social status or rank in society are determined. 'Brahmins' constitute the highest caste and are involved in professions like performing rituals, marriages, priesthood and teaching. All this brings them a great deal of respect and high social status. Similarly 'Vaishyas' in villages are destined to be involved in jobs like those of craftsmen, traders or small scale farmers. Accordingly, their economic growth remains restricted and their status in society also remains lower than Brahmins and Kshatriyas. The latter are large landholders, zamindars and leaders of the village. The lowest caste or 'Shudras' take jobs of landless and hired labourers or perform other menial jobs and are accordingly given meagre social status and recognition. Here, the caste affects job type, which in turn decides the economic and social status of a being.

As in villages, in towns too social status is dependent on economic assets and power of the individual but occupation is not a limiting factor. In urban areas, caste system is not given as much importance as it is given in rural areas. With education and urbanization, mindsets of people have become radical, rational and less orthodox. Thus, cross-cutting of caste boundaries has become a common trend in cities. In cities, based on the economic status of an individual, he is ascribed to upper, middle or lower class.

Let us first define social class. A social class can be defined as a group of people who fall under common brackets of wealth, power or influence in society and receive similar respect or social status. For analysing a person's social class, his economic status

is the first thing that is judged. Following aspects are ascertained when considering economic well-being of a person:

- Income group
- Economic stability
- Spending pattern
- Economic security

In addition to these, other factors also contribute to the process of determining the social class of an individual. These include the following:

- Hard facts or practical information like income, expenditure, level and type of expenditure and other aspects are measured. This is called the objective method of evaluating the social class.
- Knowing and understanding a person's thinking, ideologies and lifestyle values form under the subjective method of evaluating the social class.
- The indirect approach when people are asked to comment about other people's living and expenditure habits is called the reputational method of evaluating social class.

Using the above-mentioned three processes, the following social classes have been recognized in Indian society:

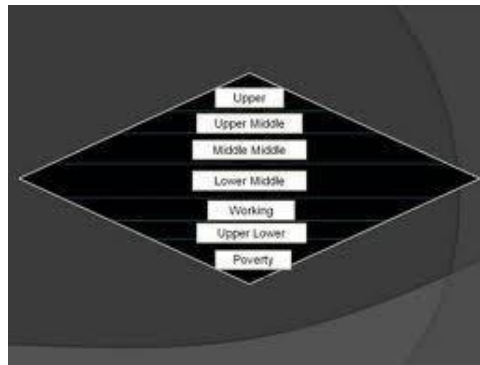*Fig. 1.4 Types of Social Classes Recognized in India Society*

Upper Class

These people are owners of a major chunk of the nation's wealth and belong to one of following professional categories:

- Owners of large lands or real estates
- Large scale industrialists
- Descendants of former royal families or 'gharanas'
- Company CEOs or top executives
- Established and prosperous entrepreneurs

Following are the characteristics of the Indian upper class:

- Within this group also, some stratification is noticed. The first category would include those who own inherited wealth and property and may belong to well-established business families or royal dynasties. The second category would comprise those first generation wealth-earners like top executives or industrialists who have hard-earned wealth as against inherited wealth. It must be mentioned here that the former category may have some families that belong to the upper class but may have lost the bulk of their wealth for some reason or the other. There are instances of families that struggle to maintain their erstwhile opulent lifestyle while in reality, they are deep in debt. It is, thus, clear that class is not always indicative of economic well-being.

- However, by and large, upper class people belong to the exceptionally rich group of people or those with more money and resources than their spending needs.

- In India, 10 million people belong to the category of upper class, i.e., 1 per cent of the population.

- Such people often indulge in conspicuous consumption by spending on highly expensive luxury goods and services.

Middle Class

Next in hierarchy is the middle class or what is sometimes called the sandwich class. An easy definition of people belonging to this class would be:

Members of the middle class are wealthier than the lower class and poorer than the upper class. So, being on the middle position of the social ladder, the middle class people constitute the thick central layer. Many millions of Indians fall in this category.

According to the findings of Credit Suisse, a global financial services firm based in Zurich, from its Global Wealth Report 2015, India accounts for 3 per cent of the global middle class with 23.6 million people. The Credit Suisse report has estimated the middle class on the basis of their wealth rather than their income The report estimated that 664 million adults belonged to the global middle class in 2015, or 14 per cent of the adult population. India has 23.6 million adults who qualified as middle class in 2015. There is no clear definition of middle class in India, but the latest definition dramatically lowers the number of Indians considered to fall in that category.

The Indian middle class is characterized by the following:

- The Indian middle class people mostly occupy medium to high level jobs (white collar respectable jobs) and aspire to rise higher in their organizations.

- Here again, two groups are observed. There is the lower middle class (low income group) which has members who occupy low to medium paying jobs like secretaries, clerks, small business owners, managers and so forth. There

is also the upper middle class that includes people with high professional status, better education and more income. They include CEOs, lawyers, businessmen, doctors and others.

- The lower and upper middle class together constitute half of the Indian population.
- Middle class people have sufficient resources to satisfy their needs and desires. Their basic needs of housing, food, good healthcare and education are looked after by their economic means. Overall, they lead decent lives.

Working Class

Another important social class is the working class. This class basically includes people in blue-collared jobs like labourers, carpenters, technicians, plumbers, factory workers and others. They are the skilled working class people.

The characteristics of the working class are:

- The skills required for blue-collared jobs are relatively easy to acquire. There is considerable lateral movement among this class as a mason may easily acquire the skills of a tile layer and upgrade his position and income.
- Non-skilled and less educated members of this class have job options of becoming care takers, drivers, maids, waiters and others.
- There is no or negligible scope of career enhancement for members of this caste and their economic and social status remains almost the same throughout their life.
- They have minimal or elementary educational background and, thus, cannot aspire to get better paying jobs. This restricts their economic growth.

Lower Class

- Poverty, unemployment, deprivation and non-fulfilment of daily needs are the identifying features of this group of people. A large chunk; almost half of the population in India belongs to this category, which is a shameful reality.
- These people have minimal or no education and, thus, take up jobs like rag picking, cleaning, sweeping, begging, becoming bonded labourers and so forth. Their income is not fixed and is rarely sufficient to even fulfil basic needs of clothing, shelter, food and medical aid.
- Given this economic condition, for members of the lower class, obtaining vocational training or education remains an unattainable dream. This further poses a barrier to their growth.

- Many belonging to this group often get frustrated and take the path of crime and illegal activities or drug abuse.

Upper Middle Class

- In the recent past, India has seen the phenomenon of the fast growing upper middle class. Those who do not fit in the upper class but possess more resources than the middle class come under this group. By commanding more resources than the middle class, we mean that these people have sufficient economic strength to avail all basic needs, enjoy some if not all luxuries and also keep aside a good amount as their savings.

- Savings is an important activity for such people. They save to complement their income and also to secure their future.
- With good education and high ambitions, these people aspire to attain not only better salary levels but also dream of emulating the lifestyle of members of the upper class.

1.5 MEANING OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY

India is a land of diversities. It consists of varied landscapes, seasons, races, religions, languages as well as cultures. The main source behind this unity is elusive and it cannot be easily identified. The unity can only be felt, but it is beyond any kind of analysis. In his book, *Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru presents a very sensitive and fascinating account of his search for the unity at the root of India's amazing diversity.

India's cultural progress can be compared with a moving river, which originates from the Himalayas and merges in the sea. It passes through forests and wastelands, as well as orchards and farms, villages and cities. The river absorbs the waters from its tributaries as well as its streams, its environment changes; still it basically remains the same. Indian culture also shows an identical combination of unity as well as diversity, continuity as well as change. In the due course of her long history, India has witnessed many changes, faced various aggressions, accommodated numerous cultural groups and assimilated elements from diverse sources. However, despite all this, the continuity and the basic theme never broke.

In the excavation at the site of the Indus Valley Civilization (3000–1800 BC) many art forms were discovered. During these excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro, a statue of a man in meditation was found, this statue hinted at the fact that yoga was practiced in those days as well. Also was found a clay seal of deity, which was quite similar to Lord Shiva. The bangles, beads and other ornaments. found during the excavations are similar to the ones available in our shops today. Recent research shows that the Indus Valley's influence got extended towards various regions of northern and western India. The people of the Indus Valley had close contacts with the people of the Dravidian civilization. The Dravidian civilization thrived in southern India long time before the Aryans arrived.

During 2000 to 1600 BC, a section of the Aryan family, popularly known as the Indo-Aryans, migrated to India. They brought the following customs with them when they came:

- The usage of Sanskrit language
- A religion based on sacrifice
- A ritual honouring of deities symbolizing the elemental forces of nature. These symbols were as follows:
  - Indra, the God of rain and thunder
  - Agni, the God of fire
  - Varuna, the lord of the seas, rivers and seasons

Hymns addressed to the above-mentioned deities were collected in the four 'Vedas'. The oldest of the 'Vedas' is the Rig Veda (1500–1200 BC). The Rig Veda describes the quest for finding the ultimate supreme reality, which underlies all diversity. This quest was reinforced in the discussions of the 'Upanishads' (900–600 BC). The Vedic poetry is marked by lofty ideas, literary beauty and a movement from external ritual to inwards experience.

In the sixth century BC, two religions emerged in India outside the Vedic tradition. These religions were Buddhism and Jainism. The Buddha's personality and his emphasis on love, compassion and harmony, deeply influenced the Indian thought and culture. However, Buddhism as an organized religion found huge recognition even outside India. Jainism, which was founded by Mahavira, emphasized on truth and non-violence and it even made huge contributions towards Indian art as well as philosophy.

Alexander of Macedon crossed the Indus River in 326 BC, but he went back soon after. His invasion persuaded Indian culture to initiate relation with the Greco–Roman world. Six years later, Chandragupta Maurya united the scattered empires of India under one centralized empire, with their capital at Pataliputra, which is modern Patna in Bihar. Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka, who ruled from 273 to 237 BC got hugely affected by the horrors of the Kalinga war and became an ardent Buddhist. He inscribed the message of compassion and gentleness on rocks and polished stone columns.

From 185–149 BC, kings of the Shunga dynasty ruled over India. They were orthodox Hindus. But Buddhism, got strong Buddhist revival under the rule of the Kushana king, Kanishka. He ruled in the north–western India during AD 78 to 101. A lot of Buddhist art and sculpture of the Gandhara style (strongly influenced by Greco-Roman art) developed during this period. Mathura, which is situated towards the south of Delhi, was another centre of Buddhist art in those days.

During the Gupta Empire (AD 319–540), the golden age of ancient Indian culture, Pataliputra became the centre of political as well as cultural activity. Gupta kings (Chandragupta and Skandagupta) were poets as well as musicians. Kalidasa, the greatest poet among all Sanskrit poets and dramatists, lived during Chandragupta's reign. Popular artistic images of that period are the Buddha images at Sarnath and the frescos painted in the caves of Ajanta in western India. Political fragmentation led to the decline of the Gupta Empire. King Harsha of Kannauj tried to control this disintegration but after his death in AD 648, many independent kingdoms arose in Kashmir, Bengal, Orissa and other regions of southern as well as northern India.

The post-eighth century period was very rich culturally. The Pallavas, Rashtrakutas and Cholas of South India built wonderful temples at Mamallapuram, Ellora and Tanjore, respectively. The Sun Temple of Konark in Orissa and the Shiva Temple at Khajuraho in Central India were constructed in AD eleventh century. In all these temples, carving is an essential part of the architecture. In literature, Sanskrit was gradually being replaced by regional languages like Bengali, Marathi, Hindi and Punjabi. In the south, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada had developed their literary traditions. The Vedanta philosophies of Shankara (eighth century) and Ramanuja (twelfth century) wielded a deep influence. There was a conventional trend in social and religious life. The caste system, which was originally based on disparities of aptitude, became severe and unfair.

The establishment of Muslim rule at the end of the twelfth century was a crossroad in India's cultural history. A preliminary period of conflict was expected due to the radical differences between Hinduism and Islam. But a progression of accommodation started soon after. One of its meeting points was Sufi mysticism, which was philosophically close to Vedanta. A lot of Muslim kings, at Delhi and in regional kingdoms, were patrons of Indian literature and music and they contributed in Hindu festivals. The trend towards integration was strengthened after the foundation of the Mughal Empire in AD 1526. The base of a national culture was firmly laid under the wise and liberal rule of Akbar (1556–1605). The Hindu and Muslim traditions, while they were keeping their individualness, influenced each other deeply.

In the beginning, the Islamic architecture in India was very sombre and simple. But soon the builders started accepting decorative elements, which included the lotus motif from the Hindu temples. Similarly, a lot of temples that were built in medieval India had Islamic features, like the dome, the arch and screens carved of stone and marble. The Indian architecture reached its peak during the reign of Shah Jahan (1627–1658), who built masterpieces such as the Taj Mahal at Agra.

Painting also had a blend of the two traditions. Motivated by Bihzad and other great Persian artists, painters at the Mughal court made a new style of miniature paintings. By combining this style with subtlety and religious and aesthetic spirit of India, painters of the Rajput School created their own distinctive contributions.

Medieval India's greatest geniuses were Amir Khusro. He was a poet, musician as well as linguist. He invented many musical instruments, which are played in classical Indian music. Khusrao's poetic experiments led to the emergence of Urdu, which is one

of the major Indian languages. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were quite full of devotional poetry in local languages. During this time, Guru Nanak founded Sikhism; Tulsidas wrote the Hindi version of the Ramayana, which is recited and read by a lot of people. Saint Kabir, whose poetry rose above all sectional differences, also preached his universal religion of tolerance and love during this period.

During the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire declined quit swiftly. In the mean time, the Europeans were making inroads into India. The Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, and finally the British entered India during this century. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, British authority was firmly established in India. The introduction of English education and the Christian missionaries in India had a profound impact on the cultural and religious life of people. The new capital, Calcutta, became the centre of Western thought. It was followed by Bombay and Madras. Some of the educated Indians, in their enthusiasm for European culture, turned away from their own legacy. Nevertheless, a reform movement known as Brahmo Samaj, which was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, guided in a spiritual and cultural renaissance. The leaders of the Brahmo Samaj emphasized on the deeper truths of Hindu and Muslim scriptures while accepting progressive elements from Western thought. One more source of inspiration was Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836–1886), who was thought of different religions as paths leading towards the same goal. His famous disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), is known as India's first spiritual and cultural ambassador towards the Europe and America.

Though politically subjugated during the British rule, India retained its cultural dominance and dynamism. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, political, historical and social ideas were taken up by novelists and dramatists. Ghalib, the great Urdu poet, and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the Bengali novelist, made huge inputs to the Indian literature. A lot of outstanding musicians, some of whom were Muslims, kept alive the tradition of classical Indian music. The Kathak School of dance was developed at Lucknow and Jaipur. Later, there was a period of renaissance in Indian painting, which was initiated by Rabindranath Tagore and other artists of the Bengal School. There were a lot of plays based on mythological as well as modern subjects that were staged at Calcutta and Bombay.

In the meantime, the movement for India's independence was gaining strength under the leadership of the Indian National Congress. The sense of patriotism that, thus, got stimulated got reflected in the literature of that era. When, after his gallant struggle against racism in South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi returned to India, he opened a new chapter in India's life and history. He touched every aspect of the Indian life, although his major concern was social and political issues. Some of the greatest writers of that period were Bharati in Tamil; Premchand in Hindi, Sharat Chandra in Bengali and others. They expressed Gandhian ideals in their poems and novels.

In the twentieth century, the Indian culture was dominated by the towering genius of Rabindranath Tagore. He was one of the greatest poet–philosophers in world history. Tagore left the imprint of his personality and worked on every field of creativity, i.e., poetry, music, drama, novel, short story and even painting. He was the first non-Western writer who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He was the founder of the international university, Vishwa Bharati, at Santiniketan and he even introduced many modern concepts in education. A whole generation of Indian writers and artists was swayed by Tagore. So, Gandhi and Tagore are correctly regarded as the makers of modern India.

On 15th August 1947, India became independent. According to Jawaharlal Nehru 'India had kept her tryst with destiny after a century of struggle. The partition of the country on the basis of religion; the bloodshed that followed; and the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi were painful shocks. But the trauma was gradually overcome and India began building her future as a sovereign country taking her rightful place in the comity of nations.'

Since, independence, India has made huge progress in many areas of culture. In almost all the major twenty three languages of India (including English), artistic literature of the utmost order has been created. Few of the outstanding artists/performers who have enriched Indian culture in recent decades are as follows:

- Filmmakers, like the late Satyajit Ray, Guru Dutt and Gulzar
- Musicians, like Pandit Ravi Shankar, Lata Mangeshkar and A.R. Rehman
- Painters, like the late M.F. Hussain
- Sportspersons, like Vijay Amritraj, Prakash Padukone, Milkha Singh, Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev and Sachin Tendulkar
- Writers, like R.K. Narayan, Gulzar Anita Desai and Gurcharan Das
- Academicians, like C. Ramanujan, Amartya Sen and Jagdish Bhagwati

The long and glorious history of India has been characteristic of assimilation and adjustment. It has confronted and overcome many periods of crisis and uncertainty. Today, there are new challenges, which are demanding new adjustments. Now, we are in the age of science and technology and rapid advancements in this field. A fundamental question facing us is how to preserve whatever is of enduring worth in the spiritual and aesthetic tradition that has stood the test of five thousand years? How to reinterpret that tradition in the contemporary context? These questions have to be dealt with by the thinkers, leaders, artists and writers of India. Their ability to handle this task in a balanced and imaginative manner will determine the future course of the Indian culture.

The cultural unity of India stands and has stood on the vast diversities prevalent in our cultural practices and beliefs.

1.6 TYPES OF UNITY

The Indian society is not a uniform one. It is a natural corollary to the fact that diversity is a part of the Indian way of life. From region to region, diversity in the social structure is prominently seen. The North Indian social traditions and customs are markedly different from those of eastern India. Similarly, there is a great difference between the traditions and culture of South and West India. The element of mystery associated with India essentially originates from within this diversity.

As per the provisional figures of the Census 2011, India has more than 17 per cent of the world's population. It is a big country with a huge population and would be overtaking China in a few years time to become the most populated country in the world. With these kinds of numbers, there is bound to be a great deal of diversity amongst the people. Moreover, the population lives in various social, ecological, geographic and economic conditions that add to the diversity prevalent in the country.

As seen earlier, India has a 5000 year old history. It has a cultural heritage that has been handed down from very ancient times. But the cultural heritage has had to travel through various stages, ages and ups and downs to reach the present era. It has had to face the challenge of various diversities through its journey. Diversities can be of

numerous types and is seen in different spheres. They run through various races, religions, castes, tribes, languages, social customs, cultural beliefs, political thoughts, ideologies and so forth.

The diversity factor notwithstanding, there is a common thread of cultural unity running through the Indians. Over centuries, various cultural traits from various parts of the country and from outside got assimilated and synthesized.

Unity in diversity is best seen in India in a maze of seemingly disparate people. Diversity in India can be observed and analysed from various perspectives. We can be dispassionately seen as communal (Hindu, Muslim, etc.), casteist (Brahmins, Kshatriya, Shudra) and regional (Odia, Telugu, Marathi, Punjabi, etc.). Our cultural orientation is also in sync with our communal, casteist or regional identity. Thus, our cultural diversity stems from our diverse identities.

Our diversities can also be analysed through the same prism of communalism, casteism and regionalism. Communalism is the ugliest of them all. It ignites such base feelings at times that people do not hesitate to resort to violence on the most irrational of issues. Hindu–Muslim riots are so irrational but they continue to raise their ugly heads at regular intervals. Religion is a private affair and when it comes out of the private domain, as it does in India, the fault lines become bolder. India's cultural and social unity is strong yet fragile. Whenever communal passions rise to extreme heights and result in catastrophes (like the massacre of the Sikhs in 1984; the Godhra and post-Godhra violence and killings of 2002; the violent clashes between the Christians and the tribal in Kandhamal district of Odisha in 2009 and others), the idea of India suffers immensely. All the religions have contributed tremendously to Indian culture and it is in our best interest to keep all religious groups together. Their common existence is the best advertisement of the idea of India.

Though caste rigidity of earlier times has given way to flexibility to a large extent, casteism still remains a divisive force in our country. Our modern history is replete with instances of exploitation and humiliation of the lower caste people. The basic quality of humanism was and is missing in our society as a large section of our population was and is considered to be 'untouchable'. A human being is untouchable because he was born in a particular family or caste! What could be worse than this kind of discrimination and characterization? Our unity would always be fragile because the fissures that exist between castes are still very deep and we have to do a lot more to redress the situation. However, over the last few years, caste is increasingly becoming a vehicle for identity politics. While the degree of exploitation of the lower castes has come down, they have themselves become more assertive of their low caste. Caste rigidity has definitely come down. It is not uncommon to come across families of the so-called incompatible castes entering into matrimonial alliances. Modern education and western outlook have brought about this positive change in the rigid caste system.

Regionalism implies the affinity with one's region. While we all are Indians, we also are north Indian or south Indian. Going down further, we also are Tamils or Gujaratis. However, regionalism here does not merely refer to the geography. It includes our linguistic plurality also. Linguistic diversity is like a double-edged sword. It enriches our culture through the sheer number of languages spoken and written. It has resulted in great literature with masterpieces coming out from all the leading languages. At the same time, linguistic plurality has resulted in creating fissures amongst our people. It is not uncommon to see one linguistic group close ranks so strongly that the others get excluded. It is not uncommon to hear pejorative terms like 'Telugu lobby', 'Bengali lobby' and so

forth working for the interests of their linguistic groups. Even the most educated and the most accomplished people fall prey to such base instincts. This is not to suggest that one should not feel proud of one's mother tongue or take steps to protect one's language. The problem lies when people in power become biased towards people of their language and ignores the merits of others.

Having seen the diversity in Indian society from the perspectives of communalism, casteism and regionalism, we can briefly discuss some cultural diversities emanating from our distinct backgrounds.

India has a rich cultural and artistic heritage. The fact that India was invaded and ruled by various kings down the ages is already reflected by its impact on Indian culture.

Music exists on this land since the existence of humanity. It was probably inspired by the whistles of the wind, the splash of the waves, the chirping of the birds or may be the falling of the rain. Our musicians designed many musical instruments and innumerable ragas. They then developed different notes for different times, seasons and feelings. Different regions developed their own style of singing.

One of the powerful attractions of India and a great cultural showcase is the colourful and diversified attire of its people. The silk sarees, brightly mirrored cholis (blouses), colourful lehangas (long skirts) and the traditional salwar-kameez have fascinated the visitors to our country over the centuries. Though a majority of the Indian women wear these traditional costumes, the men in India can be found in more conventional western clothing. Men from all regions in India wear shirts and trousers. However, men in villages are still more comfortable in their traditional attire like the dhoti, lungi, cotton vest or Khadi dress. Indian dressing styles have many variations, both in the form of religion and region, and one is likely to witness a plethora of colours, textures and styles in garments.

Indian dance is a mix of nritta (the rhythmic elements) 'nritya' (the combination of rhythm with expression) and natya (the dramatic element). Most of the Indian dances take their themes from India's rich mythology and folk legends. All Hindu gods and goddesses like Vishnu and Lakshmi, Rama and Sita, Krishna and Radha are all depicted in classical Indian dances. Each dance form draws encouragement from stories that depict the life, ethics and beliefs of the Indian people. The genesis of the contemporary styles of classical Indian dances can be attributed to the period between AD 1300 and 1400 India proposes a lot of classical dance forms, each of which can be traced to different sections of the country. Each form describes the culture of a specific region or a group of people belonging to a particular place (Table 1.4).

Table 1.4 Dance Forms Describing the Culture of a Place

Dance	Place
Bharatnatyam	Tamil Nadu
Odissi	Orissa
Kathak	Uttar Pradesh
Kathakali	Kerala
Kuchipudi	Andhra Pradesh
Manipuri	Manipur
Mohiniyattam	Kerala

There is a multiplicity of festivals in India. Most of the festivals owe their origin to legends, gods and goddesses arising out of mythology. There are as many festivals as the number of days in a year. Fun, colour, gaiety, enthusiasm, feasts and a variety of prayers and rituals characterize the festivals of our country. Some important festivals are Deepawali or Diwali, Krishna Janmashtami, Onam, Pongal, Ramzan Id, Rath Yatra, Baisakhi, Easter, Ganesha Chaturthi, Holi, Raksha Bandhan, Ram Navami, Christmas, Good Friday, Makar Sankranti, Muharram, Shivratri and Durga Puja.

Cultural Unity in India

Despite the numerous diversities in our cultural life and the extent of cultural pluralism in India, we do adhere to certain common national ethos and notions. There is definitely an 'Indian culture' that permeates our existence howsoever diverse we may be at an individual or group level. We respect the same traditions and heritage; we celebrate the same festivals; and we share similar food habits.

Some important questions that arise are what bring about the cultural unity among Indians despite the plethora of diversities existing in our society? Is the unity maintained administratively or it comes from within our society? What is the role of religion in forging this cultural unity?

The answers to these three questions are not easy to find. Firstly, the reason or reasons for the cultural unity among Indians, despite the plethora of diversities, is/are not easy to pinpoint. Thus, the first question remains unanswered even though the readers are free to do their own research and come to certain conclusive findings.

However, with regard to the second question, we can say with reasonable correctness that the unity has not been brought about administratively. Rather, it has come from within the Indian society. This is so because cultural unity in India is more than skin deep. People genuinely share a common culture that is symbolized by festivals, art, rituals, and others which are similar. These things cannot be brought about through administration or external directions. Rather, cultural unity emerges from the depths of our society. While the administrative reasons could be there, like the modern and progressive constitution; the integration of princely states with the nation; the promotion of Hindi as the national language; would only be a modern day phenomenon. This gives rise to some further queries like how can we explain the cultural unity that prevailed hundreds of years earlier? Or was there no such unity in those times and it is a recent phenomenon, i.e., something which was observed only after the beginning of the freedom movement in the nineteenth century?

In the context of these sub-queries, it would suffice to say that it would be incorrect to hold the view that cultural unity is a thing of the recent past. Centuries ago, even though there was no political state called India; the people residing in the sub-continent had certain common cultural traits. Though the various territories were often at war with each other, the people of these territories were generally a large homogeneous group with shared values and ideals. They celebrated festivals like Diwali and Rath Yatra with devotion and fanfare. With the advent of the Muslim rulers, the cultural unity amongst the Hindu population got stronger in the face of foreign aggression. However, there were many benevolent Muslim and Mughal rulers, like Akbar, who made all religious groups feel safe and secure. Such rulers promoted the cultures of different religious groups and tried to create a national culture.

The third question as to what role religion has played in forging this unity is complex and demands a careful analysis. We have earlier talked about communalism and the danger that it poses to unity in our country. People get swayed away by irrational religious issues and become violent towards people belonging to a different religion. Thus, it would appear that religion would have a negative bearing upon cultural unity. But it is not so simplistic. Admittedly, communal passions are ignited by religion and unity gets torn apart. But religion also has a tremendous contribution towards the growth of cultural unity in India. One reason for this could be the overwhelming majority of the Hindu population.

More than 80 per cent of the Indians are Hindus. This huge number covers all kinds of people belonging to different regions, castes, linguistics, classes and so forth. The Hindu religion acts as an umbrella for Marathi Brahminss, Kashmiri Pandits; Orissi farmers, Telugu entrepreneurs; Bihari zamindars, etc. They are all from diverse backgrounds and enjoy different levels of social status but they all are united by the bond of Hinduism. They celebrate Hindu festivals together, like Holi, Diwali, Durga Puja, Ganesh Chaturthi and others. They practice similar customs and rituals during times of birth and death in the family. Thus, we see that a religion is playing the role of a unifier. Hinduism is promoting cultural unity among diverse groups.

A related question that arises is that if one religion promotes unity amongst its followers, is it not promoting communalism? Is it not creating an adversarial position between different religions? Is it not true that Hindu unity might make the smaller religions feel insecure? These are all very difficult questions to answer. They may be true or at least partly true. But that does not take away from the role of religion – especially the religion followed by a vast majority of the population – in fostering cultural unity.

A peculiar thing about this issue is that Hinduism is not seen merely as a religion. It has been accepted by many as a way of life. Even many non-Hindus have accepted this view. If that is so, then we can say that Hinduism has played a very big role in bringing together the disparate groups of people in our country. Thus, on balance, we can say that religion does play a significant role in unifying people and making them share their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Another important facet about India is its caste system. We have discussed in the previous section that casteism has been generally a divisive force in our country. However, there is another school of sociological thought which believes that the caste system has also provided a common cultural ideology to Indians. This school believes that though caste has created inter-caste conflicts and the social problems emanating from untouchability, it is also true that the *jajmani* system had succeeded in maintaining harmony and cooperation among various castes in the rural areas of our country. Jajmani system or *vetti-chakiri* is a Indian social caste system and its interaction between upper castes and lower castes. It was an economic system in which lower castes have only obligations or duties to render free services to the upper caste community.

In recent years, the numerically large castes – who had been socially exploited for centuries – have realized their potential in the political arena and have started flexing their muscles. They have forged a caste unity among like groups and have attained political power. This is both good and bad for cultural unity. While it is good for the groups that have come together, it is bad in the overall social scenario as it puts some castes against the others.

Like in case of caste, there is an alternate school of thought in relation to languages. This school holds the view that language also contributes towards cultural unity because a national language binds the people together and preserves and protects the culture of a nation. This is true but does not address the issue of the effects of a plethora of languages as is the case in India.

The discussions in this and the previous section can be summarized by saying that though religion, caste and language have definitely created some problems in the Indian society, they also contain the idea of the unity of India within themselves.

1.7 SUMMARY

- Religious pluralism is usually used as a synonym for religious tolerance, although both the concepts have distinct meanings. Religious tolerance means that each person is entitled to his own set of religious beliefs without having to conform to some societal standard.

- Some theologists argue that God created all the religions of the world in order to speak to people in ways that most appeal or relate to their circumstances in life.

- The concept of religious pluralism is tricky, especially when subjected to scientific and logical analysis. Most religions contradict the position accepted in another religion and this leaves the pluralists caught in the middle of some arguments.

- Buddhism was found in India. Gautam Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, kept his teachings limited to *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*. Buddhism is an ethical arrangement, a way of life that leads towards a particular goal.

- Judaism is the oldest of the three great monotheistic religions of the world along with Islam and Christianity. It is the religion and way of life of the Jewish people.

- There have been various judicial decisions wherein religious pluralism has been emphasized as the quintessence of the Indian society.

- Secularism is a very important aspect of the Indian way of life and governance. It has helped in promoting communal harmony and in keeping national integration at the forefront. Communal harmony can prevail only when you ensure equality of status among people and equal opportunity for everyone as conceived in the Constitution of India.

- Religious conversion has become a controversial issue in contemporary India. One side of the debate on religious conversion is represented by those who claim that conversion and proselytization are basic and inalienable human rights.

- 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 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.

- Racial classification was introduced way back in the early years of the twentieth century as a tool for taxonomic studies of human beings.

- As per the polycentric theory of evolution (by Franz Weidenreich of USA), the development of modern man took place in separate regions, independent of the existence of others. This separate development led to varying characteristics. As per the same theory, man in these regions evolved from the influence of the oldest inhabitants of those regions.

- Monocentric classification was given by Henri Victor, G. Olivier (France), Francis Howell (USA), Kenneth Oakley (Britain), and VP Yakimov of USSR. The founders of this classification had a view that all human beings originated in a single region and developed into various races only after spreading out into various regions.

- The caste system is marked by extensive discrimination and exploitation. The Shudras and the untouchables were not only exploited economically and physically, but socially too, they were shunned upon.

- The three major areas of life that were dominated by caste were marriage, meals and religious worship. Marriage outside one's caste lines was strictly forbidden. In fact, most people married within their own sub-caste.

- The rural population forms a dominant part of Indian society and thus, we will begin our discussion of class hierarchy with this section of society.

- India is a land of diversities. It consists of varied landscapes, seasons, races, religions, languages as well as cultures. The main source behind this unity is elusive and it cannot be easily identified.

- In the excavation at the site of the Indus Valley Civilization (3000–1,800 BC) many art forms were discovered. During these excavations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro, a statue of a man in meditation was found, this statue hinted at the fact that yoga was practiced in those days as well.

- Though politically subjugated during the British rule, India retained its cultural dominance and dynamism. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, political, historical and social ideas were taken up by novelists and dramatists.

- The cultural unity of India stands and has stood on the vast diversities prevalent in our cultural practices and beliefs.

- The Indian society is not a uniform one. It is a natural corollary to the fact that diversity is a part of the Indian way of life. From region to region, diversity in the social structure is prominently seen.

- The diversity factor notwithstanding, there is a common thread of cultural unity running through the Indians. Over centuries, various cultural traits from various parts of the country and from outside got assimilated and synthesized.

- India has a rich cultural and artistic heritage. The fact that India was invaded and ruled by various kings down the ages is already reflected by its impact on Indian culture.

- Despite the numerous diversities in our cultural life and the extent of cultural pluralism in India, we do adhere to certain common national ethos and notions. There is definitely an 'Indian culture' that permeates our existence howsoever diverse we may be at an individual or group level. We respect the same traditions and heritage; we celebrate the same festivals; and we share similar food habits.

1.8 KEY TERMS

- **Jajmani:** It is a system in which each caste group within a village is expected to give certain standardized services to the families of other castes.
- **Zamindar:** This term refers to a landowner who is also a collector of land revenue.
- **Sankranti:** It refers to the transition of the Sun into *Makara rashi* on its celestial path.
- **Secularism:** It refers to the principle of separation of the state from religious institutions.
- **Corollary:** It is a proposition that follows from (and is often appended to) one already proved.

1.9   ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism are some of the popular religions followed in India.

2. The most important tenet of Judaism is that there is only one eternal God who desires that all people must do what is just and merciful.

3. The distinguishing traits used to classify people into various races are as follows:
    - Looks or phenotypic characteristics or physical features and body type
    - Region or place of origin
    - Ethnic as well as social status in society

4. The benefits of racial classification are as follows:
    - Forensic studies: Like identification of skeletons from bone structures. This is known as forensic anthropology.
    - Biomedical research: A way of relating diseases to phenotypic and genotypic characteristics.
    - Medicine and gene therapy research: Finding new treatment methods, targeted towards a particular population or race.
    - Psychology and sociology studies also use racial categories to understand and relate to human behaviour.
    - In some countries, profiling of suspects is done on basis of their race.

5. When Indo-Aryans migrated to India, they brought the following customs with them:
    - The usage of Sanskrit language
    - A religion based on sacrifice
    - A ritual honouring of deities symbolizing the elemental forces of nature.

    These symbols were as follows:

    o Indra, the God of rain and thunder

    o Agni, the God of fire

    o Varuna, the lord of the seas, rivers and seasons

6. Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj.

7. Cultural unity lies in the depth of the Indian society. The existence of various religions, cultures and castes together is an apt example of the existence of cultural unity in India.

8. One school of thought holds the view that language has also contributed towards cultural unity of India because a national language binds the people together and preserves and protects the culture of a nation.

1.10   QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the existence of various religions in India.

2. Mention the salient features of the Indian caste system.

3. Write short notes on the following:

    (a) Regionalism (b) Casteism (c) Communalism.

Long-Answer Questions

1. 'Religious pluralism is usually used as a synonym for religious tolerance.' Explain the statement.

2. Discuss the existence of linguistic and regional diversity in India.

3. Analyse the concept of 'unity in diversity' with reference to India.

4. Discuss how religion is responsible for preserving cultural unity in India. Do you agree with this idea? Give reasons for your views.

1.11   FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 THE STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF INDIAN SOCIETY I

Structure

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The structure and composition of society is a very important concept of social science and has been discussed in great detail by numerous social scientists. While some scholars believe that it is the set of rules that bind a society together, others view it as the interplay amongst various members of the society. It all gives a definite and tangible structure to the society.

Drawing from such varied viewpoints, it would suffice to say that the structure and composition of a society is the sum total of the relationships between human beings existing in that society. These relationships are well-established and accepted. For example, the relationship between a man and a woman as husband and wife is governed by the marital practice and leadership of the family.

Thus, if the man heads the family, it is said to be a patriarchal society where the husband is bestowed with greater rights and powers by the norms of that society.

India is widely known as a land of villages and these villages cumulatively constitute the Indian rural society.

As per the provisional figures of the Census 2011, about 69 per cent of India's population stays in rural areas spread across the country. This is a huge number and very critical statistical information. The rural society of India is very much backward. Its backwardness is due to the several problems that haunt the rural society. The process of change in rural society is quite slow and so the problems are more or less age old.

The urban society is also an important aspect of Indian society. With its growing proportion, it is set to dominate sociological studies in future. The urban society consists of the towns and cities. It has a specific way of life. But, even the urban society has

many social problems such as congestion of population and acute shortage of facilities and resources.

In this unit, you will study about the rural and urban landscape of India. The unit also deals in depth with topics such as the existence of tribes, Dalits and women and minorities in India.

2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- List the characteristics of Indian villages and urban cities
- Differentiate between the rural-urban landscape
- Discuss the classification of tribes in India

2.2 VILLAGES IN INDIA

Villages are an integral part of the Indian society. The rural landscape of India is dotted with lakhs of villages. There are around 649,481 villages in India, according to Census 2011, the most authoritative source of information about administrative boundaries in the country. Of these, 593,615 are inhabited. Thus, the expansion of the village community in India is enormous. The sociological study of the communities of India reveals the true nature of the rural society in India.

Common characteristics of Indian villages are as follows:

- **Isolation and self-sufficiency:** Villages in India were, and still are to some extent, isolated from the rest of the country. They have a self-sufficient existence wherein they grow their own food, build their own houses and carry out social relationships amongst each other within the village.

However, post-independence, things have changed quite a lot. With the growth of means of transport and communication and the laying of an extensive road and rail network, the distance or barrier between villages and towns has been removed. Political and economic factors have also contributed towards diminishing the isolation of Indian villages. Economic development has made the people of the villages more mobile and they are moving out to urban centres in search of new employment opportunities. Their dependence on agriculture has come down significantly. Political parties have also made villages the epicentre of their political activities. Many people from rural areas have actively joined politics and made frequent visits to their party headquarters in the cities.

- **Peace and simplicity:** Indian villages are generally peaceful wherein people reside together with a spirit of togetherness and have a fellow feeling. An atmosphere of calm and simplicity prevails in our villages. The hectic pace of activities prevalent in our cities is conspicuously absent from the villages. Life moves along at a slow but fulfilling pace. The villagers lead a simple life characterized by frugal eating, simple dressing, small houses and so forth.

- **Conservatism:** Indian villagers are very conservative in their thoughts and deeds. They do not accept change very easily. They prefer to hold on to their old customs and traditions.

- **Poverty and illiteracy:** The poverty and illiteracy that exists in our villages on a massive scale is one of the most depressing features of our villages and also a very shameful aspect of modern India. Despite independence and rapid economic progress, we have failed in eradicating poverty and illiteracy from our villages. The per-capita income might have increased and the literacy rate might have climbed up, but the fact remains that the levels are abysmal by global standards. The per-capita income is so low that people at the bottom of the pyramid cannot think beyond their survival. Similarly, the quality of education is so poor that the literacy rates mean nothing significant.

  Economic growth of the last twenty years has not percolated down to our villages. The availability of educational and health facilities is very poor. Lack of money forces them to depend upon local facilities, which are of very poor quality. Ignorance does not enable them to take advantage of modern techniques of agriculture. Thus, they continue to remain in poverty. A vicious cycle of poverty–ignorance–poverty engulfs the life of our villagers.

- **Local self-government:** In ancient India, villages were models of self-governance and autonomy. They used to run their own administration and judiciary through the institution of Panchayat. The British altered the scenario by resorting to a highly centralized form of governance. However, post-independence, efforts were started to revive the institutions of local self-governance under Gandhiji's vision of Gram Swaraj. This culminated in the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act in 1993 by which the Panchayati Raj institutions were strengthened. Thus, a prominent feature of the Indian villages has been restored with constitutional backing.

Indian Rural Society: Changing Nature of the Village Community

Though change occurs more in urban society, it also does take place in the rural society. The village community undergoes change but at a gradual pace. The changing nature of the village community in India can be understood from the following perspectives:

- **Economic system:** The village economy in India has changed. It no longer remains an agricultural economy alone. The educated youth do not stay back in the villages anymore. Rather, they move out to cities in search of employment. Besides, the farmers have started to employ modern tools and technology in their fields to get more out of their land. Thus, the mechanization of agriculture is also taking place. Rural banking has encouraged the village community to put their savings in the bank and also to avail credit facilities. They use this credit in starting small business ventures and also in meeting some emergency expenses in the family.

- **Political system:** The revival of the Panchayati Raj system in Indian villages through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993 has truly changed the political landscape in rural India. Political consciousness and participation in electoral politics has increased tremendously. People have become very aware about local, state and national politics. However, the negative impact of this change is that people have become divided on lines of political affiliations. The fellow feeling of our village community has been adversely affected.

- **Marriage system:** Indian villages have slowly accepted the reality of love marriages. Even though majority of marriages in our villages are arranged by family elders, a few love marriages are indeed taking place. Besides, even in arranged marriages, the boys and girls are being asked to give their views or consent. Child marriage has been almost abolished.

- **Family system:** The joint family system is no more the dominant family type in Indian villages. Nuclear families have also started coming up. Though the extended family stays in close vicinity, the nuclear families have been established through separate hearths. Girls in the family are being educated and their status in rural society has improved.

- **Caste system:** The caste system used to be followed very rigidly in Indian villages in earlier times. However, modern education, social and administrative reforms, impact of modernization and other factors have resulted in reducing its hold over the village community. The restrictions imposed by the caste system on choice of occupations, choice of spouses, mode of living and so forth have weakened.

From the above, it is clear that Indian villages are not static but undergoing changes.

2.3 TOWNS AND CITIES

Just as it was difficult to define a village or rural society, it is equally difficult to define the word 'urban' or the terms 'urban society' and 'urban community'. An urban area may be an area that has a very high density of population. But density of population alone cannot be the defining feature. While the distinction between 'rural' and 'urban' is comprehensible to everybody, it is not easy to define the terms scientifically.

Generally speaking, an urban community is large, dense and heterogeneous. It can also be said to be predominantly occupied in the industrial and service sectors. Urban growth is a recent phenomenon and till 1850, the urban population in the world was estimated to be only 2 per cent of the global population.

Ancient India did have a few cities, which were important centres of pilgrimage and governance. Ayodhya, Pataliputra, Magadha and others were some of these cities. Notwithstanding this fact, urbanization in India is also a recent phenomenon. Prior to independence, apart from the cities of ancient times, India had a few cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Delhi. The first three were important cities for the British rulers as they had ports, which facilitated trade and commerce. After Independence, with the advent of planned economic development, urbanization gathered pace in India. The reason for this was the Government's thrust on industrial growth and the resultant development of industrial towns. Thus, industrialization led to urbanization in independent India. Besides industrial towns and cities, urban areas have come up in the shape of state capitals, district headquarters and educational centres. Thus, while Rourkela (Orissa) and Bokaro (Jharkhand) are industrial towns, Bhubaneshwar (Orissa) and Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) are capital cities. Similarly, Pune and Kota are urban areas that are recognized as centres of educational excellence.

As per the provisional figures of Census 2011, the share of urban population in India has gone up to 31 per cent from 17 per cent in 1951. Thus, as stated earlier, urbanization has taken place in a major way after the independence of the country.

The census of India defines urban area as all places with a Municipality, Corporation, Cantonment Board, Notified town area committee, etc. and all other places satisfying the following criteria:

- Having a minimum population of 5,000
- At least 75 per cent of the male main workers being engaged in non-agricultural work
- Having a density of population of at least 400 per square kms.

The characteristics of urban society in India are as follows:

- **Anonymity:** Urban areas are large and have very high population. Besides, the communities do not reside in close proximity. In such circumstances, anonymity of individuals and urban communities becomes a way of life. Unlike villages, where everyone knows each other, people in towns and cities are very impersonal and know only very few people by name. Given the high population and the hectic pace of life in Indian cities and towns, it is not possible to know each other personally.

  Anonymity refers to loss of identity in a city teeming with millions. Many urbanites live in a social void or vacuum in which institutional norms are not effective in controlling or regulating their social behaviour. Although they are aware of the existence of many institutional organizations and many people around them, they do not feel a sense of belongingness to any one group or community. Socially, they are poor in the midst of plenty.

- **Social heterogeneity:** Compared to rural society, the urban society in India is far more heterogeneous. People from diverse backgrounds with great racial, cultural and educational variations live together in the cities and towns. The urban society in India is a melting pot for all cultures and traditions and people learn about each other in this setting. This society has thrived by recognizing and rewarding individual differences. The personal traits and the ideas of the members of the urban society are completely different from those of their rural counterparts.

- **Social distance:** Due to anonymity and heterogeneity, the urban dweller becomes lonely and stays removed from other persons. All social interactions are routine, mechanical and impersonal. There is no social cohesiveness between one another. Rather, there is a great deal of social distance amongst the members of the urban community.

- **Homelessness:** The housing problem in Indian cities is so acute that many people from the lower class of income do not get a roof above their heads. They spend their nights in railway stations, on footpaths or under the flyovers or bridges. This homelessness is a very disturbing feature of our urban society and is a violation of basic human rights. Even the middle class families do not get homes of their choice. They reside in small and badly located houses, which do not provide the children of such families with any space to play.

- **Class extremes:** Indian cities are characterized by inhabitants of all classes. The richest persons of the country like Mukesh Ambani, Sachin Tendulkar, Aamir Khan and other celebrities cohabit with the poorest of the poor in a city like Mumbai. Thus, urban society is replete with class extremities. Such extremities have their own problems and can create a sense of dejection in the minds of the poor people. Sometimes, this leads them to the door of crime in lure of easy money.

- **Hectic pace of life:** Life is very fast-paced and hectic in the urban areas and is completely different from the languid pace of rural life. People are always in a hurry to do their work so that they accomplish their targets and get their rewards. This endless run eventually affects their health and creates a great deal of tension in their personal lives.
- **Materialism:** The urban community of India is greatly focused upon material acquisitions and wealth accumulation. An individual's worth is expressed in terms of his material possessions. There is a lot of conspicuous consumption and an urban Indian feels happy to lead a luxurious lifestyle.
- **Secularism:** The urban community is more secular than its rural counterparts. Religious, caste and community feelings take a back seat as people are more concerned about working and earning a good livelihood. Interactions amongst people of different castes and communities at workplaces force them to adopt a more secular outlook.

2.4   Rural-Urban Linkages

While studying about the rural and urban society, it is imperative for us to know about the concepts of rural–urban continuum and rural–urban contrast. Briefly put, while the first analyses the similarities between rural and urban areas, the second does so about the differences.

Rural–urban continuum

Both rural and urban societies are part of the same human society and do share a lot of features of each other. There is no clear demarcation between the two. There is no sharp demarcation to tell where the city ends and the country begins. It is very difficult to actually distinguish between the two societies in the geographical realm. While theoretically we talk about the two societies, the dichotomy between the two is not based upon scientific principles.

Since, no concrete demarcation can be drawn between the 'rural' and the 'urban', sociologists take recourse to the concept of rural–urban continuum. The bottom line of the concept is that rural and urban societies do not exist in water tight compartments but do have a lot in common. They share lifestyles, value systems, traditional festivals and customs because they, ultimately, belong to the same society. The difference between them is usually of degree rather than of kind. They are not mutually exclusive.

The differences between them are getting further blurred with the advent of modernization and industrialization. Countries where these processes have become universal are good examples of similarities between rural and urban areas. Universal modern education, modern means of transportation, access to television and computers, and others aspects have radically changed the lifestyle in rural areas and have reduced the differences that were earlier visible between rural and urban areas. Countries like India still have huge differences between these two areas because of poverty and illiteracy continuing to dominate the rural landscape (Figure 2.1).

| Remote | Under developed village | Developed village | Fringe | Towns | Cities | Metropolis |

Fig. 2.1 The Rural–Urban Continuum

The extreme left depicts a remote village and the extreme right a metropolitan city. Such sharp differences do not usually exist between villages and cities and, in reality, rural and urban areas can exist at any point on the above line or continuum. Thus, there is no clear cut demarcation and the difference can be seen to be one of degree and not kind.

The fringe at the centre of the diagram is an interesting concept. It is also known as the rural–urban fringe. It is some sort of an overlapping geographical area between a city and a rural area. The cities have expanded and penetrated into rural areas. This is due to haphazard and unplanned growth of the cities. As one moves out of cities, one can see some residential colonies, a few factories, open sheds storing marble, timber or other construction material, automobile showrooms, petrol/diesel filling stations and so forth. In between these structures, one can see large tracts of agricultural fields. These areas are known as the rural–urban fringe. The fringe is defined as an area of mixed urban and rural land users between the point where city services cease to be available and the point where agricultural land users predominate.

Rural–urban contrast

There is a different school of thought among sociologists, which believes that a strong dichotomy exists between rural and urban areas. Notwithstanding the wide acceptability of the concept of rural–urban continuum, this group believes in the other concept, i.e., rural–urban contrast. This concept seeks to highlight the differences between the rural and urban areas and some of these differences are as follows:

- **Differences in social organization:** The systems of family and marriage are quite different. While joint families and arranged marriages are the order of the day in rural areas, urban areas see a lot of nuclear families and love marriages. Besides, the status of women is higher in urban areas.

- **Differences in social relationship and interaction:** Rural society exhibits greater cooperation and fellow feeling amongst individuals whereas; in urban areas people are very self-centred. While rural areas have personal relationships, urban areas have impersonal ones.

- **Homogeneity vis-à-vis heterogeneity:** Villages are small in size and, therefore, the inhabitants develop many identical characteristics due to physical proximity. Cities are much bigger in size and there is a great deal of heterogeneity.

- **A difference in economic life:** Agriculture is the predominant economic feature of the rural society. It results in low income and, consequently, low standard of living. On the other hand, there is a great deal of variety in the economic life of the urban society. Most people are engaged in industries or pursue their own business. The standard of living of the urban people is higher.

- **Differences in cultural life:** Rural culture is relatively static and is dominated by traditions and age-old customs. The urban areas have a dynamic culture and less room for superstitious beliefs.

- **Differences in social mobility:** Since hierarchy in the rural society is based upon the caste system in a country like India, social mobility in the rural society is almost impossible. In other countries, where hierarchy is based upon class, social mobility in rural areas is relatively easier. However, it is in the urban areas that social mobility does take place most easily as the people have the freedom to choose their occupation and move up in life.

- **Differences in social change:** The process of social change in rural areas is very slow. The reasons for this are predominance of traditional thinking and conservatism, less innovation and competition and a high degree of stability. On the contrary, urban areas see rapid social changes due to the influence of modernization and westernization.

- **Differences in social control:** In rural societies, primary institutions like the family, caste, neighbourhood and others exercise a great deal of control on the behaviour of individuals. In contrast, there is hardly any control on the members of the urban society. A man in an urban society is free from all primary controls.

2.5 SUMMARY

- The structure and composition of society is a very important concept of social science and has been discussed in great detail by numerous social scientists.

- India is widely known as a land of villages and these villages cumulatively constitute the Indian rural society.

- Villages in India were, and still are to some extent, isolated from the rest of the country.

- Indian villages are generally peaceful wherein people reside together with a spirit of togetherness and have a fellow feeling. An atmosphere of calm and simplicity prevails in our villages.

- The revival of the 'Panchayati Raj' system in Indian villages through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993 has truly changed the political landscape in rural India.

- The joint family system is no more the dominant family type in Indian villages. Nuclear families have also started coming up.

- Generally speaking, an urban community is large, dense and heterogeneous. It can also be said to be predominantly occupied in the industrial and service sectors. Urban growth is a recent phenomenon and till 1850, the urban population in the world was estimated to be only 2 per cent of the global population.

- Urban areas are large and have very high population. Besides, the communities do not reside in close proximity. In such circumstances, anonymity of individuals and urban communities becomes a way of life.

- Life is very fast-paced and hectic in the urban areas and is completely different from the languid pace of rural life.

- Both rural and urban societies are part of the same human society and do share a lot of features of each other.

- There is a different school of thought among sociologists, which believes that a strong dichotomy exists between rural and urban areas. Notwithstanding the wide acceptability of the concept of rural–urban continuum, this group believes in the other concept, i.e., rural–urban contrast.

- After a period of prolonged controversy, it was finally recorded in the Imperial Gazetteer of India that a tribe consists of the following:
  - o Collection of families bearing a common name
  - o Speaking a common dialect
  - o Occupying or professing to occupy a common territory

- Though tribal populations are found across the world, the largest concentration of tribal population is found in India. The tribes are the autochthonous people of the Indian peninsula and are believed to be the earliest settlers here.

- Various social scientists have classified tribal populations on the basis of their economic activity. Indian tribes have also been thus classified. The classical classification of Adam Smith and the more recent classification of Thurnwald and

Herskovits have been applied throughout the world in classifying tribes on the basis of their economic life.

- It is very important to study the status of women in India through a historical perspective. Finding answers to questions like when did women start losing their status is not easy. The place that women occupied in the medieval and in the colonial period is of paramount significance to comprehend why obstacles still remain in trying to bring about the upliftment of women.

- The status and condition of women in the later Vedic period significantly declined from what it was in the early Vedic period.

- At the time of the advent of the British rule in India, the status and position of Indian women was very low.

- The social reformers in the 19th century included Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and many others, who were in the forefront of the struggle for women emancipation. These reformers brought about many social reforms in the 19th and early 20th century.

- The movement for the liberation of women received a great stimulus in the rise of the nationalist movement in the 20th century. Gandhi's efforts led to the elevation of the women's status, involving them in the struggle for social progress and political independence.

- Independence of India heralded the introduction of laws relating to women. The framers of the Indian Constitution rightly felt that it was not sufficient to confer some minor benefits on women, but it was necessary to declare in unequivocal terms, their right to equality with men and various other rights which would help them in attaining an equal status or an equal footing with men.

- Sex ratio is defined as the number of females per 1,000 males in the population and is an important social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equity between males and females in a society at a given point of time.

- Dalit is a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable. Dalits are a mixed population, consisting of numerous social groups from all over India; they speak a variety of languages and practice a multitude of religions.

- The contemporary use of Dalit is centered on the idea that as a people they may have been broken by oppression but they survive and even thrive by finding meaning in the struggle of their existence towards human dignity.

- In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure, such as any involving leatherwork, butchering, or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses and waste.

- The government has been taking up the required legislative measures for the removal of untouchability. In pursuance of the provision of the Article 17 of the constitution practice of untouchability a punishable offence, the Parliament passed the Untouchability Offences Act, 1955.

2.6 KEY TERMS

- **Heterogeneity:** It is the quality of being diverse and not comparable in kind.
- **Panchayati Raj:** It is a system of governance in which 'gram' (village) panchayats are the basic units of administration.
- **Autochthonous:** It refers to indigenous rather than descended from migrants or colonists.
- **Gram Swaraj:** This refers to independent self-rule by villages.
- **Sati:** It was a former practice in India whereby a widow threw herself on to her husband's funeral pyre.

2.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Two characteristics of Indian villages are as follows:
   - Isolation and self-sufficiency
   - Peace and simplicity

2. The revival of the Panchayati Raj system in Indian villages through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993 has truly changed the political landscape in rural India. Political consciousness and participation in electoral politics has increased tremendously. People have become aware about local, state and national politics.

3. Two characteristics of urban Indian society are as follows:
   - Anonymity
   - Social heterogeneity

4. The fringe in the urban-rural continuum is defined as an area of mixed urban and rural land users between the point where city services cease to be available and the point where agricultural land users predominate.

5. The linguistic classification of Indian tribes has been divided into the following four major families:
   - Austro-Asiatic family
   - Tibeto-Chinese family
   - Indo-European family
   - Dravidian family

6. As per the British social anthropologist, Bailey, a tribe possesses organic unity, which is characterized by lack of interaction and absence of any hierarchical system.

7. The status and condition of women in the later Vedic period significantly declined from what it was in the early Vedic period. Ancestry began to be sketched through the male heir with sons becoming solitary heirs to family property. Women became entirely dependent on men, and were subjected to the authority of their male counterparts. Their education, religious rights and privileges were curbed. Customs such as purdah, sati, child marriage, polygamy and enforced widowhood crept in.

8. Certain legislations pertaining to women passed in Independent India are as follows:
   - The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983 – seeks to stop various types of crimes against women.
   - The Family Court Act, 1984 – seeks to provide justice to women who get involved in family disputes.
   - The Indecent Representation of Women prohibition Act, 1986 – prohibits the vulgar representation of women in the media such as newspaper, cinema, television and so on.
   - The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, 1993 – empowers women and seek to secure greater participation of women at all levels of the Panchayat System.

9. Dalit is a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable.

10. The offences of untouchability as per the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1976 are the following:
   - Committing any kind of social injustice, such as denying access to any shop, restaurant, public hospital, educational institution or any place of public entertainment.
   - Preventing a person, on the grounds of untouchability, from entering a place of worship and offering prayers, or from drinking water from a public well or spring.
   - Refusal to sell goods or render services to a person on the grounds of untouchability is an offence punishable with imprisonment for six months or a fine upto ' 500 or both.
   - Enforcing occupational, professional, trade disabilities in the matter of enjoyment of any benefit under a charitable trust and so forth.

2.8   QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Mention the common characteristics of Indian villages.

2. Write a short note on rural-urban continuum.

3. Prepare a short note on the classification of Indian tribes on the basis of culture.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the changing nature of the Indian rural society.

2. Explain the differentiating features of rural-urban landscape.

3. 'In India, tribe and caste are two important aspects of social organization.' Explain the statement.

4. Describe the classification of tribes in India on the basis of location and economic life.

5. Evaluate the position of women in the pre-colonial and post-colonial period in India.

6. Discuss the measures taken by the Indian government for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

2.9 FURTHER READING

Atal, Y. 2006. *Changing Indian Society*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

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UNIT 3 THE STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF INDIAN SOCIETY II

Structure

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The structure and composition of society is a very important concept of social science and has been discussed in great detail by numerous social scientists. While some scholars believe that it is the set of rules that bind a society together, others view it as the interplay amongst various members of the society. It all gives a definite and tangible structure to the society.

Drawing from such varied viewpoints, it would suffice to say that the structure and composition of a society is the sum total of the relationships between human beings existing in that society. These relationships are well-established and accepted. For example, the relationship between a man and a woman as husband and wife is governed by the marital practice and leadership of the family.

Thus, if the man heads the family, it is said to be a patriarchal society where the husband is bestowed with greater rights and powers by the norms of that society.

India is widely known as a land of villages and these villages cumulatively constitute the Indian rural society.

As per the provisional figures of the Census 2011, about 69 per cent of India's population stays in rural areas spread across the country. This is a huge number and very critical statistical information. The rural society of India is very much backward. Its backwardness is due to the several problems that haunt the rural society. The process of change in rural society is quite slow and so the problems are more or less age old.

The urban society is also an important aspect of Indian society. With its growing proportion, it is set to dominate sociological studies in future. The urban society consists of the towns and cities. It has a specific way of life. But, even the urban society has

many social problems such as congestion of population and acute shortage of facilities and resources.

In this unit, you will study about the rural and urban landscape of India. The unit also deals in depth with topics such as the existence of tribes, Dalits and women and minorities in India.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Differentiate between the rural-urban landscape
- Discuss the classification of tribes in India
- Analyse the position of women in the current scenario in India
- Interpret the position of Dalits, weaker sections and minorities in India

3.2 TRIBES

In India, tribe and caste are two important aspects of social organization. These two have many attributes in common. This similarity has led many scholars to identify these two as synonymous. As a result, many tribes have been described as castes and vice versa. After a period of prolonged controversy, it was finally recorded in the Imperial Gazetteer of India that a tribe consists of the following:

- Collection of families bearing a common name
- Speaking a common dialect
- Occupying or professing to occupy a common territory

The definition of caste gives an almost similar picture. A caste is also a collection of families bearing a common name, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and very often speaking the same dialect, though it is always endogamous.

While distinguishing a tribe from a caste in India, British social anthropologist, Bailey writes that an ideal tribe has always an organic unity, which is characterized by lack of interaction and absence of any hierarchical system. On the other hand, an ideal caste encourages interactions and always hankers after a position in the hierarchical system.

As regards tribe-caste differences, Surajit Sinha, author of *Anthropology in India*, has made a number of valuable observations. He holds that a tribe is isolated from other ethnic groups in ecology, demography, economy, politics and other social relations. This isolation generates a strong in-group sentiment. Internally, a tribe is characterized by homogeneity as there is always a lack of social stratification and role specialization other than by age, sex and kinship. On the contrary, a caste is a typically connected, stratified and heterogeneous group. Further, a caste is characterized by multi-ethnic residence in the local community, inter-ethnic participation in an economy involving occupational specialization by ethnic groups.

Classification of Tribes in India

Though tribal populations are found across the world, the largest concentration of tribal population is found in India. The tribes are the autochthonous people of the Indian peninsula and are believed to be the earliest settlers here. The tribal population in India, in absolute terms, is the highest in the world at 8.43 crore (provisional figures as given by the 2011 census). Tribal constitute about 7 per cent of India's total population and an overwhelming majority of them (about 92 per cent) reside in rural areas.

Classification on the basis of religion

The bulk of the tribal population regard themselves as Hindus. The influence of Hindu religion on the tribes is tremendous and almost 90 per cent of the tribal follow it in one form or the other. A significant number have embraced Christianity also. Buddhism, Jainism and Islam are also followed by a negligible proportion of the tribal population in India.

One important point to be noted in this context is that even those tribes that have embraced any of the above-mentioned religions, have not necessarily shed their local tribal beliefs and rituals. They continue to practice their traditional faith even while following their acquired faith.

When you view this phenomenon from the geographical perspective, it is seen that most of the tribes of southern India, western India and Central India have adopted Hinduism as their new religion. The tribes of north-eastern India, especially those residing in Nagaland and Mizoram, have adopted Christianity in a big way. In Central India, some major tribes of Chota Nagpur also follow Christianity. The tribes following Islam are few in number and are scattered all across the country. Buddhism among Indian tribes is represented mainly by some tribal groups of Arunachal Pradesh. The impact of Buddhism can also be seen in the Himalayan and Maharashtrian tribes.

Classification on the basis of location

Considering the widespread distribution of the tribes all across the country, it is necessary to group them in broad geographical regions. L.P. Vidyarthi (ICSSR, Survey of Research in Sociology and Anthropology, Volume 3) divided the tribal people into the following four major zones:

1. The Himalayan Region, comprising Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh (Bhot, Gujjar and Gaddi), Terai area of Uttar Pradesh (Tharus), Assam (Mizo, Garo, Khasi), Meghalaya, Nagaland (Nagas), Manipur (Mao) and Tripura (Tripuri) and having 11 per cent of the total tribal population of the country.

2. Middle India, comprising West Bengal, Bihar (Santhal, Munda, Oraon and Ho), Orissa (Khond and Gond) and having about 57 per cent of the Indian tribal population.

3. Western India, comprising Rajasthan (Bhil, Meena, Garasia), Madhya Pradesh (Bhil), Gujarat (Bhil, Dubla, Dhodia) and Maharashtra (Bhil, Koli, Mahadeo, Kokana) containing about 25 per cent of the Indian tribal population.

4. Southern India, comprising Andhra Pradesh (Gond, Koya, Konda, Dova), Karnataka (Naikada, Marati), Tamil Nadu (Irula, Toda), Kerala (Pulayan, Paniyan) and Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Andamanese, Nicobari) and containing about 7 per cent of the total tribal population.

Racial classification

L.P. Vidyarthi observes that the most acceptable racial classification of the Indian population is the one done by Guha in 1935. The latter had identified the following six main races with nine sub-types:

1. The Negrito
2. The Proto-Austroloid

3. The Mongoloid
   (i) Paleo Mongoloid
       (a) Long-headed
       (b) Broad-headed
   (ii) Tibeto Mongoloid
4. The Mediterranean
   (i) Paleo-mediterranenan
   (ii) Mediterranean
   (iii) Oriental type
5. The Western Brachycephals
   (i) Alpinoid
   (ii) Dinaric
   (iii) Armenoid
6. The Nordic

Against this backdrop of the overall racial composition of the people of India, Guha has classified the Indian tribal population into three major racial categories:

1. **The Proto-Austroloid:** This group is characterized by dark skin colour, sunken nose and lower forehead. The Munda (Chota Nagpur), the Oraon (Central India), the Ho (Bihar), the Gond (Madhya Pradesh) and the Khond (Orissa) tribes belong to this racial strain.

2. **The Mongoloid:** This group is characterized by light skin colour, broad head and face, low nose bridge and slanting eyes with a fold on the upper eye lid. These features are found amongst the Bhutiya (Central Himalayas), the Wanchu (Arunachal Pradesh), the Naga (Nagaland) and the Khasi (Meghalaya) tribes.

3. **The Negrito:** They are characterized by dark skin, wooly hair and broad lips. The Kadar (Kerala), the Onge (Little Andaman) and the Jarwa (Andaman Island) tribes have these features.

It is to be clarified that classification of the tribal or any population by racial type only means pre-dominance of certain hereditary physical traits among the concerned population. The same traits can be found in different degrees among other populations also. There is no pure race anywhere anymore and there is no correlation between racial strain and mental faculties.

Biraja Sankar Guha's (Director of Social Education Training Centre in Ranchi) classification of the Indian tribes in terms of race is not free from controversy. He questions the existence of the Negrito strain in India as a hereditary racial trait. He considers that mutation has played its role in the prevalence of Negrito features among some tribal population. There are also missing links in Guha's classification. The pastoral Todas of Nilgiri hills in the South are predominantly of Nordic type. Besides, the presence of Mediterranean features among the Indian tribes has been underplayed by Guha. Taking an overall view, it can be said that the population included in the list of Scheduled Tribes share in different proportion the same racial traits as the rest of the population of the country.

Linguistic classification

The linguistic classification of Indian tribes is very complex. According to a recent estimate, the tribal people speak 105 different languages and 225 subsidary languages. Since, languages are highly structured and reflect the social structure and values of a society, this linguistic diversity indicates the great variety found among the Indian tribes. However, for the purpose of clarity and understanding, the languages have been classified into the following four major families:

- **Austro-Asiatic family:** There are two branches of this family, namely, Mon-Khmer branch and Munda branch. Languages of the first branch are spoken by Khasi and Nicobari tribes. Languages of the Munda branch are spoken by the Santhali, Gondi and Kharia tribes.

- **Tibeto-Chinese family:** There are two sub-families of this type, namely, Siamese-Chinese sub-family and Tibeto-Burman sub-family. In the North-Eastern frontier of India, Khamti is one specimen of the Siamese-Chinese sub-family. The Tibeto-Burman sub-family is further sub-divided into several branches. Tribal people of Nagaland and Lepcha of Darjeeling speak variants of Tibeto-Burman languages.

- **Indo-European family:** Tribal languages such as Hajong and Bhili are included in this group.

- **Dravidian family:** Languages of this family are spoken by Yeruva of Mysore and Oraon of Chota Nagpur.

This broad classification does not necessarily mean that there is a high degree of understanding of languages among the speakers of different languages within the same language family. For example, the Nagas are divided in about fifty different language groups and quite often the speaker of one language variant does not understand the language spoken by another group.

Economic classification

Various social scientists have classified tribal populations on the basis of their economic activity. Indian tribes have also been, thus, classified. The classical classification of Adam Smith and the more recent classification of anthropologists, Thurnwald and Herskovits have been applied throughout the world in classifying tribes on the basis of their economic life. Though Indian scholars like Majumdar have also classified the tribal people of India on this basis; it is the scheme presented by Thurnwald that is taken as most acceptable. His classification is as follows:

- **Homogeneous communities of men as hunters and trappers, women as collectors**: The Kadar, the Chenchu, the Kharia and the Korwa are some of the tribes that fall under this economic activity.

- **Homogeneous communities of hunters, trappers and agriculturists**: The Kamar, the Baiga and the Birhor tribes fall under this category.

- **Graded societies of hunters, trappers, agriculturists and artisans**: Most of the Indian tribes fall under this category. The Chero and the Agariya, amongst so many others are famous artisans.

- **The herdsmen**: The Toda and some sections of the great Bhil tribe are the best examples of this category.

- **Homogeneous hunters and herdsmen:** This category is not represented among Indian tribes.

- **Ethnically stratified cattle breeders and traders:** The Bhotiyas of the sub-Himalayan region breed yaks and are also traders.
- **Socially graded herdsmen** with hunting, agriculture and artisan population.

Thurnwald's classification has been criticized by Majumdar on the ground that though it is useful, it does not indicate the nature of economic difficulties experienced by the tribal communities.

Nadeem Hasnain, Professor of Soial Anthropology at University of Lucknow, has classified the Indian tribes on the basis of the conditions of their economic life in the following categories:

- **Tribes hunting in forests:** This class of tribes is mainly found in southern India. The Chenchu and the Chandi of Andhra Pradesh, Kadar, Malapatram and Kurumba of Kerala, Paliyan of Tamil Nadu, and Onge, Jarawa, Sentenelese and Nicobarese of Andaman and Nicobar islands are some of these tribes.
- **Tribes engaged in hilly cultivation (shifting or slash and burn cultivation)**: Almost all the tribes of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura and some tribes of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh produce their crops through this mode of cultivation.
- **Tribes engaged in cultivation on levelled (plain) land:** The Oraon, Munda, Ho and Santhal tribes have taken to settled agriculture on plain land as means of their livelihood.
- **Simple artisan tribes:** Some Indian tribes earn their livelihood through basket-making, rope-making, weaving, iron smelting, woodwork and so forth. The main examples are the Gujar of Kashmir, the Kinnauri of Himachal Pradesh, Asur of Bihar, Munda of Orissa, Agariya of Madhya Pradesh and Irula of Tamil Nadu.
- **Pastoral tribes:** These tribes earn their living by selling milk of cattle reared by them or by trading the cattle itself. The Toda of Nilgiri hills, Gaddi and Bakriwal of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir, Nageshia of Madhya Pradesh, Maldhan of Gujarat and some other tribes of northern and southern India are notable examples.
- **Tribes living as folk artists**: Some tribal groups are very good exponents of art forms and earn their livelihood by performing the same. The Mundupptu of Orissa are expert acrobats, the Kota of Tamil Nadu are snake charmers and the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh are dancers.
- **Agricultural and non-agricultural labour oriented tribes**: Among the tribes engaged in agricultural labour are those which are traditionally agriculturists but work as farm labourers on others' lands owing to their landlessness. Non-agricultural tribal labour force includes those tribes who are working in local factories and mines.
- **Tribes engaged in service and trade:** A small proportion of the tribal communities are engaged in Government and semi-Government jobs, mainly due to the Constitutional provisions of reservations for Scheduled Tribes. The tribes of north-eastern India and the Meena tribe of Rajasthan have been the major beneficiaries of this policy.

Classification on the basis of culture

Indian tribes are also classified according to their cultural distance from the rural–urban groups. Scholars believe that the indigenous tribes of India lose their originality, individuality and distinct identity on account of the cultural influence from non-tribals. This intermingling of tribal people with non-tribal is known as culture contact.

Majumdar (1976) opines that classification of Indian tribes in accordance with the degree and influence of culture contact is very useful in formulating rehabilitation plans for the tribal as it focuses upon the problems of tribal India. He believes that these problems arise due to the tribal people's contact with, or isolation from, the rural–urban groups. According to him, the tribal cultures fall into the following groups:

- Tribes that are culturally most distant from the rural–urban groups and, hence, more or less out of contact.
- Tribes that are under the influence of the culture of rural–urban groups and have developed discomforts and problems consequently.
- Tribes that are in contact with rural–urban groups but have not suffered due to such contact or have turned the corner and do not suffer any more because they have now got acculturated into rural or urban culture.

Majumdar never agreed with the view of Verrier Elwin that every contact with the civilized world brings misery to the tribal people. Rather, he believed that all the three types of tribal communities mentioned above should be encouraged to establish healthy and creative contacts with the rural–urban groups.

The Indian Conference of Social Work (1952) appointed a Tribal Welfare Committee that suggested the following classification of the Indian tribes on the basis of their culture contact:

- Tribal communities
- Semi-tribal communities
- Acculturated tribal communities
- Totally assimilated tribes

3.3 WOMEN

It is very important to study the status of women in India through a historical perspective. Finding answers to questions like when did women start losing their status is not easy. The place that women occupied in the medieval and in the colonial period is of paramount significance to comprehend why obstacles still remain in trying to bring about the upliftment of women.

Pre Colonial India

Ancient Period

Historians or scholars of Indian civilizations cannot clearly state whether men and women were given equal rights during the Vedic age. But available sources show that women in India reached one of their glorious stages during this time. Although the father held supreme sway in the affairs of the family, the mother also enjoyed a high position, and she exercised considerable authority in the household affairs (Apte, 1964). The Aryans

sought cooperation of their women in almost every walk of life and they were given full freedom for their development. Their women enjoyed the property rights and had access to the property of their fathers and husbands. They discussed political and social problems freely with men. They composed and chanted Vedic hymns during holy sacrifices. Women enthusiastically involved themselves in matters of religious and social significance. Moreover, by and large, women were free to choose their partner in marriage. Widow re-marriage was in existence. They also had the privilege of adoption (Kapadia, 1968). The law did not discriminate between men and women. In the economic field, women enjoyed the freedom to earn. The home was the centre of production, where women took active part in spinning, weaving, agricultural production as well as in teaching.

The status and condition of women in the later Vedic period significantly declined from what it was in the early Vedic period. Ancestry began to be sketched through the male heir with sons becoming solitary heirs to family property. Women became entirely dependent on men, and were subjected to the authority of their fathers, husbands, and sons in the different periods of their life as daughters, wives and mothers. Their education, religious rights and privileges were curbed. Due to social, economic and political changes, women lost their position in the society. Subsequently, unnecessary and unwarranted customs such as purdah, sati, child marriage, polygamy and enforced widowhood crept in. As the economic and social status of sons began to go up, the status of women saw a sharp decline. Women subjugation was predominant in the patriarchal society. All the decisions were taken by men and they did not bother to share their decisions with their wives. Rather they did everything according to their own will and pleasure.

The status of women in the ancient period reached its lowest ebb during the period of the Dharmasastras. It is during this time period that codes of conduct setting down the behaviour norms were established. This age also saw the segregation of women from religious and economic spheres. During the period of Dharmasastra, child marriage was encouraged and widow remarriage was prohibited. During this period, many anti-women traditions and superstitions also came into being. The birth of a girl child started being considered an ill-omen with parents going to the extent of killing their infants and sati also became quite widespread.

Medieval Period

The system of purdah which was prevalent among royal families, nobles and merchant prince classes, prior to the advent of Muslims, spread to other classes also. During the medieval period, practices such as polygamy, sati, child marriage, ill treatment of widows, Devadasi system, already prevalent during the Dharmasastra age gained further momentum. The priestly class misinterpreted the sacred texts and created an impression that all these evil practices had religious sanction.

Colonial Period

At the time of the advent of the British rule in India, the status and position of Indian women was very low. The spread of Christianity among the Indians with the British conquest of India and the network of educational institutions in India established by the British created a far-reaching transformation. As a result, a new class of educated Indians came into existence. It was a section of this class that became the vanguard of all progressive movements in India. Many of the social reformers were the products of this British educational system. The social reformers in the 19th century included Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami

Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and many others, who were in the forefront of the struggle for women emancipation. These reformers brought about many social reforms in the 19th and early 20th century. Let us study some of them:

Abolition of Sati: The first serious challenge for the reformers was the problem of 'widow immolation' or sati, where Hindu widows climbed the funeral pyres of their husbands; an ancient tradition, prevalent in Bengal, Rajasthan, and the South Indian kingdom of Vijayanagar. Sati was never a religious obligation, but it was believed that by burning herself on the funeral pyre, a widow sanctified her ancestors and removed the sins of her husband. She was believed to ascend to the heaven on committing such an action. Strong social pressures on the widow and the status of widows among the Hindus were also factors that promoted the growth of this custom. Sati was first abolished in Calcutta in 1798; a territory that fell under the British jurisdiction. Raja Ram Mohan Roy fought bravely for the abolition of sati with assistance from Lord William Bentinck, and a ban on sati was imposed in 1829 in the British territories in India.

Widow Remarriage: The status of widows in India was deplorable in that they were not allowed to participate in any religious and social functions. Their lives were worse than death, one of the reasons as to why many widows opted for sati. The upper-caste widows were most affected by the customs prevailing at that time. Prohibition against remarriage of widows was strictly observed only among upper-caste Hindus. Attempts to make laws to facilitate remarriage of widows by the British were vehemently opposed by the conservative Hindus, who held that remarriage of widows 'involved guilt and disgrace on earth and exclusion from heaven.' Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who wrote *Marriage of Hindu Widows* relying heavily on the *Shastras*, fought for widow remarriage. Reformers like Mahadev Govind Ranade and Dayananda Saraswati also actively participated in the reform movement, resulting in the enactment of the Hindu Widows Remarriage Act XV of 1856. The major drawback of the Act was that it was only applicable to the Hindus. Also, people showed little enthusiasm to implement the provisions of the Act. In Maharashtra, social reformers like Pandit Vishnu Shastri, Sir R.G. Bhandarkar, Agarkar, D.K. Karve have made significant contributions in this regard.

Right to Property: There was a lot of ambiguity on the question of the rights of a widow to property which made it difficult for a widow to remarry. Before the 'Hindu Women's Right to Property Act XVIII of 1937' and the 'Hindu Succession Act XXX of 1956' came into effect, the *Dayabhaga* and *Mitakshara* Laws laid down that a widow could become a successor to her husband's estate in the absence of the nearest male heir and the estate which she took by succession to her husband was an estate which she held only during her lifetime. At her death, the estate reverted to the nearest living heir of her dead husband.

Child marriage: Another serious problem that women faced was that of child marriage. Small kids and in some cases even infants in the cradle were married off. Early marriage affected the growth and development of the children. Fixing the minimum age of marriage of men and women by law was voiced as early as the mid-19th century by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Keshab Chandra Sen. Vidyasagar argued that early marriage was detrimental to the health of women. Their efforts, coupled with those of Mahatma Gandhi, resulted in passing of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929.

Female infanticide: The practice of female infanticide was common among certain castes and tribes in India, especially in the north and north-western states. The custom of infanticide was particularly prominent among communities which found it difficult to

find suitable husbands for their daughters and an unmarried daughter was considered a disgrace to the family. The difficulty was exacerbated by the extravagant expenditure which conventions demanded on the occasion of a daughter's marriage. The earliest efforts to stop female infanticide were made in Kathiawar and Kutch. In 1795, infanticide was declared to be murder by Bengal Regulation XXI. The evil of female infanticide was ended by propaganda and the forceful action on the part of the British Government. Through the efforts of Keshab Chandra Sen, the Native Marriage Act of 1872 was passed, which abolished early marriages, made polygamy an offence, sanctioned widow remarriages and inter-caste marriages. In 1901, the Government of Baroda passed the Infant Marriage Prevention Act. This Act fixed the minimum age for marriage for girls at 12 and for boys at 16. In 1930, the Sarda Act was passed to prevent the solemnization of marriages between boys under the age of 18 years and girls under the age 14 years. However, even today, the Act remains merely on paper on account of several factors.

The movement for the liberation of women received a great stimulus in the rise of the nationalist movement in the 20th century. Gandhi's efforts led to the elevation of the women's status, involving them in the struggle for social progress and political independence. Prominent among them were Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Kamala Nehru and Aruna Asaf Ali, who participated in the political arena. After initial hesitation, even Muslims took to modern western education in large number, thanks to the efforts of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and others. The Muslim student population in modern high schools was generally proportionate to their numerical strength.

The early 20th century witnessed a nascent women's movement which campaigned for furthering female education, raising the age of marriage for woman, and the abolition of purdah. In 1929, the All India Women's Conference passed a resolution against purdah. The All India Women's Conference passed a resolution favouring girl's education at its Lucknow session in 1932. Resolutions were also passed against communal electorates for women untouchability, abolition of the unilateral right to divorce and communal unity. More than any other factor, participation of women in the national movement contributed to their awakening and emancipation. Women's struggle for equality took a big step forward with the coming of independence. Thus, the colonial period witnessed profound changes in the history of women in India.

Post-Colonial Period

Independence of India heralded the introduction of laws relating to women. The framers of the Indian Constitution rightly felt that it was not sufficient to confer some minor benefits on women, but it was necessary to declare in unequivocal terms, their right to equality with men and various other rights which would help them in attaining an equal status or an equal footing with men. These include Articles 14,15, 23 and 39, among others, in the Constitution. Article 14 of Indian Constitution says that the state shall not deny to any person equality before or equal protection of the law. Article 15 says that no women can be discriminated against on the ground of sex. Article 15(3) emphasizes that the state shall make special provisions for women and children and Article 16 provides equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment by the state. Article 39(a) emphasizes that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood. Article 39(d) says that the state should secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women and in Article 34 it provides that the state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions for work and maternity relief.

Besides the provisions in the Constitution, the following legislations were passed since 1950:

- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955: It prohibits polygyny, polyandry and child marriage and concedes equal rights to women to divorce and remarry.
- The Hindu Succession Act, 1956: It provides for women the right to their parental property.
- The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956: It Gives a childless woman the right to adopt a child and to claim maintenance from the husband if she is divorced by him.
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: It declares the taking and giving of dowry an unlawful activity and thereby prevents the exploitation of women.

Along with these, special laws have been enacted to prevent indecent representation of women in the media, sexual harassment in workplaces, equal wage laws, maternity benefit laws, and so on. The Hindu Code Bill gave the women the right to share the property of their parents. Many other social evils were removed. Widow remarriage was encouraged and child marriages were prohibited. The right of divorce was also given to women. The law also gives women equal rights in the matter of adoption, maternity benefits, equal pay, good working conditions and so forth. Along with these, legislations were also passed that mandated political representation of women right from the grassroots. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution passed in 1993 paved the way for women's entry into local governance by reserving 33 per cent of seats for them in the panchayats at all the levels, including that of the chairperson's seat. In most states, reservation of seats has met with success, with female representation exceeding the 33 per cent quota in states such as Karnataka, Kerala and Manipur.

However, many of these rights were more on papers than in actual practice. The traditional customs were so strongly rooted in the minds of people that they did not easily take these new reforms. When we start drawing a comparison between their role and status of women in modern India and in the other countries of the world, particularly in the matter of emancipation of women, we cannot but be stuck with certain unexpected contrasts. Although the status of Indian women has changed, it does not prove satisfactory. Indian society has all along been a maledominated society, where women's roles are confined to their homes. Their role was limited to procreation and upbringing of children and catering to the needs of men folk. In fact, in all the ages, women did not have an independent existence of their own. They existed for men and always played a second fiddle to them.

Some of the recent legislations pertaining to women include the following:

- The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983: It seeks to stop various types of crimes against women.
- The Family Court Act, 1984: It seeks to provide justice to women who get involved in family disputes.
- The Indecent Representation of Women Prohibition Act, 1986: It prohibits the vulgar representation of women in the media such as newspaper, cinema, Television and so on.
- The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, 1993: It empowers women and seek to secure greater participation of women at all levels of the Panchayat System.

3.3.1 Population Enumeration by Gender Composition

Sex Composition

Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenges of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.

— Kofi Annan

Population enumeration by gender composition is one of the basic demographic characteristics and provides meaningful demographic analysis. Indian census has the tradition of bringing out information by gender composition on various aspects of the population. Changes in gender composition largely reflect the underlying social, economic and cultural patterns of the society in different ways.

Sex ratio is defined as the number of females per 1,000 males in the population and is an important social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equity between males and females in a society at a given point of time. It may be noted that the sex ratio is expected to be almost at parity in nature. According to experts, sex differential in mortality, sex selective outmigration and skewed sex ratio at birth are the major contributory factors that influence changes in sex ratio.

In India, sex ratio is skewed in favour of males and has continued to rise and expand in various forms. This has drawn wide attention of policy makers and planners to reverse the trend to bring it back to parity.

As per the provisional results of Census 2011, total population of India is 1, 21, 08, 59, 977 which comprises of 62,37,24,248 males and 58,64,69,174 females with the sex ratio of 940 females per 1000 males. The sex ratio in India from the year 1901 to 2011 is given in Table 2.1. States/Union Territories which account for the highest and lowest sex ratios in the country are mentioned in Tables 13.3 and 13.4. As per Census 2011, top five states/union territories which have the highest sex ratio are Kerala (1,084) followed by Puducherry (1,038), Tamil Nadu (995), Andhra Pradesh (992) and Chhattisgarh (991). Five states which have the lowest sex ratio are Daman and Diu (618), Dadra and Nagar Haveli (775), Chandigarh (818), NCT of Delhi (866) and Andaman and Nicobar Islands (878).

Table 2.1 Sex Ratio in India

Year	Females per 1000 males
1901	972
1911	964
1921	955
1931	950
1941	945
1951	946
1961	941
1971	930
1981	934
1991	927
2001	933
2011	940

Table 3.2 *Top Five States/Union Territories having the Highest Sex Ratio*

S.No.	States/Union Territories	Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 Males)
1	Kerala	1,084
2	Puducherry	1,038
3	Tamil Nadu	995
4	Andhra Pradesh	992
5	Chhattisgarh	991

Source: Census 2011

Table 3.3 *Five States having the Lowest Sex Ratio*

S.No.	States/Union Territories	Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 Males)
1	Daman & Diu	618
2	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	775
3	Chandigarh	818
4	NCT of Delhi	866
5	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	878

Source: Census 2011

3.4 DALITS AND WEAKER SECTIONS

Dalit is a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable. Dalits are a mixed population, consisting of numerous social groups from all over India; they speak a variety of languages and practice a multitude of religions. There are many different names proposed for defining this group of people, including Panchamas ('fifth varna'), and *Asprushya* ('untouchables'). The word 'Dalit' may be derived from Sanskrit, and means 'ground', 'suppressed', 'crushed', or 'broken to pieces'. It was perhaps first used by Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century, in the context of the oppression faced by the erstwhile 'untouchable' castes of the twice-born Hindus.

According to Victor Premasagar, the term expresses their 'weakness, poverty and humiliation at the hands of the upper castes in the Indian society.'

The contemporary use of Dalit is centred on the idea that as a people they may have been broken by oppression but they survive and even thrive by finding meaning in the struggle of their existence towards human dignity.

Mohandas Gandhi adopted the word Harijan, translated roughly as 'Children of God', to identify the former untouchables. But this term is now considered derogatory when used to describe Dalits. In addition, the terms 'Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes'(SC/ST) are the official terms used in Indian Government documents to identify former 'untouchables' and tribes. However, in 2008 the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, noticing that 'Dalit' was used interchangeably with the official term 'scheduled castes', called the term 'unconstitutional' and asked state governments to end its use.

History of Dalits

In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure, such as any involving leatherwork, butchering, or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses and waste. Dalits worked as manual labourers cleaning streets, latrines, and sewers. As a result, Dalits were commonly segregated, and banned from full participation in Hindu social life. For example, they could not enter a temple or a school, and were required to stay outside the village. Elaborate precautions were sometimes observed to prevent incidental contact between Dalits and other castes. Discrimination against Dalits still exists in rural areas in the private sphere, in everyday matters such as access to eating places, schools, temples and water sources. It has largely disappeared in urban areas and in the public sphere. Some Dalits have successfully integrated into urban Indian society, where caste origins are less obvious and less important in public life. In rural India, however, caste origins are more readily apparent and Dalits often remain excluded from local religious life, though some qualitative evidence suggests that its severity is fast diminishing.

Modern India: Since 1950, India has enacted and implemented many laws and social initiatives to protect and improve the socio-economic conditions of its Dalit population. By 1995, of all jobs in India, 17.2 per cent of the jobs were held by Dalits, greater than their proportion in Indian population. Of the highest paying, senior most jobs in government agencies and government controlled enterprises, over 10 per cent of all highest paying jobs were held by members of the Dalit community, a tenfold increase in 40 years. In 1997, India democratically elected K. R. Narayanan, a Dalit, as the nation's President. In the last 15 years, Indians born in historically discriminated minority castes have been elected to its highest judicial and political offices. The quality of life of Dalit population in India, in 2001, in terms of metrics such as access to health care, life expectancy, education attainability, access to drinking water, housing, etc. was statistically similar to overall population of modern India. In 2010, international attention was drawn to the Dalits by an exhibition featuring portraits depicting the lives of Dalits by Marcus Perkins. Babu Jagjivan Ram became the first Dalit to hold the post of Deputy Prime Minister of India from 1977 to 1979.

Problems Faced by Dalits in India

The varna system which existed during the vedic period, in due course of time has degenerated into the caste system. Since then, the Scheduled Castes/Dalits also known as 'untouchables' have been suffering from various social, legal, economic, educational and other disabilities. For centuries they were denied political representation, legal rights, civic facilities, educational privileges and economic opportunities. Even today, the Scheduled Castes are not free from problems.

The social restrictions and inabilities of the Scheduled Castes

The Scheduled Castes or the Harijans suffered for centuries from a number of social disabilities among which the following may be noted:

- **Lowest status in history**: They were considered to be unholy, inferior, and low and were looked down upon by the other castes. They bear the stigma of untouchability. They have been treated as the servants of the other castes. They were not allowed to interact with people of other castes.

- **Education disabilities**: The Harijans were forbidden from taking up to education during the early days. Sanskrit education was denied to them. Even today majority of them are illiterate and ignorant.

- **Civic disability:** For a long time, untouchables castes were not allowed to use public places and avail civic facilities such as- village wells, ponds, temples, hotels, schools, hospitals and so forth. They were forced to live on the outskirt of the towns and village during the early days. Even today, they are segregated from others spatially. Some lower caste people were not allowed to carry umbrellas, to wear shoes or golden ornaments and to milk cows.

- **Religious disabilities**: The Dalits also suffers from religious disabilities even today. They are not allowed to enter temples in many places. The Brahmins, who offer their priestly services to some lower castes, are not prepared to officiate in the ceremonies of the 'untouchable' castes.

- **Economic disabilities**: Due to social and religious disabilities, people of Scheduled Caste have to face many type of economic disabilities. They have to face many problems in life due to these economic disabilities. Majority of them depend on agriculture but only few of them own land. For Harijan, the selection of occupation is limited. They are not allowed to do work allotted to the upper castes. Majority of them are landless labourers. More than 90.1 of the agricultural labourers in India belong to the lower classes.

- **Political disabilities**: The untouchables hardly participate in political matters. They were not allowed to take part in political and administrative functions of the state. Under the British rule, they were given the right to vote for the first time. After independence, equal political opportunities and rights have been provided for Harijans also. Politically, the Harijans are yet to become an organized force.

Measures for the Welfare of Scheduled Castes

The government of independent India has been trying to uplift the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes right from its very inception. The government attempts to promote the welfare of the SCs and STs. The initiatives of the government have been classified into two groups. (a) Constitutional and legislative measures and (b) other welfare measures and programmes.

Constitutional and legislative measures

The Government of India has taken many steps to uplift the status of scheduled castes people. The Constitution ensures the protection and assures the promotion of interest of SCs and STs and other weaker section of the population in the fields such as (a) political representation, (b) representation in services, (c) economic development, (d) socio-cultural safeguards and (e) legal support.

- The preamble of the Constitution of India declares that it assures equality, promotes fraternity, guarantees liberty and ensures justice to one and all.

- Articles 15,16,17,38 and 46 guarantee that the state shall not discriminate between person on account of their religion and caste or class.

- Article 46 promotes educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Sscheduled Tribes and other weaker sections of the society.

- Article 330 reserves representation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People.
- Article 334 relates to reservation of seats and special representation to cease after fifty years [Originally reservation was made for ten years and it was extended four times, the present period of expiry being AD 2000)
- Article 335 mentions the claims of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to services and posts.
- Article 338 empowers the Central Govt. to appoint a National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Article 339 empowers the President to appoint a Commission to report on the administration of the Scheduled Areas and the welfare of Scheduled Tribes in the States.
- Article 341 empowers the President to specify the castes, races or tribes deemed as Scheduled Castes in a particular State or Union territory.
- Article 342 empowers the President to specify the tribes or tribal communities deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in a particular State or Union territory.

Legislative measures for the removal of untouchability

The government has been taking up the required legislative measures for the removal of untouchability. In pursuance of the provision of the Article 17 of the Constitution practice of untouchability a punishable offence, the Parliament passed the Untouchability Offences Act, 1955. It was later substituted by the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1976. The offences of Untouchability as per the 'Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1976' are the following:

(i) Committing any kind of social injustice, such as denying access to any shop, restaurant, public hospital, educational institution or any place of public entertainment.

(ii) Preventing a person, on the grounds of untouchability, from entering a place of worship and offering prayers, or from drinking water from a public well or spring.

(iii) Refusal to sell goods or render services to a person on the grounds of untouchability is an offence punishable with imprisonment for six months or a fine upto ' 500 or both.

(iv) Enforcing occupational, professional, trade disabilities in the matter of enjoyment of any benefit under a charitable trust and so forth.

3.5   Minorities

Minorities in a community refer to a sect of people who are lesser in number in comparison to the total population of the country, with the different religions in it. The Indian society has a long history of external aggression. But it is adept in accommodating and assimilating the alien cultures in spite of resentment to the outside forces. In a plural society like India, such co-operative activities sometimes have been responsible for insecurity. The period of the Mughal dynasty that preceded colonial rule was a turbulent period witnessing numerous wars and upheavals. Moreover, the Divide and Rule policy of the British sowed the seeds of communalism in India.

The most drastic effects of communalism was felt by the minorities. Minorities in India, being in lesser number face these atrocities and indifferent ideology.

3.6 SUMMARY

- The structure and composition of society is a very important concept of social science and has been discussed in great detail by numerous social scientists.

- India is widely known as a land of villages and these villages cumulatively constitute the Indian rural society.

- Villages in India were, and still are to some extent, isolated from the rest of the country.

- Indian villages are generally peaceful wherein people reside together with a spirit of togetherness and have a fellow feeling. An atmosphere of calm and simplicity prevails in our villages.

- The revival of the 'Panchayati Raj' system in Indian villages through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993 has truly changed the political landscape in rural India.

- The joint family system is no more the dominant family type in Indian villages. Nuclear families have also started coming up.

- Generally speaking, an urban community is large, dense and heterogeneous. It can also be said to be predominantly occupied in the industrial and service sectors. Urban growth is a recent phenomenon and till 1850, the urban population in the world was estimated to be only 2 per cent of the global population.

- Urban areas are large and have very high population. Besides, the communities do not reside in close proximity. In such circumstances, anonymity of individuals and urban communities becomes a way of life.

- Life is very fast-paced and hectic in the urban areas and is completely different from the languid pace of rural life.

- Both rural and urban societies are part of the same human society and do share a lot of features of each other.

- There is a different school of thought among sociologists, which believes that a strong dichotomy exists between rural and urban areas. Notwithstanding the wide acceptability of the concept of rural–urban continuum, this group believes in the other concept, i.e., rural–urban contrast.

- After a period of prolonged controversy, it was finally recorded in the Imperial Gazetteer of India that a tribe consists of the following:
    - o Collection of families bearing a common name
    - o Speaking a common dialect
    - o Occupying or professing to occupy a common territory

- Though tribal populations are found across the world, the largest concentration of tribal population is found in India. The tribes are the autochthonous people of the Indian peninsula and are believed to be the earliest settlers here.

- Various social scientists have classified tribal populations on the basis of their economic activity. Indian tribes have also been thus classified. The classical classification of Adam Smith and the more recent classification of Thurnwald and

Herskovits have been applied throughout the world in classifying tribes on the basis of their economic life.

- It is very important to study the status of women in India through a historical perspective. Finding answers to questions like when did women start losing their status is not easy. The place that women occupied in the medieval and in the colonial period is of paramount significance to comprehend why obstacles still remain in trying to bring about the upliftment of women.

- The status and condition of women in the later Vedic period significantly declined from what it was in the early Vedic period.

- At the time of the advent of the British rule in India, the status and position of Indian women was very low.

- The social reformers in the 19th century included Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and many others, who were in the forefront of the struggle for women emancipation. These reformers brought about many social reforms in the 19th and early 20th century.

- The movement for the liberation of women received a great stimulus in the rise of the nationalist movement in the 20th century. Gandhi's efforts led to the elevation of the women's status, involving them in the struggle for social progress and political independence.

- Independence of India heralded the introduction of laws relating to women. The framers of the Indian Constitution rightly felt that it was not sufficient to confer some minor benefits on women, but it was necessary to declare in unequivocal terms, their right to equality with men and various other rights which would help them in attaining an equal status or an equal footing with men.

- Sex ratio is defined as the number of females per 1,000 males in the population and is an important social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equity between males and females in a society at a given point of time.

- Dalit is a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable. Dalits are a mixed population, consisting of numerous social groups from all over India; they speak a variety of languages and practice a multitude of religions.

- The contemporary use of Dalit is centered on the idea that as a people they may have been broken by oppression but they survive and even thrive by finding meaning in the struggle of their existence towards human dignity.

- In the context of traditional Hindu society, Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure, such as any involving leatherwork, butchering, or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses and waste.

- The government has been taking up the required legislative measures for the removal of untouchability. In pursuance of the provision of the Article 17 of the constitution practice of untouchability a punishable offence, the Parliament passed the Untouchability Offences Act, 1955.

3.7 KEY TERMS

- **Heterogeneity:** It is the quality of being diverse and not comparable in kind.
- **Panchayati Raj:** It is a system of governance in which 'gram' (village) panchayats are the basic units of administration.
- **Autochthonous:** It refers to indigenous rather than descended from migrants or colonists.
- **Gram Swaraj:** This refers to independent self-rule by villages.
- **Sati:** It was a former practice in India whereby a widow threw herself on to her husband's funeral pyre.

3.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Two characteristics of Indian villages are as follows:
   - Isolation and self-sufficiency
   - Peace and simplicity

2. The revival of the Panchayati Raj system in Indian villages through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993 has truly changed the political landscape in rural India. Political consciousness and participation in electoral politics has increased tremendously. People have become aware about local, state and national politics.

3. Two characteristics of urban Indian society are as follows:
   - Anonymity
   - Social heterogeneity

4. The fringe in the urban-rural continuum is defined as an area of mixed urban and rural land users between the point where city services cease to be available and the point where agricultural land users predominate.

5. The linguistic classification of Indian tribes has been divided into the following four major families:
   - Austro-Asiatic family
   - Tibeto-Chinese family
   - Indo-European family
   - Dravidian family

6. As per the British social anthropologist, Bailey, a tribe possesses organic unity, which is characterized by lack of interaction and absence of any hierarchical system.

7. The status and condition of women in the later Vedic period significantly declined from what it was in the early Vedic period. Ancestry began to be sketched through the male heir with sons becoming solitary heirs to family property. Women became entirely dependent on men, and were subjected to the authority of their male counterparts. Their education, religious rights and privileges were curbed. Customs such as purdah, sati, child marriage, polygamy and enforced widowhood crept in.

8. Certain legislations pertaining to women passed in Independent India are as follows:
   - The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983 – seeks to stop various types of crimes against women.
   - The Family Court Act, 1984 – seeks to provide justice to women who get involved in family disputes.
   - The Indecent Representation of Women prohibition Act, 1986 – prohibits the vulgar representation of women in the media such as newspaper, cinema, television and so on.
   - The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, 1993 – empowers women and seek to secure greater participation of women at all levels of the Panchayat System.

9. Dalit is a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable.

10. The offences of untouchability as per the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1976 are the following:
    - Committing any kind of social injustice, such as denying access to any shop, restaurant, public hospital, educational institution or any place of public entertainment.
    - Preventing a person, on the grounds of untouchability, from entering a place of worship and offering prayers, or from drinking water from a public well or spring.
    - Refusal to sell goods or render services to a person on the grounds of untouchability is an offence punishable with imprisonment for six months or a fine upto ' 500 or both.
    - Enforcing occupational, professional, trade disabilities in the matter of enjoyment of any benefit under a charitable trust and so forth.

3.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Mention the common characteristics of Indian villages.

2. Write a short note on rural-urban continuum.

3. Prepare a short note on the classification of Indian tribes on the basis of culture.

4. Write a short note on the measures taken for improving in the position of women in Independent India.

5. What are the problems faced by the Dalits in India?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the changing nature of the Indian rural society.

2. Explain the differentiating features of rural-urban landscape.

3. 'In India, tribe and caste are two important aspects of social organization.' Explain the statement.

4. Describe the classification of tribes in India on the basis of location and economic life.

5. Evaluate the position of women in the pre-colonial and post-colonial period in India.

6. Discuss the measures taken by the Indian government for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

3.10 FURTHER READING

Atal, Y. 2006. *Changing Indian Society*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

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UNIT 4 BASIC INSTITUTIONS OF INDIAN SOCIETY

Structure

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the various institutions of Indian society. The family is the smallest unit in a society and is the tiniest form of social organization. Indian society is no different and the family is a very important part of it. It is one of the basic institutions of Indian society and contributes immensely to the social fabric of India. Family is a very important component of our social structure and occupies a central position.

Like elsewhere, the two major types of family in the Indian society are the nuclear family and the joint family. In nuclear families, the members comprise the husband, wife and their children. This type of family has become more common with the advent of industrialization and urbanization. It has forced people to move out to new urban centres and seek employment. The Hindu joint family system found in the Indian society is a unique institution. It consists of members spanning horizontally (siblings) and vertically (generations) and living together with common goals and common assets.

The family is no doubt the basic establishment of Indian society and contributes immensely to the social fabric of India. Moving ahead, in this unit, you will also study about castes and classes, which are also important elements of the Indian society. Across human societies, one finds systems that divide a society into different categories. Rarely are societies a united whole. Divisions are generally seen to be on the basis of race, religion, caste and class. While race is the most rigid division, being biologically determined, class is the most mobile division and people can move across classes with minimum hurdles.

Class is a system that rewards achievements and status. Indian society has traces of racial and religious discrimination and quite a bit of class distinction. However, the unique characteristic of Indian society is the overbearing and all pervasive nature of the caste system. The caste system has compartmentalized Indian society in such a manner that there is great distrust across castes and a very strong caste endogamy.

In this unit, you will study about the basic institutions of the Indian society such as family, caste, class, marriage and kinship.

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the various theories of caste
- Analyse the changing nature of the caste system
- List the characteristics of social class
- Differentiate between caste and class
- Discuss the functions of family
- Describe the types of family
- Explain the rules of mate selection as per the Hindu law
- State the recent changes in the institution of marriage
- Analyse the importance of kinship
- Explain the origin and evolution of religion

4.2 CASTE

The word caste has been defined from the Portugese word *Casta*, which means race, breed or kind. British anthropologist and linguist, Risley defines caste as 'a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same hereditary calling and is regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogenous community'.

The caste system in India has been studied from the following three different perspectives:

- **Indological:** The Indologists have viewed caste from the scriptural point of view and believe that the ancient Hindu scriptures have given birth to the concept of caste. They maintain that the varnas have originated from Brahma—the *Virat Purusha* (the Great Man)—and castes are units within the varna system, which have developed as a result of hypergamy and hypogamy. The rituals to be performed by the four varnas are status bound and laid down in the Brahmanas (800 BC), while the customs and laws to be followed by each caste are laid down in the Smritis (100–200 BC).

  The Brahmins were given the pre-eminent position in the society as it was believed that they had the divine right to interpret law and religion. The Indologists believe that the caste system would continue to exist as it was divinely ordained and cannot be dismantled by human beings.

- **Social-anthropological:** The social anthropologists have studied caste from the cultural point of view. The organizational and structural approaches of Hutton consider caste as a unique system found in India alone. The institutional approach of Kroeber and Risley does not view the caste system as relevant only to India. They find it in ancient Egypt, medieval Europe and present southern United States. The relational approach finds caste situations in army, business, factory and so forth. It states that the presence/absence of caste in a society depends upon the absence/presence of mobility in groups. If mobility is normal, there is no caste system and vice versa.

- **Sociological:** Sociologists have viewed caste from the stratificational point of view. They study caste in terms of social stratification in a society. They study it as a phenomenon of social inequality. According to them, society has certain structural aspects and it distributes its members in social positions. The interaction is the basis of social structures and types of interactions along with associated norms categorize social structures.

Theories of Caste

Though a number of theories explaining the origin of caste in India have been propounded, not one of them has managed to explain it properly. While Herbert Risley, a British ethnographer, explains the origin of caste with reference to racial differences, Abbe Dubois, author of *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, traces the origin of caste to the role played by the Brahmins. Some such theories are as follows:

- **Traditional theory:** Various scholars have described Hindu society as a supernatural-centred society. In it, people are attracted to abstract truths and try to find its reality through mysticism. There is no effort to analyse these things scientifically. These scholars have observed, and rightly so, that the Hindus try to explain every phenomenon in terms of God and religion. Even the origin of the institution of caste is sought to be explained in terms of religion by relating it to the body of Brahma.

The traditional theory believes that the Indian caste system has been divinely ordained. While the sociological theory views caste system as an artificially created system of stratification in which the role and status of an individual is determined by birth (ascriptive status), the traditional theory views it as a natural system of stratification. The traditional theory has two versions– mythical and metaphysical.

The mythical version treats the four varnas as the four castes and it believes that the four emerged from different parts of Brahma's body. This theory finds the caste system to be a completely normal and natural institution of social functions. It believes that membership of an individual in a caste is determined by the doctrines of karma and dharma. According to the doctrine of karma (actions), a man is born in a particular caste due to his actions in his previous incarnation. Srinivas (1952) summarizes the doctrine of karma as the birth of a man in a particular caste. It is certainly not an accident. He was born in that caste because he deserved to be born there.

The doctrine of dharma (religious duty) propounds that a person who accepts the caste system and regulates his life according to the norms of his particular caste, is living by his dharma. On the other hand, one who questions a norm governing his caste is violating dharma. While the former is rewarded, the latter invites punishment. This reward and punishment would befall both in this life and in the next incarnation. Thus, a person who lives according to his dharma will be born in a high caste in his next life whereas somebody who violates his dharma would be born in a low caste.

The metaphysical version explains the function, hierarchy and other characteristics of caste. Each caste has a separate function, which is determined by the nature and qualities of the members of that caste. The Hindus believe that an individual's nature consists of two sets of qualities–*gotrika* and *namika*. The *gotrika* (lineage) qualities are the hereditary qualities, which an individual inherits from his *gotra* and shares with the members of his family. The *namika* (individual) qualities, on

the other hand, are specific individual qualities that one does not share with any other member of his family. Thus, while the *namika* qualities differentiate an individual from others, the *gotrika* qualities identify him with a particular group. The *gotrika* qualities explain the characteristic of hereditary membership of the caste system.

Another characteristic of the caste system is fixed occupation. It is explained by the close connection between nature (*swabhav*) and occupation. The nature of a man determines his occupation and since people of a particular group have the same *gotrika* qualities, they tend to do the same kind of occupation. Thus, a particular caste gets limited to a particular occupation.

The traditional theory identifies two kinds of functions–ordinary and extraordinary. While ordinary functions require no specialized skills, extraordinary functions do. It further divides extraordinary functions into three types – techno-economic, politico-legal and cultural-religious. The traditional theory accords the highest status to cultural-religious functions. Politico-legal and techno-economic functions are placed after it. The lowest status is accorded to the ordinary functions. The Brahmins get the highest status in caste society because they discharge the cultural-religious functions. Kshatriyas follow them by performing politico-legal functions. Vaishyas are placed at the third place as they are engaged in techno-economic functions. The Shudras are placed at the bottom of the four-fold system because they perform the ordinary functions.

The traditional theory of the origin of caste has been rejected by many scholars because it considers caste as a natural phenomenon and it considers the four varnas as the four castes. If we accept this view, then it would mean that the varna and not the caste is the unit of the caste system. Refuting this view, M.N. Srinivas has stated that the idea of caste as the four-fold division of society is a gross oversimplification of facts. He says that the real unit of the caste system is not the varna but the jati, which is a very small endogamous group, practicing a traditional occupation and enjoying cultural and ritual autonomy.

- **Brahmanical theory:** Abbe Dubois feels that that the caste system originated and developed in India due to the Brahmins. His view is that the caste system was designed by the Brahmins for the Brahmins. They devised this system to place various restrictions (food, marriage and others) on non-Brahmins so that they can protect their purity, which is necessary to perpetuate their monopoly in matters of religious and sacred functions.

  G.S. Ghurye also believed the view professed by Abbe Dubois. He supports the Brahmanical theory. He maintains that the various factors that characterize caste society were the result of the efforts of the Brahmins to exclude the Shudras from religious and social communion with them. He concludes that caste in India is a Brahmanic child of the Indo-Aryan culture of North India and was thereafter transferred to other parts of the country.

- **Racial theory:** Herbert Risley is the main proponent of this theory and finds support from scholars like Ghurye, Majumdar and Westermarck. According to this theory, the clash of cultures and the contact of races crystallized castes in India. This theory believes that the perceived superiority of the Aryans vis-à-vis the aboriginals and the social intercourse between the two groups laid the foundation for the caste system. Marriages between the Aryans and the aboriginals resulted in the birth of half-breeds and they were called the *chandals* who had to be

confined to the lowest position in society. Risley has referred to six processes in the formation of castes:

- o **Change in traditional occupation:** Adoption of a new occupation often resulted in the creation of a distinct caste.
- o **Migration:** Migration of a caste group to a new place often resulted in development of a distinct caste.
- o **Change in customs:** Adoption of new customs and practices led to the growth of a new caste.
- o **Preservation of old traditions:** Preservation of traditional customs by a group led to their moving away from those who had adopted new customs and resulted in growth of a new caste.
- o **Hinduization:** Sometimes a tribe enters the fold of Hinduism by adopting Hindu customs and beliefs and this results in the creation of a new caste that is distinct from the other caste Hindus.
- o **Role of religious enthusiasts:** Preaching of his own doctrines by a religious leader often resulted in the formation of a new religious sect, which gradually became a new caste.

Risley's racial theory is supported by other scholars. According to Ghurye, the Aryans tried to show off their superiority because they were fairer in colour in comparison to the natives. Westermarck observes that India was inhabited by the dark people before the Aryans came and took control. The Aryans had bitter contempt for the original inhabitants of India and drew sharp distinctions between themselves and the latter. These distinctions gave rise to the caste system.

Acceptance of Risley's racial theory would give rise to the question as to why then the caste system should be confined to India. Risley himself believes that the caste system exists in other countries too. The discrimination on the basis of skin colour in countries like South Africa, South America, Canada and others has been put forward as a kind of caste discrimination.

- **Occupational theory:** Nesfield is the proponent of this theory and is ably supported by Ibbetson. This theory holds that caste has nothing to do with race or religion and its origin is due to occupations. Nesfield maintains that occupations were passed on hereditarily across generations and practising the same occupation resulted in the creation of occupational guilds. These guilds gradually came to be known as castes. The hierarchy in the caste system was due to the feeling of superiority or inferiority of occupations. Answering a question as to how the Brahmins got the highest status in this hierarchy, Nesfield explained that Brahmins had specialization in the occupation of sacrifices, hymns and rituals, which were of the greatest importance for the people of the society. Thus, the Brahmins acquired the highest position in the caste system.

Ibbetson, supporting Nesfield, says that tribes developed as occupational guilds and came to function on religious lines. Eventually, these tribes developed as castes in the process of social evolution.

Many scholars have criticized the occupational theory of Nesfield and Ibbetson. D.N. Majumdar has rejected the idea of hierarchy of castes in terms of the superiority or inferiority of occupations. He maintains that the status of castes does not depend upon the occupation but upon the degree of purity of blood and the extent of isolation maintained by the groups. Hutton too believes that the

occupational theory does not explain the social status of various agricultural castes. The same agricultural caste has a higher status in North India than in South India. The occupational theory fails to explain this.

Characteristics of the Indian Caste System

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:

- Segmental division of society
- Hierarchy of castes
- Restrictions on commensality and social intercourse
- Differential civil and religious privileges and disabilities
- Restrictions on occupational choice
- Restrictions on marriage

Changing Nature of Caste

Caste has never been static. The caste system has been changing continuously and has always undergone adaptive changes. Though the pace of change might have been slow earlier, in the post-independence period the changes have occurred rapidly. The changes can be mainly categorized as follows:

- **Structural changes:** The following are some of the major structural changes in the caste system:
    o **Decline in the supremacy of the Brahmins**: Due to the forces of modernization and rapid economic development, Brahmins have lost their dominance of yore.
    o **Dilution of caste hierarchy**: Factors like migration to urban areas, diversification of jobs and others have reduced the gaps between different castes and there is greater intercourse amongst members of various castes.
    o **Socio-economic empowerment of Dalits and Harijans:** The Government's policy of affirmative action in case of the oppressed castes has led to an upwards movement of their social status.
- **Functional changes:** The functional changes in the caste system are as follows:
    o **Birth no longer the sole determinant of status:** Unlike earlier, birth is no longer the sole factor determining social status. Wealth, education, occupation and others aspects have become the determinants of status and caste as an ascriber of status has been relegated to the background.
    o **Change due to occupational diversity:** Occupation is no longer hereditarily determined. The so-called high status occupations are accessible to members of all castes. On the other hand, members of high castes have also taken to manual work to earn a decent and dignified living.
    o **Dilution of restrictions on marriage:** The Special Marriages Act, 1954 and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 have removed the restrictions on inter-caste marriages by legalizing them. Caste endogamy is no more the basis of choosing a mate.
    o **Change in commensality:** Restrictions on food intake by members of various castes have been virtually removed.

- o **Lifestyle changes:** Due to westernization and modernization, the sharp differences in lifestyle of various caste members have come down. A common lifestyle is emerging, which breaks the caste barriers.
- o **Educational restrictions removed:** Education is no more the preserve of the high caste people. Government policies have resulted in providing access to education to all citizens. The amendment of the Constitution to make the right to education a fundamental right is going to improve the situation further.
- o **Changes in political system:** Democracy and universal adult franchise have ensured that every citizen of this country exercises political power through the ballot. Reservation of seats for members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to contest elections has also empowered them politically.
- **Attitudinal changes:** The attitudinal changes in the caste system are as follows:
  - o **Decline of the concept of ascriptive status:** The processes of modernization, westernization, industrialization and so forths have seriously eroded the hold of the caste system. People do not accept the notion of ascriptive status any more as it is determined only by birth. Status is now achieved through ability, efficiency, wealth, political power and other factors.
  - o **Philosophical basis of caste system has become unacceptable:** The belief of people that caste system is divinely ordained has undergone change. They have no faith on the philosophical basis of the caste system because they have stopped accepting the doctrine of karma.

Factors Responsible for the Changes in the Caste System

The main factors responsible for the changes in the caste system are enumerated as follows:

- **Industrialization:** The process of industrialization has affected the caste structure to a remarkable extent. Caste system functions well in an agrarian economy because in such an economy there is interdependence among the various castes for economic reasons. For example, the cultivator has to avail the services of the carpenter and the weaver and the latter are dependent on the cultivator for food grains. Thus, the village economy functions as a self-sufficient unit.

  The growth of industrial economy has weakened this bond of interdependence among the castes. Industrialization has provided new sources of livelihood to people and made occupational mobility possible. Due to this mobility, different castes come together to work at one place. For example, in a factory a Brahmin works alongside a Shudra and cannot avoid the latter's touch or shadow.

- **Urbanization:** Industrialization has resulted in the process of urbanization. New townships have emerged around factories and the rural people migrate to these townships to avail better employment opportunities. Development of modern towns and cities has eroded the hold of caste taboos and restrictions by forcing people to intermingle in their daily lives. Eating out in restaurants where the caste of the cook or the person sitting on the next table is not known, has eroded all notions of purity and pollution.

- **Modern means of transport and communication:** Modern means of transportation have increased mobility of the people and thereby put an end to the

geographical isolation, which was a favourable condition for the creation and continuation of the caste system in India. Moreover, while travelling in the modern modes of transport like buses, trains and airplanes, it is impossible to observe caste rules regarding food, drink and social intercourse.

- **Growth of materialism:** The caste system gets its strength from divine and religious sanctions. People believe in the doctrine of karma and the theory of reincarnation, which make them obey caste rules. But the modern age is dominated by scientific and technological knowledge and this has changed the consciousness of human beings to a great extent. Traditional beliefs, faiths and philosophies are no more the powerful moulders of human behaviour. Material considerations like wealth, power and prestige are given importance. A Shudra having wealth and political power would have a higher status today than a poor Brahmin who follows all the traditional customs rigidly. Such a change from spiritualism to materialism has gone against the caste system.

- **Modern education:** Modern liberal education introduced by the British has played a crucial role in undermining the importance of caste in Indian society. Modern education is accessible to all irrespective of one's caste or community. It popularized the idea of freedom of association, equality before law, equal rights of all citizens and equal freedom to follow any vocation. It also acts as a powerful force towards the removal of untouchability.

- **New legal system:** The new legal system established by the British has also played a vital role in weakening the influence of caste in India. This system has firmly established the concept of equality before law in India and has given a blow to the age-old legal discrimination against the lower castes, which is a main characteristic of a caste society. Further, with the establishment of modern judicial courts, the caste panchayats have lost their power and effectiveness. Besides, modern legislations like the Untouchability Offences Act, 1955 and Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 have proved to be disastrous for the caste system.

- **Social and religious reform movements:** Several religious and social reform movements also played their role. The Bhakti Movement and the Sufi Movement laid emphasis on oneness of mankind and exposed the idea of inequality as man made rather than being divinely ordained. Though they could not eliminate the caste system, they definitely facilitated relaxation of caste rigidities.

    Several social reform movements like the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj movements made direct attacks on the caste system, especially targeting its ritual aspect of purity and pollution.

- **Influence of Indian Constitution:** Last but not the least, the influence of the Indian Constitution in weakening the caste system has been universally recognized. Our Constitution confers fundamental rights to all our citizens irrespective of their caste, creed or colour. Article 15(2) of the Constitution directly attacks the caste system by declaring all citizens as equal.

4.3 CLASS

Class is one of the most important bases of social stratification. Classes are groups of people into which a society is divided. These groups are ranked on the basis of specific criteria. Thus, classes are social groups that occupy specific high and low positions in a

given society. Each class is a sub-culture with a set of attitudes, beliefs, values and behavioural norms, which differ from those of other classes. Class lines are not clearly drawn but represent points along a continuum of social status. The exact size and membership of a given class is difficult to establish.

Karl Marx defined a social class as 'all those people who share their relation to the means of economic production.' According to him, a class is determined by its possession of economic criteria like wealth, occupation and income.

Max Weber has defined social class as 'an aggregate of individuals who have the same opportunities of acquiring goods and the same exhibited standard of living.'

Maciver and Page define a social class as any portion of a community marked off from the rest by social status. Similarly, Ogburn and Nimkoff define social class as an aggregate of persons having essentially the same social status in a given society.

Class consciousness emerged in India during the British Rule as they introduced modern education, civil services, legal system and means of transportation in India. These new instrumentalities changed the mindset of the people and they started looking beyond caste. Post-independence, the Government's developmental initiatives accelerated the process of decline of the caste system. With industrialization around the country, intermingling among people grew and they aspired to achieve a higher social status. The class system of social stratification allowed people to have vertical mobility and the lower caste people, by sheer dint of their hard work and competence, could manage to climb up the class ladder. In today's era, though caste is still a strong factor in our society, class has been accepted as an alternative system of social stratification in India.

In the rural areas of the country, agrarian class structure has strong roots. It has been studied in detail by sociologists like Andre Beteille. The agrarian class structure was the creation of the British period but there was an agrarian hierarchy in the pre-British period. In this hierarchy, the high caste people were the large land owners while the lower caste people were landless labourers. In between were the members of certain castes who did the actual cultivation on these lands. Thus, it was a three-tier structure. Andre Beteille has observed that wherever the agrarian hierarchy is elaborate, the caste hierarchy is also elaborate.

The agrarian class structure in post-independent India is seen to possess the following four classes:

  (i) Landowners
 (ii) Tenants
(iii) Labourers
(iv) Non-agriculturists

Professor D.N.Dhanagre has suggested an alternative agrarian class structure, which has the following five classes:

  (i) Landlords
 (ii) Rich peasants
(iii) Middle peasants
(iv) Poor peasants
 (v) Landless labourers

Apart from the traditional agrarian class structure, modern rural India also has a non-agrarian class structure. It can broadly be classified as follows:

  ● Political functionaries and government officials
  ● Civil work contractors
  ● Village teachers and doctors
  ● Priests and astrologers
  ● NGO workers

Though pre-independent India had trade centres and port cities like Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai), urban India is mainly a post-independence phenomenon. In the last sixty four years, large numbers of people from rural India have migrated to old and new urban centres in search of better education, employment and living standards. This has weakened the hold of the caste system and has given rise to a class system in urban India which is different from the agrarian class structure.

The modern urban class structure can be classified as follows:
  ● Political personalities like Ministers, MPs and civil servants
  ● Technocrats (software engineers, CEOs and others), Professionals (doctors, lawyers, sportsmen and media persons and others) and industrialists/entrepreneurs
  ● Educationists and academicians
  ● People in the organized sector other than the above categories (service men, traders)
  ● People in the unorganized sector (hawkers, daily labourers and so forth)

Characteristics of Social Class

The following are some of the important characteristics of a social class:

  ● **Class–a status group:** A social class is essentially a social group. Class is related to status. Different statuses arise in a society as people do different things, engage in different activities and pursue different vocations.

  ● **Achieved status and not ascribed status:** Status in the class system is achieved and not ascribed. Birth is not the criterion of status. Achievements of an individual mostly decide his status. Class system provides scope for changing or improving one's status. Factors like income, occupation, wealth, education, lifestyle and other factors decide the status of an individual.

  ● **Universal:** Class is almost a universal phenomenon. The class system appears in all the modern complex societies of the world.

  ● **Mode of feeling:** In a class system, you may observe three modes of feeling. Firstly, there is a feeling of equality in relation to the members of one's own class. Secondly, there is a feeling of inferiority in relation to those who occupy the higher status in the socio-economic hierarchy. Thirdly, there is a feeling of superiority in relation to those who occupy the lower status in the hierarchy. These kinds of feelings develop into class consciousness and finally result in class solidarity.

  ● **Element of prestige:** Each social class has its own status in society. Status is associated with prestige. Thus, the status and prestige enjoyed by the ruling or rich classes in every society is superior to that of the poorer classes. The prestige that a class enjoys depends upon our evaluations. In many societies knowledge, purity of race or descent, religion, wealth, heroism, bravery and similar other traits confer a high degree of prestige on the persons possessing them.

- **Element of stability:** A social class is relatively a stable group. It is not unstable like a crowd or mob. Though status of a class might change, it rarely does so in a radical manner. Radical changes occur in extraordinary situations like war, economic depression and others arenas and such changes can alter the social position of the class suddenly.

- **A way of life:** Every social class tends to have a lifestyle of its own, which distinguishes it from other classes. Lifestyle includes the type of dress one wears, the quality and location of residence in which one resides, the means of recreation one resorts to, the relationship one enjoys with close relatives, the books, magazines and so forth one reads, the cultural products one is able to enjoy, political affiliations and othres. Lifestyles reflect the preferences, tastes and values of a class.

- **An open group:** Social classes are open groups and represent an open social system in which vertical social mobility is possible. This means there are either no restrictions or very mild restrictions imposed upon the upwards and downwards movement of individuals in the social hierarchy.

- **Social class–more than an economic group:** Social classes are mostly economic but not merely economic groups or divisions. Subjective criteria such as class-consciousness, class solidarity and class identification on the one hand, and objective criteria such as wealth, property, income, education and occupation on the other, are equally important in the class system.

Classification of Social Classes

Traditionally, sociologists have classified class into following types:

- Upper class
- Middle class
- Lower class

Warner and Lunt, in their study of a New England town, have divided each of the three traditional classes into two sub-classes. Thus, they have given the following six-fold classification of class:

- The upper-upper class
- The lower-upper class
- The upper-middle class
- The lower-middle class
- The upper-lower class
- The lower-lower class

Karl Marx, the champion of the theory of social class and class conflict, has spoken of only two major social classes – the haves and the have nots, or the rich and the poor, or the capitalists and the workers, or the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat.

Sorokin, sociologist and social critic, has spoken of three major types of class stratification. They are economic, political and occupational classes.

Differences between Caste and Class

The caste system is based on the principle of inherited inequalities. On the other hand, the class system is based on the principle of equal opportunities. Both are important systems of social stratification but represent two opposite poles.

The following are the major differences between caste and class:

- While stratification in a caste society is based on birth, it is based primarily on wealth in a class society. Therefore, caste provides an individual with a status that is ascribed whereas class status is an achieved one.

- While the structure of the caste system is closed, the class system has an open structure. Mobility is virtually impossible in the caste system but is very much possible in the class system.

- The caste system insists upon the observance of certain rules regarding eating, drinking and social intercourse among the members of different castes. However, such rules are conspicuous by their absence in a class society.

- The caste system is unique to India whereas, the class system is found all over the world.

- The caste system is believed to have had a divine origin. It is based on religious dogmas like karma, rebirth and so forth. Class system, on the other hand, is purely secular and has got nothing to do with religion.

- The idea of purity and pollution is associated with the caste system. However, it does not find place in the class system and there is no concept of untouchability as it is found in the caste system.

- Caste societies have strong caste panchayats, which maintain the caste structure by punishing those who violate the customs and traditions of their respective castes. No such organization exists in a class society.

- The caste system is conservative and orthodox whereas, the class system is liberal and progressive.
  - Caste is an endogamous social unit whereas, a class is not so. Members of a class are free to select their life partners from any other class. Unlike the caste system, a class system never imposes restrictions on marriage.
  - The caste system is a complex system. There are more than 800 castes and sub-castes in India and each one of them are complex categories. The class system is much simpler with only three broad categories, i.e., upper class, middle class and lower class.

4.4 FAMILY

The family is the most important primary group in society. It is often called the basic social institution because of its important functions of procreation and socialization. Robert Bierstedt is of the opinion that 'the family, almost without question, is the most important of any of the groups that human experience offers. Other groups we join for longer or shorter periods of time for the satisfaction of this interest or that. The family, on the contrary, is with us always or rather more precisely, we are with it.'

Sociologists have defined the family in a number of ways. MacIver and Page hold that the family is a definite and long-term group defined by sexual relationships that reproduce and bring up children. It may include other blood relations also but it is mainly formed by living together of man, woman and their children. The unit formed by their living together is called family. Ogburn and Nimkoff held that the family is an association formed by the sex relations of husband and wife with or without children. They believe that husband and wife or only the woman and her children or only the man and his

children by living together can form a family. But the family is not limited to these individuals alone. Its size can be large also. People of many generations and various relatives can also live together in a family.

Characteristics of family

The basic characteristics of family are as follows:

- **Mating relationship:** A family is based on mating relationship, that is to say that family comes into existence when a man and a woman establish mating relations between them.

- **A form of marriage:** The mating relationship is established through the institution of marriage. It is an institutional arrangement made by the society according to which the individuals establish marital relationships among themselves. Marriages may be of the following types:
  o Monogamy
  o Polygamy
  o Group marriage

- **A system of nomenclature:** Every family is known by a name and has its own system of recognizing descent. Descent may be traced through the male line, i.e., patrilineal or through the female line, i.e., matrilineal or through both the lines, i.e., bilateral.

- **Economic provisions:** Every family has certain economic needs and the head of the family looks into ways and means to satisfy these needs. He has to ensure the comfort of the family members.

- **Common habitation:** Each family has a common habitation that implies that the members of a family must reside together under one roof.

Distinctive Features of Family

Family is a very important component of our social structure and occupies a central position. Its distinctive features are discussed as follows:

- **Universality:** The family is universal. There is no society in which some form or the other of family does not exist. A typical family consists of mother, father and their progeny. It is found in all communities.

- **Emotional basis:** The family is grounded in emotions and sentiments. It is based upon our impulses of mating, procreation, maternal devotion, fraternal love and parental care. It is built upon sentiments of love, affection, sympathy, cooperation and friendship.

- **Limited size:** A family usually means a small-sized organization. As a primary group its size is necessarily limited. Biological conditions are primarily responsible for the small size.

- **Formative influence:** Family helps in the formulation of the characters of its members and in shaping their personalities. Freud and other psychologists have proved that a child exhibits the same character and mental tendencies in adulthood, which he has acquired in the family.

- **Nuclear position in the social structure:** The family is the nucleus of all other social organizations and controls the social life of the individual. It influences the whole life of the society.

● **Responsibility of the members:** Every member of the family has certain responsibilities, duties and obligations. The smooth running of the family depends on how best the members discharge their responsibilities in coordination with the other members of the family.

● **Social regulations:** The family is guarded by social taboos and legal regulations. The society takes steps to safeguard this organization from any possible breakdown due to divorce, desertion or separation.

● **Permanent and temporary:** The family is a permanent institution. Since, it is based on the organic and emotional nature of man, it continues to exist. But family as an association may be temporary in character.

Functions of Family

The family fulfills a number of functions. According to American sociologist, Goode, a family has the following functions:

● Procreation
● Socio-economic security to family members
● Determination of status of family members
● Socialization and emotional support
● Social control

Kingsley Davis, American Sociologist and demographer, talks about the following four functions of the family:

● Reproduction
● Maintenance
● Placement
● Socialization

Sociologists, Ogburn and Nimkoff have outlined the following six functions of the family:

(i) Affection
(ii) Economic
(iii) Recreational
(iv) Protective
(v) Religious
(vi) Educational

The functions of a family mentioned above can be divided into four broad categories:

(i) Biological
(ii) Social
(iii) Psychological
(iv) Economic

The biological needs of an individual are satisfied in the family. Thus, it is a very important function of the family. Firstly, the family institutionalizes the need of sex satisfaction through marriage. Social sanction is accorded to this need by the family. Secondly, the family also fulfills the biological need of procreation. The existence of the human race is

dependent upon procreation and, therefore, this is a very crucial function discharged by the family.

The family discharges the various social functions also. According to Goode, it brings up children and helps in their socialization. Children learn their language, customs and traditions while growing up in the family. The family also discharges the functions of imparting socialization to its members, regulation of their behaviour and ensuring social control. The family transmits the familial values to its members and they do not deviate from the path of proper social behaviour.

In addition to biological and social functions, the family also satisfies psychological and emotional needs of its members. The members get love, adulation, sympathy and emotional support from within the family.

Another important function of the family is economic. In pre-industrial economies, the family is the unit of production. All members of a family contribute to the family occupation like agriculture, cattle-rearing, hunting and so forth. The family provides economic security to its members. It takes care of their basic needs like food, shelter, clothing, education, health and other aspects.

Types of Family

Though family is a universal institution, its structure or forms vary not only from one society to another but also from one class to another within the same society. Sociologists have spoken of different forms or types of families and they have taken into consideration different factors for the purposes of making such classifications. A few types of family classifications are discussed as follows:

- On the basis of marriage, family has been classified into two major types:
  - Monogamous
  - Polygamous
    - (i) Polyandrous
    - (ii) Polygynous

Monogamy is a system of marriage in which one man marries one woman. In almost all the modern societies, marriages are monogamous and such families are known as monogamous families.

- Polygamy is a system of marriage that permits the marriage of one man with more than one woman or the marriage of one woman with more than one man. Polygamous marriages or families are rarely seen in the modern societies.
- On the basis of nature of residence, family can be classified into three major types:
  - Family of matriarchal residence
  - Family of patriarchal residence
  - Family of changing residence

When the wife goes to stay with her husband in his house after marriage, the residence is known as patriarchal residence. Such families are known as patriarchal families. Most of the families in all modern societies are of this type.

In cases where the husband stays in the wife's house after marriage, the residence type is known as matriarchal residence. Such families are known as matriarchal families and are predominantly found in tribal societies. In India, such families can be seen amongst the Khasi, Jayantia and Garo tribes of Meghalaya.

A third type of residence system is the one where both the husband and wife stay in a new house after marriage and start a family. This kind of family is known as a family of changing residence.

- On the basis of ancestry or descent, family can be classified into two main types:
  - o **Matrilineal family:** When descent is traced through the mother, we have the system known as the matrilineal system. Families that trace their descent through this system are known as matrilineal families. In such families, lineage and succession are determined by the female line.
  - o **Patrilineal family:** When descent is traced through the father or the male line, we have the patrilineal system. Families that follow this system are known as patrilineal families. Most of the families in the world belong to the patrilineal system and the lineage and succession in such families are determined through the father.

- On the basis of the nature of authority, family can be classified into two main types:
  - o **Matriarchal family:** The matriarchal family is also known as the mother-centred or mother-dominated family. In such families, the mother or the woman is the family head and she exercises authority. She is the owner of the family property and controls the household. The Khasis of North-East India may be called mother-right people. Amongst them, descent is traced through the mother, not the father. Inheritance passes from mother to the daughter.
  - o **Patriarchal family:** A patriarchal family is also known as father-centred or father-dominated family. The head of the family is the father or the eldest male member and he exercises authority. He is the owner and administrator of the family property. His voice is final in all family matters.

- On the basis of nature of relationship amongst its members, a family can be classified into two types:
  - o **Conjugal:** Ralph Linton has given this classification. He is of the view that a family based on blood relationship is known as **consanguine** family. For example, the relationship between a father and a son.
  - o **Consanguine**: On the other hand, a family in which there exists sex relationship between the members on the strength of marriage is known as a conjugal family. The sexual relationship between the husband and wife is a basic ingredient of the conjugal family.

- On the basis of the in-group and out-group affiliation, family can be classified into two types:
  - o **Endogamous:** It is one where the social norms make it compulsory for members of the family to marry within the larger social group to which it belongs. For example, a Brahmin family in India would be in the nature of an endogamous family because the rigid caste system does not allow inter-caste marriages. Therefore, an Indian family is usually endogamous.
  - o **Exogamous:** In societies where there is no such restriction of marrying within one's own group, families are usually exogamous. For example, members of a family belonging to one class can marry members belonging to another class in an open society.

- On the basis of size, family can be classified into three types:
  o Nuclear or individualistic family
  o Extended family
  o Joint family

Nuclear or individualistic family

In nuclear families, the members comprise the husband, wife and their children. This type of family has become more common with the advent of industrialization and urbanization, which has forced people to move out to new urban centres and seek employment. Further, factors like individualistic ideology, economic aspirations and housing problems in urban areas have strengthened the nuclear family.

Murdock has further sub-divided the nuclear family into the following two types:

- The family of orientation
- The family of procreation

The family of orientation is the family in which an individual is born and in which his parents and siblings reside. He grows up in this family of orientation and stays in it till his marriage.

Exteded family

The extended family comprises members belonging to three or more generations. For example, a man living with his parents, his wife and their children is said to be living in an extended family. According to Murdock, an extended family 'consists of two or more nuclear families affiliated through an extension of the parent-child relationship, i.e., by joining the nuclear family of a married adult to that of his parents.' Thus, the nuclear family of an individual and the nuclear family of his parents can combine together to form an extended family. This type of extended family can be seen in India, China and others countries. The joint family of India is also a type of extended family.

An extended family can also be formed when an individual and his several wives live together with the families of his several sons. This kind of extended family is seen in some African and Arab societies.

Joint family

A joint family, though a type of extended family, is an important social unit of Indian society. Smt. Iravati Karve says that 'a joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular kind of kindred.'

In brief, a joint family consists of members spanning horizontally (siblings) and vertically (generations) and living together with common goals and common assets.

You will read anout the joint family system in detail in the next section.

The Joint Family System

The joint family system can be seen across societies in various forms of extended families. However, it is more prevalent in India and has certain peculiar Indian characteristics.

The joint family has been defined as a mode of combining smaller families into larger units through the extension of three or more generations. It has also been defined

as one which consists of members related through blood and spread over several generations living together under one roof and working under a common head.

C.B. Memoria has observed that the fundamental principle of the Hindu joint family is the tie of *sapindaship* without which such a family cannot be formed. He defines a joint family as a kin group consisting of all the male descendants from a common ancestor, their wives and their unmarried daughters. Daughters, on their marriage, become members of their husbands' families. Normally, a joint family is composed of members of three generations. However, at times it may include members of four or more generations. All the members of a joint family are related to one another as *sapindas*.

In the Hindu society in India, the joint family, the caste system and the village system are considered as the three pillars on which the social edifice is built. It is a very old system and is regarded by the Hindus as a sacred institution having been derived from religion.

There are two types of joint family:
 (i) Patriarchal joint family
(ii) Matriarchal joint family

Both types are found in India. The patriarchal joint family is father-dominated and matriarchal joint family is mother-dominated. The patriarchal joint families are found among the Nambudaris of Malabar, the Mundas of Chotanagpur and the Angami Nagas of Assam. The matriarchal joint families are found among the Nairs of Malabar and the Khasis and Garos living on the Garo hills of Assam.

Characteristics of the Joint Family System

Following are the important characteristics of the joint family system in India:

- **Collection of generations:** The joint family consists of people belonging to at least three generations. Besides, it also has people related to each other and belonging to a particular generation.

- **Common roof:** Normally, the members of a joint family reside together under one roof. Due to housing problem, educational problem and employment problem, people are sometimes unable to continue with the joint family under a common roof. However, they still continue to maintain contact and relationships with each other.

- **Joint kitchen:** Merely living together under one roof does not constitute a joint family. There has to be a common kitchen for the family and all the members must eat food cooked at one hearth. Separation of kitchen implies breaking up of the joint family. Normally, in patriarchal families, the eldest female member is in charge of this joint kitchen. The womenfolk of the family serve the food to the male members first and eat only after the male members have finished eating.

- **Common property:** The members of a joint family hold property in common. Melley observes, 'a joint family is a co-operative institution similar to a joint stock company in which there is a joint property.' The earnings of the family are pooled together and household expenses are met out of the pool. The joint property is managed by the head of the family who is known as the *karta*.

- **Joint worship:** The Hindu joint family derives its strength from religion and is associated with various religious practices and rituals. Members of the family pray together and have a common family deity.

- **Exercise of authority:** In patriarchal joint families, the eldest male member is the head of the family and his directions are obeyed by all other members. He exercises complete authority in family matters. Similarly, in joint matriarchal families, this role is played by the eldest female member in the family. This exercise of supreme authority by one member is a key feature of the joint family.

- **Arranged marriages:** In the Hindu joint family, the head of the family arranges the marriages of the younger members by choosing the prospective bride or bridegroom, as the case may be. The individual members of a joint family in India do not have the freedom to choose their life partners. They rarely challenge the decisions made by the elders and the family head. However, this trend is slowly changing.

- **Procreation:** In a joint family, procreation is regarded as a religious duty. As a result, the rate of production in such families is higher. As no birth control measures are adopted by the married couples, the size of joint families is usually big. However, with modernization, this is changing and family sizes are getting smaller.

- **Self-sufficiency:** In the past, joint families used to be fully self-reliant. The members of the families derived their economic, emotional, educational, recreational and other needs from the family itself. However, things have changed today and no family can remain self-reliant in that manner as inter-dependence has increased in society.

- **Family obligations:** Members of a joint family identify themselves strongly with their family obligations. They discharge their duties towards the family diligently and the family, in turn, protects their interests.

Advantages of the Joint Family System

The joint family system has a number of advantages. Some of them are as follows:

- **Stable and long-lasting:** The joint family is more stable than a nuclear family and, therefore, it lasts for a long time. Even if a couple of members leave the family, it has no impact upon its stability and the family stands as a unit. Due to its durability, it is helpful in carrying forward the cultural traditions.

- **Ensures economic growth:** The joint family contributes to welfare and economic progress of the family members by providing the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter of its members. Further, it helps in productivity by contributing more hands to the labour force. Besides, in agricultural communities, the joint family prevents fragmentation of the family's land holdings.

- **Economizes expenditure:** Since, no member has an individual control over the family property, the family head ensures that they remain spendthrift. Joint purchases of household needs also result in savings.

- **Division of labour:** The joint family raises efficiency through division of labour. Due to the presence of a large number of members, a joint family divides various tasks amongst them. This is especially beneficial for a joint family in an agricultural community.

- **Provides social insurance:** The basic needs of family members like orphans, widows, deserted, diseased, divorced and so forth are taken care of very well in a joint family. Thus, such a family provides social security.

- **Provides leisure:** Due to the advantage of numbers, work within a joint family is shared among the members and gets completed quickly. This allows the members to have more time for leisure and relaxation.

- **Provides recreation:** Due to the presence of a large number of persons of different age groups, a joint family is an ideal place for enjoyment and entertainment. The interaction between the young and the old, the games played by the children, the combined celebration of festivals and other aspects all add up to provide valuable recreation to the members.

- **Provides social security:** A joint family, apart from acting like an insurance company for its relatively disadvantaged members, also provides social security to the aged, infirm and sick members of the family. In times of crises like accidents, the joint family takes care of the affected members. It is often said that a joint family takes care of an individual from his cradle to his grave.

- **Provides psychological security:** A joint family provides psychological security to its members by giving them a feeling of staying with one's own. It does not allow any member to develop strong individualistic mindset, thereby preventing him from becoming aloof and lonely.

- **Promotes cooperative virtues:** A joint family instills many virtues into the minds and characters of its members. Qualities like cooperation, discipline, sympathy, tolerance, sacrifice, loyalty and other qualities are learnt and imbibed in such families. All the members get tied in a bond of love and sacrifice and promote the welfare of their family through their positive traits.

- **Ensures social control:** The joint family acts as an agency of social control by controlling the behaviour of its members. It teaches each member to think about the common interests of the family and sacrifice individual interests.

- **Develops a sense of tolerance:** The presence of a large number of members results in expression of divergent views on a variety of issues. The members learn to respect each other's views and this helps them in developing a sense of tolerance while dealing with the views of other members of the society. Such a sense of tolerance is good for any society as it leaves room for discussion and debate.

Disadvantages of the Joint Family System

It is not that the joint family system only has positive things to offer. It also suffers from many demerits. Some of such demerits or disadvantages are as follows:

- **Retards personality development:** Due to the overbearing nature of the family head in a joint family, the younger members fail to develop any leadership quality. They remain protected and become weak and shaky in life. They never get a chance to show their talents or develop strong personalities.

- **Kills individual initiative:** The joint family does not allow its members to develop their talents. Individual enterprise gets killed in such an environment. The young members do not get a chance to show their originality or creativity.

- **Promotes lethargy:** The joint family does not provide much incentive for hard work because everybody is assured of his food, shelter and clothing. This results in promoting a dependency syndrome, which is bad for the economy and society.

- **Disincentive savings:** Since basic needs of every member are assured, there is no incentive to save money and invest the same in quality assets. Besides, savings is not easy for the earning members as there are a large number of non-earning members who have to be taken care of.

- **Hampers privacy:** Personal privacy is badly affected in the joint family system due to the presence of large number of family members in the house. This is especially true in case of newly married couples who do not get the desired privacy to know each other intimately and share their feelings of love. This affects them both emotionally and psychologically.

- **Promotes quarrels:** In a joint family, chances of frequent quarrels among the family members are more due to the presence of a number of persons. This is true in case of married women of the family as they come into this large family from different families with different upbringing. They usually do not get along well with each other and end up spoiling their relationships.

- **Adversely affects children's socialization:** Since, the parents are not able to devote exclusive time to their children in a joint family set-up, the socialization of the children does not take place in a proper way. Children remain aloof to their parents and get more attached to their grandparents. The values instilled by the grandparents may sometimes be not in tune with the modern times.

- **Promotes higher reproduction:** A joint family system promotes higher reproduction as there is no disincentive of giving birth to more children. Irrespective of the number of children that they have parents are assured that the basic needs of their children – food, health, education and clothes would be automatically taken care of by the family.

- **Adversely affects status of women:** A joint family system is unfavourable for women. They are treated badly in the patriarchal joint families and are made to work like servants of the household. They do not get any respect for the work they do and have no financial or social autonomy. Sometimes, they do not even have a say in matters personal to them like their health, higher education, visits to their parental homes and so forth.

- **Promotes litigation:** Due to the presence of common property in a joint family system, there is bound to be a lot of litigation and it does happen. A plethora of cases are filed by family members against each other to gain control over the family assets.

- **Limits social mobility:** Joint families restrict the social mobility of their members. They are not encouraged to adapt to the modern world and are forced to remain bound by traditions. This prevents them from accepting changes and moving ahead in life.

- **Delays decision-making:** Due to the presence of a large number of family members, decision-making is very slow in a joint family set-up. There are discussions and deliberations before taking any major decisions. While such discussions are good and help in taking the right decisions, its slow pace frustrates the younger members.

Changing Nature of the Joint Family System and the Causes of Change

The institution of joint family has started undergoing change and is moving towards disintegration. This is primarily the result of the forces of modernization, which is transforming Indian society.

Industrialization and urbanization have resulted in the breakdown of the joint family because the latter is better placed to handle agricultural societies. With industrialization, family has ceased to be the unit of production as it used to be in an agrarian set-up. People leave their villages in search of employment in new industries coming up in urban areas and break their link with their joint family. Thus, the new industry-based economy has shaken the foundations of the joint family system.

Industrialization has been helped further by the modern means of transportation and communication. Bus and train services from rural areas to the towns and cities have enabled people to travel to urban areas in search of employment opportunities. This has quickened the pace of the decline of the joint family. With the spread of telecom facilities, especially with the easy availability of mobile telephony, people can stay connected with their families without staying together under a common roof. Due to this, the dependence of people on their traditional family occupation, which was a major factor for the survival and importance of the joint family, has reduced. They are migrating to urban areas for better employment opportunities.

The influence of the western countries on our thinking and way of life is also an important factor that has changed the joint family system in India. The family structure of the western world is characterized by the nuclear family. This is so because they base their family on the ideas of freedom, equality, love between husband and wife and communication. The Indian joint family has very little scope for all of these. Therefore, the younger generation in India prefers the nuclear family. The joint family is trying to adapt to this situation and the family heads are trying to provide more space to all the members by decentralizing power. Notwithstanding this, westernization has resulted in greatly reducing the importance of the joint family system.

Indian women have managed to break the shackles of male-domination upon them to a significant extent. This has happened due to the empowerment of women through the forces of education and employment. For women to come of age, it was important for them to get out of the conservative and oppressive environment prevalent in joint families. The status of women was very low in joint families and an enhancement in their status is directly linked to the decline of such families. Thus, higher status of women can be said to have adversely affected the joint family system in India.

The joint family system has faced serious challenges from progressive social legislations enacted during the British Rule and after independence. Legislations like The Civil Marriage Act, 1872; The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 have eroded the pre-dominant position of the joint family system in the Indian society. These acts resulted in empowering women by giving them various rights relating to marriage, divorce and inheritance of property. This empowerment of women shook the joint family system in which women used to be treated with scant respect. As a result, joint families in India are reinventing themselves and women are being given the respect that they deserve. But the trend is towards more individualistic or nuclear families as they provide greater freedom and privacy to the young couples.

Another reason for the decline of the joint family is the shortage of residential space in urban areas. Since, houses are small; it is not possible for a large number of

family members to cohabit. In villages, even if the houses were small, there were vast open spaces in and around the house, which is not the case in towns and cities. Therefore, the family size had to be necessarily small in urban areas. This aspect goes against the joint family system.

The quarrels among the members of the joint family are yet another reason for its decline. The presence of many members, especially the women members hailing from different families, often resulted in such quarrels. Nuclear families became the preferred option for people as they wanted to avoid such frequent quarrels.

The changes and the causes of those changes discussed above would indicate that the joint family system in India is disintegrating. However, scholars have pointed out, it would be wrong to say that joint family has been or would be completely replaced by nuclear families. Empirical studies by eminent sociologists like I.P. Desai, K.M. Kapadia, Aileen Ross, M.S. Gore, A.M. Shah and Sachchidananda have shown that the jointness in the joint family is decreasing whereas the nuclearity is increasing. They have pointed out that joint families would continue to exist in their evolved forms and would never fade away.

These scholars have found out from their studies that the joint family continues to exist but their sizes have come down. They are no longer the huge families with large number of members spread vertically and horizontally. The joint family has evolved to give way to a trimmer joint family wherein a maximum of three generations reside. It is now a compact and functional unit. It now includes only the siblings and the father's brothers.

Therefore, it can be concluded that so long as the old cultural values persist among the people, the functional type of joint family would continue to thrive in the Indian society. The residential type of joint family would be under strain as people tend to move out in search of employment, freedom and privacy.

4.5 MARRIAGE

Hindu marriage is considered a sacrament, or a sacred bond. Its aim is not only to secure sexual gratification but also to advance spiritual development. According to K.M. Kapadia, 'Hindu marriage is a socially approved union of men and women aiming at dharma, procreation, sexual pleasure and observance of certain obligations.' Ancient Hindu texts point out three main aims of marriage. These are *Dharma*, (fulfillment of religious duties, which was the highest aim of marriage), *Praja* (progeny) and *Rati* (sexual pleasure). Several reasons are given for considering a Hindu marriage as sacred:

  (i) *Dharma.*

 (ii) Performance of the religious ceremony includes certain rites like *havan*, *kanyadan*, *panigrahan* and *saptapadi*.

(iii) The rites are performed before *agni* by reciting mantras from the Vedas by a Brahmin.

(iv) The union is considered inviolable and irrevocable and husband and wife are bound to each other not only until death but even after death.

 (v) Though a man performs several sacraments during the course of his life, a woman performs only one sacrament of marriage in her life, hence, it carries great importance for her.

Check Your Progress

5. Mention the distinctive features of family.

6. What is a matrilineal family?

7. What is a joint family?

(vi) Marriage is considered to be a social duty towards the family and the community and there is little scope for individual interest and aspiration.

Forms of Hindu Marriage

Hindu scriptures described eight forms of Hindu marriage. These are:

1. **Brahma vivah:** This is the ideal form of Hindu marriage. It is settled by parents, a Brahmin is called to preside over the marriage rites and the daughter is given by her father to the groom (this is called *kanyadan*), along with some dowry of ornaments and clothes.

2. **Daiva vivah:** The father of the bride offers his daughter in the hand of the priest as *dakshina*. It was considered as an ideal form of marriage in ancient times but has become irrelevant today.

3. **Arsha vivah:** In this form of marriage the bride's father gets something from the groom, like a pair of cattle, in exchange for his daughter.

4. **Parjapatya vivah:** In this form of marriage, the consent of the parents is essential but no ceremony is performed.

5. **Asura vihah:** The bride price is given by the groom to the bride's father. This is a sort of an economic contract and there is no limit or stipulation on the amount given.

6. **Gandharva vivah:** This was the traditional form of love marriage. Here neither is the consent of parents necessary nor are the rites or dowry essential.

7. **Rakshasa vivah:** This type of marriage is by capture or abduction without obtaining the consent of the girl or her parents. This was practised in times when group conflicts and tribal wars were very common. The victorious groups used to carry away the girls of the conquered group.

8. **Paisacha vivah:** This is the least acceptable form of marriage. A woman who is seduced when asleep or unconscious or when incapable of protecting herself is given the status of the wife.

Of these eight forms of marriage, Brahma vivaha is considered to be the best marriage where a girl is given to a boy of merit in the same caste or in a caste of equal status. Both bride and groom are competent enough to give consent.

Rules of Mate Selection

In order to ensure the purity and maintain the distinctive identity of different groups in society, Hindu law-makers have stipulated detailed rules and regulations governing the choice of a partner for the union of marriage. These laws are based on two rules:

(i) **Endogamic rule:** Endogamy is a social rule that requires a person to select a spouse from within certain groups. These endogamous groups specifically refer to varna, caste and sub-caste. Thus, a Brahmin boy has not only to marry a Brahmin girl but a *kanyakubja* boy has to marry a *kunyakubja* girl, a *saryupari* boy has to marry a *saryupari* girl and a *gaur* boy has to marry a *gaur* girl. Although endogamy is restricted to a tribe or a caste, there are exceptions in some cases. The Anuloma, or hypergamy, allows the alliance of lower caste women to higher caste men. This practice occurs mainly among different sub-sections of a caste or sub-caste rather than between castes. In Pratiloma marriage based on the rule of hypogamy, an upper caste woman can enter into an alliance with a man of a lower caste.

(ii) **Exogamic rule:** Exogamy is a social rule which forbids selection of a spouse from certain groups. The two types of exogamy practiced by Hindus are gotra exogamy and sapinda exogamy. In a few cases, besides *gotra* and *sapinda*, the village is also treated as an exogamous group. Mclennan in his book *Studies in Indian History* writes that the custom of exogamy arose owing to the paucity of women in early times.

  (a) *Sagotra* **exogamy:** A *gotra* is a group whose members are believed to have descended from a common mythical ancestor of a rishi. Initially, there were only eight gotras but gradually their number increased to thousands. The *gotra* exogamy prohibits marriage between members of the same *gotra*. The four-clan rule or four *gotra* exogamous rule prevails among Hindu castes in North India. In accordance with this four-clan rule, a man cannot marry a girl from: (i) his father's *gotra* or clan (ii) his mother's *gotra* or clan (iii) his father's mother's *gotra* and (iv) mother's mother's *gotra*. In almost all castes in the northern zone, according to Karve(1953) the marriage between cousins is prohibited. It was Manu who imposed restrictions on *gotra* marriage. However the restrictions on *gotra* marriage were removed in 1946 by the Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Act.

  (b) *Sapinda* **exogamy:** The word *sapinda* has two meanings: those who can offer rice balls to the deceased, and those who share the particles of the same body. *Sapinda* are those who are related to one another in ascending or descending order, by five generations through the mother's side and seven generations through father's side. Marriage with such a person is prohibited. Gautam has recommended avoiding seven generations from the father's side and five from the mother's side. The Hindu Marriage Act 1955 prohibits *sapinda* marriage in general, but allows this in the form of cross cousin marriages as a peculiar custom of South India. Among Christians and Muslims, the elementary nuclear family is the exogamous unit. Today, even though this rule is followed by and large by all Hindus, some cases of cousin marriages are known to happen.

Tribal Marriage in India

The institution of marriage is another issue on which tribal people throughout the world have been much maligned. Indian tribes, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, practice several forms of marriage as a matter of convenience and social acclimatization in their respective cultural and ecological settings. Most tribes are monogamous with few exceptions, such as on some festive occasions. Even among the most primitive tribes like the Toda, the Andamanese, the Kadar, and the Chenchu, where sexual morals are lax, there still exist strict marriage rules. Marital fidelity is practiced and enforced in most tribes. Proscriptions, prescriptions and preferences that determine the choice of spouses or partners in tribal societies, are based on very strict rules.

Preference in Mate Selection

The tribes of India differ from each other in the manner in which mate selection is carried out. On one hand, society prohibits sexual liaisons or matrimonial alliances between particular kin or in the same clan or *gotra*, but on the other hand, it encourages matrimonial alliances between certain other kins. The following are some of the popular types of preferential marriages prevalent among the Indian tribes:

Cousin marriage: Both types of cousin marriages, i.e., cross cousin and parallel cousin, are quite popular among the Indian tribes. The Gond, Kharia, Khasi and Kadar are some of the important Indian tribes practicing cousin marriage. When the children of a brother and a sister marry it is a cross cousin marriage. On the other hand, it is parallel cousin marriage when the children of two sisters or two brothers get married. The Gonds of Madhya Pradesh call this form of marriage 'doodh lautawa' (return of milk). Levirate and sororate are two other types of preferential marriages which are also said to promote 'inter-familial cordiality' by making certain linkages imperative.

Marriage among Different Ethnic Groups

Ways of acquiring mates: There are nine important ways of acquiring mates among tribes:

  (i) **Marriage by capture:** When a man snatches a woman away from her village and marries her, it is called marriage by capture. Many tribal societies give social sanction to this type of marriage which symbolizes valour and chivalry. It is popular among the Naga tribes of the north eastern region, where Naga tribals of one village used to invade the enemy's village and capture grown up girls. Among the Ho it is called *oportipi* and among the Gond it is called *posiothur*. It is of two types: physical capture and ceremonial capture. In the case of physical capture, the man carries away the woman forcefully, and marries her. However, in ceremonial capture, the man adopts a procedure wherein he surprises the woman by smearing vermilion on her forehead.

 (ii) **Marriage by exchange:** This method has evolved primarily to avoid the payment of a high bride price. According to such a marriage, two households exchange women with each other and, thus, avoid the payment of bride price. The Uralis of Kerala, the Muria Gonds and Baiga of Bastar and the Koya and the Saora of Andhra Pradesh practice this trend.

(iii) **Marriage by purchase:** It is a common mode of matrimony throughout India. In this form of tribal marriage the parents of the bridegroom pay in cash or kind to the bride's parents. This money or material goods is the bride pride. It is prevalent among Munda, Oraon, the Santhal, Rengma Naga and others. The worst financial consequence is seen among the Ho tribals of Chota Nagpur, Bihar. Their poor economic condition has been made worse by the increasing amount of bride price.

 (iv) **Marriage by elopement:** This takes place when a couple love each other and want to marry against the wishes of their parents who are against this marriage. In this situation, both of them run away from the village for a certain period of time after which they come back and are then acknowledged as husband and wife. This is called *raji khusi* marriage among the Ho tribes of Jharkhand. The tribes of Chotanagpur also practice this.

  (v) **Marriage by service:** This is another way of avoiding the payment of bride price altogether (or minimizing it considerably) through services rendered by the prospective groom at the bride's residence for a particular period. If the girl's father is satisfied with the work done, then he gives his daughter's hand to him at the end of the period. If he is dissatisfied, then the man is asked to leave the house and never come back. This is practised among the Gonds, Baigas, Birhor and others.

(vi) Marriage by intrusion: In this kind of marriage, the girl is desirous of getting married to the young man, but he is unwilling. The girl thrusts herself on the unwilling groom and his parents. She does this in order to serve the would-be man in her life but is humiliated and tortured in return. If she persists in her efforts and endures her torment for a considerable period of time, she is finally accepted as the daughter-in-law. Among the Oraons it is known as *nirbolok* and among the Ho as *anader*.

(vii) Marriage by trial: This is the recognition of personal courage and bravery as highly desirable traits in a young man. It is most popular among the Bhils during the Holi festival. Young men and women perform a folk dance around a pole or a tree, to the top of which coconut or gur are tied. The women make an inner ring of dancers around the tree. When a young man attempts to break through the cordon to climb the tree to eat the gur and break open the coconut, the girls resist his attempt. If, in spite of this, the man succeeds then he has the right to demand any of the surrounding girls as his wife.

(viii) Marriage by mutual consent: This is a result of the contact that the tribals have had with Hindus over a period of time. This practice is similar and prevalent among Muslims, Hindus, Christians and so forth in which all the formalities of marriage are arranged by the parties concerned through the process of mutual consultation and consent.

(ix) Probationary marriage: As per this practice, the husband and wife are permitted to live together for some time in the bride's house. If they like each other and decide to marry, the elders arrange their early marriage. In case the couple do not find each other's temperament to be suitable and compatible, they separate, and the man has to pay cash compensation to the girl's parents. It is prevalent among the Kuki of Arunachal Pradesh.

Divorce among Hindus

Marriage in the traditional Hindu society, regarded essentially as *dharmic*, is gradually becoming secularized in the modern era. Desertion, separation and divorce, though not clearly sanctified by Hindu law except in very unusual circumstances, have received significant attention in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. This code also eliminated the discriminatory status of previous customs by which a man exerted more power, enjoyed a superior position, and had the right to seek a divorce or abandon a wife on his own. The Marriage Law Amendment Act, 1976 widened the basis for seeking divorce by providing divorce through mutual consent and on the grounds of desertion and cruelty.

Marriage among Muslims

In marriage among Muslims, a man and woman enter into a solemn pact for life. There is a popular conception that in Islamic law, marriage is not considered to be sacrament but rests entirely on a contractual basis. Muslim marriage is called *Nikah* and is both an act of *ibadat* (devotion to God) and *maumalat* (dealings among men). Witnesses are a necessary condition for a valid marriage. There are two main sects of the Muslim community in India, Shias and Sunnis. Inter marriages among these groups are discouraged. There are two types of Muslim marriages, regular (*shahi*) and irregular (*fasid*).

Muta marriage

Muslims also have a system of temporary marriage called *muta* marriage. This is a marriage settled by a man and a woman by mutual consent and without the intervention of kin. A man is permitted to contract *muta* marriage with a Muslim, a Jew or a Christian girl but a woman cannot contract such a marriage with a non-Muslim. A wife secured through *muta* marriage is known as *sigha*. In this form of marriage, the period of cohabitation must be stipulated and the amount of dowry should be predetermined. Where the duration of the marriage has not been fixed, the marriage remains illegitimate.

Dower (*Mehr*)

Dower comprises of money or property which the wife gets from her husband when she marries him. As per Muslim law, dower is the obligation which is imposed on the husband as a mark of respect to his wife. The amount of the *mehr* is determined either before, or after, or at the time of the marriage. Though it cannot then be reduced, it may be increased at the husband's will. It can either be prompt (*muajjal*) or deferred (*muwajjal*).

Divorce among Muslims

Under Muslim law, the contract of marriage can be dissolved either with or without the intervention of the court. The divorce can be obtained either on the basis of Muslim law by judicial decree, or the marriage can be broken without the court's intervention, by the husband at his will (called *talaq*) or by the mutual consent of husband and wife called (*khula* or *kohl* and *mubarat*). The difference between *khula* and *mubarat* is that, in the former the divorce is intiated at the instance of wife, whereas in the latter, since both the parties desire separation, the initiative can be taken by either wife or husband. Divorce or *talaq*, can be carried out in any one of the following three ways:

(i) *Talaq–e-ahasan:* This consists of a single pronouncement made during a *tuhr* (period of maturation) and followed by abstinence from sexual relations throughout the period of *iddat*.

(ii) *Talq-e-hasan:* This consists of three pronouncements made during three successive *tuhrs* and no intercourse taking place during any of these three *tuhrs*.

(iii) *Talaq–ul-bidat:* This is a disapproved form of divorce which includes two types of triple declaration and a single irrevocable declaration. The triple declaration comprises three pronouncements made in a single *tuhr*, either in one sentence or in three sentences. This form of *talaq* is irrevocable. It is the most common mode of *talaq* in the country.

In addition to these three types of *talaq*, the Shariat Act of 1937 makes a mention of three other kinds of divorce as well:

(i) *Illa:* In this, the husband swears by god promising not to enter into sexual relationships with his wife for four months or more. If the husband follows his promise, the marriage is considered dissolved.

(ii) *Lian:* If the husband imposes a false charge of adultery on the wife, the wife prays to the court that the husband be ordered to take back his charge.

(iii) *Zihar:* In this, the husband compares his wife with some near relative whom he cannot marry. For instance, if the husband compares his wife with his mother, he cannot enter into sexual relationship with her unless he repents for this comparison. If he fails to do so, the wife can divorce him.

Marriage among Christians

The Christian society is stratified into Protestants and Catholics. The Catholics are further divided into Latin Catholics and Syrian Catholics. These groups are generally endogamous and do not marry intra-group. In Christianity, religion plays a predominant role in marital unions. Christians believe that marriages are made in heaven and decided by God. The Christians usually practice monogamy and there are strict restrictions on polygamy. Divorce is not appreciated by the Church. The Christian marriage system is quite different from the Hindu marriage system. The Indian Christians follow the Western marriage system of the British.

The Christian Marriage Act 1872 is the law that regulates solemnization of marriages among Christians. It extends throughout India except the territories, which immediately after 1 Nov. 1956 comprised of the states of Travancore, Cochin, Manipur, and Jammu and Kashmir. Christian marriage focuses on certain important aspects like procreation, prohibition of sexual relations without marriage and mutual help and comfort. Hence, it is correct to state that Christian marriage is a bond between man and woman, normally intended to be binding for life, for sexual union, mutual respect and companionship, and establishment of a family. In a true marriage, each partner seeks the fulfilment of the other. By complementing each other, the union between husband and wife is enhanced. In their love for one another, through their faithfulness to one another and in their fruitfulness, husband and wife reflect God's image in a mysterious and wonderful way. Their union is the fruit of more than companionship or partnership; it is the deepest intimacy. (Arnold, 2007). As Friedrich Nietzsche writes, 'It is brought about by the resolve of two to create a unity which is more than those who created it. It is reverence for one another and for the fulfilment of such a resolve.' (Arnold, 2007).

Marital unions

The Syrian Christians remained as endogamous groups and marriage between Latin and Syrian Christians were rare. In the Kerala Church, denomitional divisions grew. The Syrian Christians are ethnic groups who differ from others in terms of their doctrinal beliefs and religious principles. Marriages between different denominations are possible only if they belong to a single origin of Syrian Christians, rather than being converts. While selecting a marriage partner, it is ensured that the partners are not related by blood. The Christian wedding takes place in a church in the presence of a priest. However, Christian marriage takes place with the consent of both the bride and the groom. The Christians practice divorce as well, and grounds like adultery and cruelty can lead to the dissolution of marriage. Among the Christians, widow remarriage is accepted and also encouraged.

Recent Changes in the Institution of Marriage

The onset of globalization has brought about innumerable changes in the institution of marriage. For instance, in the case of India, the majority of citizens, even those who have formal education, practice arranged marriage. However, commitment towards the union of marriage is disappearing as a result of modernization in India these days (*India Today,* Aug. 1, 1998). In urban India, youngsters are more inclined to choose their own partners, though arranged marriages still continue to dominate. The cultural values of upper and middle class Indians, as well as urban Indians have changed considerably due to the influence of media and the evolving trends of a cosmopolitan, Western culture.

Even though the traditional nature of marriage has changed considerably, the belief in marriage remains intact and marriage continues to be an important institution in Indian society. At this point in time, India is undergoing rapid changes on the basis of strong economic growth, which is leading to high consumption patterns, new professional and economic opportunities and upward mobility. Marriage and family are pre-eminent institutions that govern and impact the lives of people on a personal level. These connect very closely with economic growth and its related benefits. Demographic trends, intra and inter-country migration, economic shifts and political and gender struggles are rapidly changing the marriage scenario in societies across the globe. The questions then arise, are these fundamental shifts in the importance, types and nature of marriage actually challenging the sanctity of marriage per se? Are the younger generations ignoring parental matchmaking criteria and basing marriages on romance and love (or choosing their own partners)? Which sections of youth (class, caste, occupation, location, and region) are embodying these changes the most? Where and how do meetings, matchmaking and courtship take place? How are marital preferences being discussed and negotiated within the wider circles of the family, community and caste nexus? These are some of the important questions which should be addressed.

In a far-reaching recommendation to the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the National Commission for Women has sought a change in the definition of 'wife' — as described in Section 125 of CRPC, which deals with maintenance — and suggested that it include women involved in live-in relationships as well. The move aims to harmonize other sections of the law with the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act that treats a live-in couple's relationship at par with that of a legally married husband and wife.

Despite the changing rules of marriage, divorce and live-in relationships, the institution of marriage still occupies an important place in the hearts and minds of people in India.

4.6 Kinship

In every society, a male at some time in his life, plays the roles of a husband, a father and a son and a brother in some family; and a female plays the roles of a wife, a mother and a daughter and a sister. But due to the incest taboo, a man cannot play the roles of a father and a husband in the same nuclear family in which he is a son and a brother. Similarly, a woman cannot play the roles of a mother and a wife in the same nuclear family in which she is a daughter and a sister. Hence, every adult individual belongs to two nuclear families—the *family of orientation* in which he was born and reared, and the *family of procreation* which he establishes by marriage. This fact of individual membership in two nuclear families gives rise to kinship system.

Due to the of the fact that individuals belong to two nuclear families, every person forms a link between the members of his family of orientation and those of his family of procreation. Such links bind individuals to one another through kinship ties.

According to Theodorson and Theodorson, 'kinship is a social relationship based upon family relatedness'. The nature of relationship which may be consanguineal or affinal determines the rights and obligations of related persons. A **kin group** is group united by ties of blood or marriage. Most kin groups, other than the family, are consanguineal. According to Theodorson, 'kinship system is the customary system of statuses and roles that governs the behaviour of people who are related to each other through marriage or descent from a common ancestor'. According to Mudrock, 'kinship

is a structured system of relationship in which kin are bound to one another by complex inter-locking ties'.

Categories of Kinship

There are mainly four kinship categories: primary kin, secondary kin, tertiary kin, and distant kin. The *primary kin* are those kin who belong to the Ego's nuclear families of orientation and procreation. Thus, father (Fa), mother (Mo), sister (Si), and brother (Br) in one's family of orientation, and husband (Hu), wife (Wi), son (So), and daughter (Da) in one's family of procreation, are one's primary kin. Each of Ego's primary kin will have his/her own primary kin, who will not be primary kin of Ego. These will be called Ego's *secondary* kin. For example, FaFa, FaMo, MoFa, MoBr, etc. There are 33 types of secondary kin. The primary kin of the secondary kin are called *tertiary kin*. There are 151 types of tertiary kin. Lastly, the primary kin of tertiary kin are called *distant kin*. Their number is very large. Kinship relationship characterizes every relationship between kin and it determines reciprocal behaviour.

Part of the reciprocal behaviour characterizing every relationship between kin, consists of a verbal element, i.e., the terms by which each addresses the other. In some cases, people use personal names, in others they use kinship terms, and in a few cases they employ what Tylor has called 'teknonymy', i.e., combination of personal and kinship terms; for example, Suresh's father, Pinki's mother, and so forth. Murdock has classified kinship terms on three bases:

(i) **Mode of use of kinship terms:** This refers to the kinship term employed either in direct address *(term of address)* or in indirect reference *(term of reference)*. Some people have distinct set of terms for address and reference, for example, *pita (term of reference)* and *baba (term of address)* for father, or *mata* and *amba* for mother, but others make only grammatical distinctions or none at all. Terms of address tend to reveal more duplication and overlapping; for example just as in English language the term 'uncle' is used for a number of people (like FaFa, MoBr, father's elderly cousin, and for all elderly persons). Similarly in Indian languages, the term *bhai* is used not only for one's own brother but also for cousin and many other persons.

(ii) **Linguistic structure of kinship terms:** On this basis, kinship terms are distinguished as elementary, derivative and descriptive. *Elementary* term is one which cannot be reduced to any other term, for example, English terms 'father', 'nephew', etc. or Hindi terms *sali*, *jeth*, *mata*, *pita*, *bhai*, *kaka*, *chacha*, *taoo*, *bahen*, etc. *Derivative* term is compounded from an elementary term, for example, grandfather, sister-in-law, step-son, or Hindi terms *pitamaha* (FaFa), *prapitamaha* (FaFaFa), *duhitr* (daughter), *mausa* (MoSi Hu), *bahnoi* (SiHu) and others. The *descriptive* term is one which combines two or more elementary terms to denote a specific relative, for example, wife's sister, brother's wife, sister's husband, or Hindi terms *bhratra-jaya* (BrWi), *arya-putra* (father-in-law), *mauseri-bahen*, (MoSiDa), *phuphera-bhai* (FaSiSo).

(iii) **Range of application of kinship terms:** On this basis, kinship terms are differentiated as denotative and classificatory. *Denotative* or isolative term applies only to one kin as defined by generation, sex and geneological connection, for example, father, mother, brother, sister, or Hindi terms *pati*, *patni*, *bhai*, *bahen*, and so forth. The *classificatory* term applies to persons of two or more kinship categories, for example, grandfather (used both for father's father and mother's

father), cousin (used for father's brother's son and mother's sister's son), brother-in-law (used for sister's husband and wife's brother). It is through the liberal use of classificatory terms that all societies reduce the number of kinship categories from the thousands to a very modest number. A term arises only by ignoring one or more fundamental criteria of distinction between kins, for example, criterion of sex (cousin refers to both male and female), generation (bhai ignores ego's own generation as well as first ascending or descending generation), affinity (whether kin related through blood or marriage), collaterality (consanguineal relative of same generation, for example, brother and cousin), bifurcation (whether kin is secondary, tertiary or distant, for example,*pitamaha*), age (whether younger or older for example, *bhai*) and decedence (whether alive or dead).

Importance of Kinship

Next to family, kinship group plays a very crucial role in the daily life, rituals and social ceremonies of Hindus. People turn to their kin not only for help in exigencies of life but even on regular occasions too. The kinship group may consist of 4 to 5 families or as many as 20 to 35 families. The important kinship groups after the family are*vansh* (lineage) and *gotra* (clan).

Vansh is an extension of family. It is a consanguineous unilateral descent group whose members trace themselves from a known (and real) common ancestor.*Vansh* is based on more precise and specific genealogy. It may be either patrilineal or matrilineal.

The *Vansh* members are treated as brothers and have fraternal allegiance to each other. Its ties lapse after several generations but the number of obligated generations is not usually specified clearly. The *Vansh* fellows who live in the same neighbourhood or same village exchange economic aid, pool labour at harvest, help in dispute settlements, and cooperate with each other almost on all important occasions.

A main link among the families of a *vansh* is common participation in ritual functions. They participate together in each other's lifecycle observances like birth, death and so forth. They worship the same deities and follow the same restrictions. The *Vansh* fellows also cooperate for economic purposes.

The *vansh* passes into *gotra* which is also a unilateral kin group but is larger than the *vansh*. It has a mythical ancestor and is exogamous. Each person inherits the *gotra* of his father. According to T.N. Madan, 'the separation of a lineage is usually a gradual process and comes about through the slow, piecemeal relinquishing of mutual exchanging—sometimes under protest and sometimes mutually accepted—rather than in an abrupt, explosive break'. The exogamous principle is, however, not relinquished, even after abandoning lineage cooperation.

The *vansh* relations are limited in time and space, whereas the *gotra* relations endure through time and across space. The members of a *gotra* usually have an origin story linking all of them to the same supernatural or mythical source. Cooperation within the *gotra* depends on economic factors as well as distance in place of residence. Today, the functions of *gotra* are minimal and is now limited for regulating marriage.

A man's relations with his feminal kin, *i.e.*, kin related through his mother, his married sisters, his wife and his married daughters, are equally important in his life. The exchange of gifts, periodic visits, reciprocal support in personal emergencies, and regular communication strengthen their relations with each other. Mother's brother has many obligations to perform for his neices and nephews on different occasions. The feminal kinsmen, are more concerned with the individual and his problems as a person

than as a member of a group. Hence, we can say that feminal relationships help to integrate each person and each village into a social network of villages that affect many aspects of village life.

Features of Kinship in Different Zones

Let us look at the features of kinship in different zones.

Northern zone

Though kinship behaviour in the northern zone changes slightly from region to region and within each region from caste to caste, yet comparative study shows that it is possible to talk of an 'ideal' northern pattern referring to practices and attitudes generally found to be common among the majority of castes. Some important features/folkways of the kinship organization of the northern zone are as follows:

  (i) Kin junior to 'ego' are addressed by their personal names and senior to 'ego' by the kinship term.

  (ii) All children in ascending and descending generations are equated with one's own sibling group (brothers and sisters) and all children of one's sibling group are again equated with one's own children.

  (iii) The principle of unity of generations is observed (for example, great-grandfather and grandfather are given same respect as father).

  (iv) Within the same generation, the older and the younger kin are kept distinct.

  (v) The duties and behaviour patterns of the members of three generations are strictly regulated.

  (vi) Some of the ancient kinship terms having Sanskrit origin have been replaced by new terms; for example, *pitamaha* is replaced by *pita*. Suffix '*ji*' is added to kinship terms used for kin older than the speaker (for example, *chachaji*, *tauji*, etc.) In Bengal, instead of '*ji*' suffix '*moshai*' is added.

  (vii) Marriage among close kin is not permitted.

  (viii) After marriage, a girl is not expected to be free with her parents-in-law; but when she becomes a mother, she achieves position of respect and power, and restrictions on her are lessened.

  (ix) The family is so structured that children, parents and grandparents either live together or social kinship obligations towards them are clearly met.

  (x) Apart from the joint family which represents a person's intimate and nearest circle of relations, there is always a larger circle of kin who play a part in his life. This kindred represents the circle of his *patri*-kin or matri-kin who may stand by him and help him when the immediate family no longer suffices.

Central zone

The important features of kinship in Central India are:

  (i) Consanguinity is the main consideration which rules marriage.

  (ii) The kinship terminology shows intimacy and closeness between various kin. The relations between kin are governed by the custom of *neota*-gifts according to which cash-gift is given equivalent to cash-gift received. The *neota*-registers are maintained and preserved for generations.

(iii) Many castes are divided into exogamous clans. Among some castes, the exogamous clans are arranged in hypergamous hierarchy.

(iv) Some castes like Marathas and Kunbis practice bride-price too, though dowry custom also exists among them.

(v) In Gujarat, *mamera*-type of cousin marriage (with mother's brother) and levirate (marriage with husband's brother) are practised by some castes.

(vi) The custom of periodic marriages in Gujarat has led to child marriages as well as unequal marriages. Such marriages are practised even today.

(vii) In Maharashtra, the clan organization of the Marathas is similar to that of the Rajputs which is arranged in a ladder manner. Clans are grouped into divisions and each division in named according to the number of clans it comprises; for example *panch-kuli*, *sat-kuli*, etc. The clans are arranged in hypergamous order, the highest being the *panch-kuli*, followed by the *sat-kuli*, etc. The *panch-kuli* can marry among themselves or can take a girl from the *sat-kuli*, etc., but do not give their daughters outside the *panch-kuli*.

(viii) Though the kinship terms are mostly northern yet some terms are borrowed from the Dravidians in the south; for example, use of the term *anna* and *nana* for brother along with the term *dada*. Similarly, use of term *akka*, *tai* and *mai* for sister.

(ix) Though the family system in Maharashtra is patrilineal and patrilocal, yet in castes like Marathas, the wife moves to and from her father's house very frequently. Once she goes to her father's house, it is difficult to get her back to her husband's house.

(x) The kinship system of the tribals in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh is somewhat different from that of the caste Hindus. The difference exists in terms of kinship terminology, marriage rules, inheritance system and clan obligations.

Southern zone

The southern zone presents a complicated pattern of kinship system. Though patrilineal and patrilocal family is the dominant family type for the greater number of castes and communities like Namboodris, there are important sections of population which are matrilineal and matrilocal like Nayars; also there are quite a few castes whose systems possess features of both patrilineal and matrilineal organizations like Todas.

Similarly, there are some castes/tribes who practise only polygyny like Asari, Nayars and yet others, who practise both polygyny and polyandry like Todas. Then there are polyandrous patrilineal groups like Asari and also polyandrous matrilineal groups like Tiyan, Nayars; and polygynous patntineal groups like Namboodris but no polygynous matrilineal groups. There are patrilineal joint families and also matrilineal joint families. Matrilineal joint family, called *Tarwad*, is found among the Nairs of Malabar in Travancore and a few other groups.

The important characteristics of *Tarwad* are:

(i) The property of *Tarwad* is the property of all males and females belonging to it.

(ii) Unmarried sons belong to mother's *tarward*, but married sons belong to their wife's *Tarwad*.

(iii) Manager of *Tarwad* property is oldest male member in the family, called *Karnavan* (his wife is called *Ammayi*).

(iv) *Karnmavan* is an absolute ruler in the family. On his death, the next senior male member becomes *Karnavan*. He can invest money in his own name, can mortgage property, can give money on loan, can give land as gift, and is not accountable to any member in respect of income and expenditure.

(v) When *Tarwad* becomes too large and unwieldy, it is divided into *Tavazhis*. A *Tavazhi* in relation to a woman is 'a group of persons consisting of a female, her children, and all her descendants in the female line'.

The following changes may be noted in *Tarwad* after the 1912 Act:

(a) The *Tarwad* property can now be divided.

(b) The authority of *Karnavan* has now become limited.

(c) The members of *Tarwad* have now become entitled to maintenance outside the ancestral house.

(d) The ancestor worship of *Karnavan* is now no longer common.

(e) The relations between husband and wife have now become informal and personal and more close and intimate.

(f) The self-acquired property of a member of a *Tarward* after his death, now goes to his widow and children, and in their absence to mother and mother's mother.

Clan organization and marriage rules in south: A caste is divided into five exogamous clans. The important characteristics of clan organization are as follows:

(i) Each clan possesses a name of some animal or a plant or some other object.

(ii) A person from one clan can seek a spouse from any other clan except his own. However, this choice is theoretical because of the rule of exchange of daughters.

(iii) In marriage, there is not only the rule of clan exogamy but also of family exchange of daughters.

(iv) Because of the marriage rule of exchange of daughters, many kinship terms are common. For example, the term used for *nanad* (HuSi) is also used for *bhabhi* (BrWi); the term used for *sala* (WiBr) is also used for *bahnoi* (SiHu); the term used for *sasur* (HuFa) is also used for *bhabhi's father* (BrWiFa).

(v) Marriage between children of two sisters, is not permissible.

(vi) The marriage with wife's younger sister is practised. Also, two sisters can marry two brothers in one family.

(vii) There is a system of preferential mating in the south. In a large number of castes, the first preference is given to elder sister's daughter, second preference to father's sister's daughter, and third preference to mother's brother's daughter. However, today cross-cousin marriage, especially the uncle-niece marriage, is a thing of the past.

(viii) The taboos prescribed for marriage are: a man cannot marry his younger sister's daughter; a widow cannot marry her husband's elder or younger brother; and a man cannot marry his mother's sister's daughter.

(ix) Marriage is dependent on the chronological age differences. One example is that the marriage of grandfather and granddaughter is possible in south.

(x) Marriage is not arranged with a view to widening a kin group, but each marriage strengthens already existing bonds and makes doubly near those people who were already very near kin.

(xi) A girl has to marry a person who belongs to the groups older than her, i.e.,*tam-mum*, and also to the group younger than her parents,*i.e.,* she can marry any of her older cross-cousins. A boy must marry in a*tam-pin* group and to one who is a child of a group of*tam-mum*.

(xii) In south, a girl after marriage does not enter the house of strangers. One's husband is one's mother's brother's son and so on. Marriage in the south, does not symbolize separation from father's house for a girl. A girl moves freely in her father-in-law's house.

Comparison of kinship system of North and South India

(i) In the south, organization of kin is arranged according to age categories in the two groups, *i.e.*, older than Ego *(tam-mum)* and younger than Ego*(tam-pin)*.

(ii) No special norms of behaviour are evolved for married girls in the south; whereas in the north, many restrictions are imposed on them.

(iii) In the north, marriage is to widen the kinship group while in the south it is to strengthen already existing bonds.

(iv) Marriage does not symbolize woman's separation from her father's house in the south but in the north, a woman becomes a casual visitor to her parents' family.

(v) In the south, an Ego has some kin who are his blood relatives only and others who are his blood relatives and affinal kin at the same time.

(vi) In a southern family, there is no clear-cut distinction between the family of birth and family of marriage as found in the northern family. In the north, no member from Ego's family of orientation i.e., of father, mother, brother and sister can also become a member of his family of marriage; but this is possible in the south.

(vii) In the south, kinship organization is dependent on the chronological age differences; while in the north, it is dependent on the principle of generational divisions.

(viii) In the north, every kinship term clearly indicates whether the person referred to is a blood relation or an affinal kin; but this is not so in the south.

Eastern zone

There are more tribes than caste Hindus in eastern India (consisting of parts of Bengal, Bihar, Assam and Orissa). The more important tribes are: Khasi, Birhor, Ho, Munda and Uraon. The kinship organization here has no one pattern. People speaking Mundan languages have patrilineal patrilocal families. However, joint families are rare in this zone. Cross-cousin marriages are rarely practised though bride-price is common. Woman is addressed as *dual* (you two). Kinship terminology is borrowed both from Sanskrit and Dravidian languages. Khasis and Garos have matrilineal joint family system. After marriage, a man rarely lives with his parents and establishes a separate house.

The kinship organization in India is influenced by caste and language. In this age of sharp competition for status and livelihood, a man and his family must have kin as allies. Caste and linguistic groups may help an individual from time to time but his most

staunch, trustworthy and loyal supporters could only be his nearest kin. It is, therefore, necessary that a person must not only strengthen his bonds with kin but should also try to enlarge his circle of kin. Cousin marriages, preferential mating, exchange rules and the marriage norms which circumvent the field of mate selection are now so changing that kinship relations through marriage are being extended and a person is able to get their help in seeking power and the status-lift that power can bring.

Kinship Usages

We now study the behaviour patterns of different kins. Every relationship involves a particular type of behaviour. The behaviour of a son towards his father is one of respect while the behaviour of husband towards wife is one of love. There are some usages which regulate the behaviour of different kin. These usages are called 'kinship usages'. Some of these usages are the following:

(i) **Avoidance:** In almost all societies, the usage of avoidance is observed in one form or another. It means that the two kins should remain away from each other. They should not only avoid sexual relationship but in some cases avoid seeing the face of each other. Thus, a father-in-law should avoid daughter-in-law. The *purdah* system illustrates the usage of avoidance. Different explanations have been given for the usage of avoidance. According to Radcliff Brown and G. P. Murdock, 'avoidance serves to forestall further and more serious trouble between relatives'. According to the Freudian explanation, avoidances represent a sort of institutionalized neurotic symptom.

(ii) **Joking relationship:** Under it, a relation is permitted to tease or make fun of the other. The relationship between *devar-bhabhi, jija-sali* is joking relationship. The joking may amount to exchange of abuse and vulgar references to sex.

(iii) **Teknonymy:** The word 'teknonymy' is a Greek word. According to this usage, a kin is not referred to directly but he is referred to through another kin. A kin becomes the medium of reference between two kins. Thus, in traditional Hindu family a wife does not utter the name of her husband. She calls him through her son or daughter. He is referred to by her as the father of *Munni* or *Sonu*.

(iv) **Avunclate:** This kinship usage is a peculiar feature of matriarchal system. It gives to the maternal uncle *(mama)* a prominent place in the life of his nephews and nieces. He has special obligations towards them which exceed those of father. The maternal uncle has a prior right over their loyalties. He comes first among all male relatives.

(v) **Amitate:** When a special role is given to the father's sister *(bua)*, it is known as amitate. The father's sister gets more respect than the mother's.

(vi) **Couvade:** This queer usage is found among many primitive tribes like the Khasi and the Toda. Under this usage, the husband is made to lead the life of an invalid along with his wife whenever she gives birth to a child. He refrains from active work and takes sick diet. He observes the same taboos which are observed by his wife. This kinship usage, thus, involves the husband and wife.

4.7   RELIGION

Since the days of the primitive society, religion has always existed in one form or another. There are mysteries and perplexities of life for which there is no adequate explanation.

The elements of nature, sunshine, wind and rain affect man in a number of ways. **Religion** is the expression of the manner and type of adjustment that is effected by people in terms of their conception of the supernatural. In the words of James Frazer, the author of the book *The Golden Bough,* religion has been explained as 'a belief in powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life.' According to Ogburn and Nimkoff, 'Religion is the attitude towards superhuman powers'. Such attitude gives rise to coherent systems of beliefs and practices that concern the supernatural order. Thus, religion is a more or less a coherent system of beliefs and practices that concerns a supernatural order of beings, forces, places, or other entities: a system that, for its adherents, has implications for their behaviour and welfare implications that the adherents in varying degrees and ways take seriously in their private and collective lives.

The origin and evolution of religion

The early sociological studies of religion had three distinctive methodological characteristics, these were *evolutionist*, *positivist* and *psychological*. These are shown in the works of Comte, Tylor and Spencer. According to Comte, sociology is one of the fundamental conceptions of the so called law of three stages, according to which human thought had passed through theological metaphysical and positive stages. Comte treats theological thinking as an intellectual error which is dispersed by the rise of modern science. He traces, within the theological stage, a development from animism to monotheism and he explains religious belief in psychological terms by reference to the perception and thought processes of early man. Later, Comte propounded his own religion of humanity and, thus, recognized in some sense a universal need for religion.

However, the works of Tylor and Spencer were rigorous as they were concerned with explaining the origin of religion. They believed that the idea of the soul was the principal feature in a religious belief. They set out to give an account, in rationalist terms, of how such an idea might have originated in the mind of primitive man. According to this, men obtained their idea of the soul from a misinterpretation of dream and death. Spencer refers to that original theory of things as from which the supposed reality of dreams, resulted a supposed reality of ghosts. E.B. Tylor believes animism was the oldest practice of religion. He argues that animism was a result of the efforts of mankind to answer two questions of the difference between a living body and a dead one and what are those human shapes which appear in dreams and visions. The soul is a spirit being which leaves the body temporarily during dreams and visions. Animals were invested with spirits as were human tribes, such as Australian aborigines. Tylor points out that religion, assumes the form of animism with the purpose of satisfying the intellectual capacity of mankind and meet his quest for knowledge about death, dreams and vision. Similarly, naturism endorses the concept that the forces of nature are supernatural powering nature. Max Muller believes this to be the earliest form of religion. He argues that naturism came to exist as a result of man's interaction with nature, typically as the outcome of the reaction of nature on man's emotions. According to him, animism tries to find the source of religion in man's intellectual requirements; naturism seeks it in his emotional needs. Naturism is how man responds to the effect of power and to the nature on his emotions.

However, there is a lot of criticism about the evolutionary approach. The origin of religion is lost in the past. However, theories about the origin of religion can only be based on speculation and intelligent guess work, according to some critics. Moreover,

the exact phases of the evolution of religion do not match with the facts. Andrew Lang has highlighted that the religion of a large number of simplest societies is monotheistic in nature, which according to Tylor was restricted to modern societies.

The sacred and the profane

Durkheim held that the essence of religion is to sustain divisions into the phenomena of sacred and profane ideologies. He does not believe that the essence of religion lies in the belief of a transcendent God. He proclaims that the true aim of religion is to establish the phenomena of the sacred and the profane in the society. The 'sacred' consists of a body of things, beliefs and rites. Supernatural entities are always sacred, that is, they are worthy of being treated with respect whether they are good or evil. Supernatural beings and forces are invisible and intangible, but certain sacred objects are quite tangible and visible, for instance, the alter in a Christian church. On the other hand, everything that is not holy is profane. Profanity is using names without proper respect.

Functions and dysfunctions of religion

Religion has various social functions. Religion is an agency of social control. It disciplines human behaviour in terms of sacred and profane. Performance of rituals and ceremonies gives a sense of collectivity to the society. The law of *karma*, the fear of retribution and such other prescriptions, always has a moderating and civilizing impact on human action. The norms of conduct, once established, regulate social relations. Religion has unified the principles of every society. Religion is an integrating and unifying force of the human society. Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore reason why religion is necessary and is apparently to be found in the fact that human society achieves its unity through the possession by its members of certain ultimate values in common. Although these values and ends are subjective, the influence of behaviour and its integration enables the society to operate as a system.

Though the direct impact of religion remains healthy, elevating and socializing, its indirect effect may be dysfunctional for the society. In Europe, religion hindered the growth of science and inquiry till decline of the organized church in the 19th century. The superstitious superstructure that developed successively, caused immense harm to the society at all levels. Religion inhibits protests and impedes social changes. Religion has resulted in wars, devastations and genocides. While fulfilling the identity function of religion, certain loyalties arise which may actually impede the development of new identities that are more appropriate to new situations.

4.8   SUMMARY

- The word caste has been defined from the Portugese word *Casta*, which means race, breed or kind.
- The Indologists have viewed caste from the scriptural point of view and believe that the ancient Hindu scriptures have given birth to the concept of caste. They maintain that the varnas have originated from Brahma—the *Virat Purusha* (the Great Man)—and castes are units within the varna system, which have developed as a result of hypergamy and hypogamy.
- Though a number of theories explaining the origin of caste in India have been propounded, no one of them has managed to explain it properly.

- Caste has never been static. The caste system has been changing continuously and has always undergone adaptive changes. Though the pace of change might have been slow earlier, in the post-independence period the changes have occurred rapidly.

- Modern liberal education introduced by the British has played a crucial role in undermining the importance of caste in Indian society. Modern education is accessible to all irrespective of one's caste or community.

- Class is one of the most important bases of social stratification. Classes are groups of people into which a society is divided. These groups are ranked on the basis of specific criteria.

- The caste system is based on the principle of inherited inequalities. On the other hand, the class system is based on the principle of equal opportunities. Both are important systems of social stratification but represent two opposite poles.

- The family is the most important primary group in society. It is often called the basic social institution because of its important functions of procreation and socialization. Robert Bierstedt is of the opinion that 'the family, almost without question, is the most important of any of the groups that human experience offers.

- The biological needs of an individual are satisfied in the family. Thus, it is a very important function of the family. Firstly, the family institutionalizes the need of sex satisfaction through marriage.

- Monogamy is a system of marriage in which one man marries one woman. In almost all the modern societies, marriages are monogamous and such families are known as monogamous families.

- In nuclear families, the members comprise the husband, wife and their children. This type of family has become more common with the advent of industrialization and urbanization, which has forced people to move out to new urban centers and seek employment.

- The joint family system can be seen across societies in various forms of extended families. However, it is more prevalent in India and has certain peculiar Indian characteristics.

- In the Hindu society in India, the joint family, the caste system and the village system are considered as the three pillars on which the social edifice is built. It is a very old system and is regarded by the Hindus as a sacred institution having been derived from religion.

- Members of a joint family identify themselves strongly with their family obligations. They discharge their duties towards the family diligently and the family, in turn, protects their interests.

- The institution of joint family has started undergoing change and is moving towards disintegration. This is primarily the result of the forces of modernization, which is transforming Indian society.

- The joint family system has faced serious challenges from progressive social legislations enacted during the British Rule and after independence. Legislations like The Civil Marriage Act, 1872; The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 have eroded the pre-dominant position of the joint family system in the Indian society.

- In order to ensure the purity and maintain the distinctive identity of different groups in society, Hindu law-makers have stipulated detailed rules and regulations governing the choice of a partner for the union of marriage.

- The institution of marriage is another issue on which tribal people throughout the world have been much maligned. Indian tribes, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, practice several forms of marriage as a matter of convenience and social acclimatization in their respective cultural and ecological settings.

- The tribes of India differ from each other in the manner in which mate selection is carried out. On one hand, society prohibits sexual liaisons or matrimonial alliances between particular kin or in the same clan or *gotra*, but on the other hand it encourages matrimonial alliances between certain other kins.

- Dower comprises of money or property which the wife gets from her husband when she marries him. As per Muslim law, dower is the obligation which is imposed on the husband as a mark of respect to his wife.

- The Christian society is stratified into Protestants and Catholics. The Catholics are further divided into Latin Catholics and Syrian Catholics. These groups are generally endogamous and do not marry intra-group. In Christianity, religion plays a predominant role in marital unions.

- Despite the changing rules of marriage, divorce and live-in relationships, the institution of marriage still occupies an important place in the hearts and minds of people in India.

- In every society, a male at some time in his life, plays the roles of a husband, a father and a son and a brother in some family; and a female plays the roles of a wife, a mother and a daughter and a sister.

- A kin group is group united by ties of blood or marriage. Most kin groups, other than the family, are consanguineal.

- There are mainly four kinship categories: primary kin, secondary kin, tertiary kin, and distant kin.

- Next to family, kinship group plays a very crucial role in the daily life, rituals and social ceremonies of Hindus. People turn to their kin not only for help in exigencies of life but even on regular occasions too. The kinship group may consist of 4 to 5 families or as many as 20 to 35 families. The important kinship groups after the family are *vansh* (lineage) and *gotra* (clan).

- A man's relations with his feminal kin, *i.e.*, kin related through his mother, his married sisters, his wife and his married daughters, are equally important in his life. The exchange of gifts, periodic visits, reciprocal support in personal emergencies, and regular communication strengthen their relations with each other.

- Though kinship behaviour in the northern zone changes slightly from region to region and within each region from caste to caste, yet comparative study shows that it is possible to talk of an *ideal* northern pattern referring to practices and attitudes generally found to be common among the majority of castes.

- Religion is the expression of the manner and type of adjustment that is effected by people in terms of their conception of the supernatural.

- The early sociological studies of religion had three distinctive methodological characteristics, these were *evolutionist*, *positivist* and *psychological*.

● Religion has various social functions. Religion is an agency of social control. It disciplines human behaviour in terms of sacred and profane. Performance of rituals and ceremonies gives a sense of collectivity to the society.

4.9 KEY TERMS

- **Hypergamy:** It is the action of marrying a person of a superior caste or class.
- **Varna:** It is the all-India model of castes derived from the ancient Hindu scriptures.
- **Sapinda:** It refers to a person who is related to an individual by virtue of lineal descent.
- **Polygamy:** It is a system of marriage that permits the marriage of one man with more than one woman.
- **Progeny:** It is a descendant or the descendants of a person, animal, or plant.

4.10 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The essential characteristics of the Indian caste system are as follows:
   - Segmental division of society
   - Hierarchy of castes
   - Restrictions on commensality and social intercourse
   - Differential civil and religious privileges and disabilities
   - Restrictions on occupational choice
   - Restrictions on marriage

2. Sociologists have viewed caste from the stratificational point of view. They study caste in terms of social stratification in a society. They study it as a phenomenon of social inequality. According to them, society has certain structural aspects and it distributes its members in social positions.

3. The four classes of the agrarian class structure in post-independent India are as follows:
   i. Landowners
   ii. Tenants
   iii. Labourers
   iv. Non-agriculturists

4. Two essential features of a social class are as follows:
   i. Class-a status group
   ii. Universal

5. The distinctive features of family are as follows:
   - Emotional basis
   - Formative influence
   - Responsibility of the members
   - Social regulations

6. When descent is traced through the mother, we have the system known as the matrilineal system. Families that trace their descent through this system are known as matrilineal families.

7. A joint family, though a type of extended family, is an important social unit of Indian society. The joint family system can be seen across societies in various forms of extended families. In a joint family, at least, three generations of a family are seen residing together under one roof. However, it is more prevalent in India and has certain peculiar Indian characteristics.

8. The eight forms of Hindu marriage are as follows:
   i. Brahma vivah
   ii. Daiva vivah
   iii. Arsha vivah
   iv. Parjapatya vivah
   v. Asura vihah
   vi. Gandharva vivah
   vii. Rakshasa vivah
   viii. Paisacha vivah

9. There are mainly four kinship categories: primary kin, secondary kin, tertiary kin, and distant kin.

10. Muslims also have a system of temporary marriage, called *muta* marriage. This is a marriage settled by a man and a woman by mutual consent and without the intervention of kin. A man is permitted to contract *muta* marriage with a Muslim, a Jew or a Christian girl but a woman cannot contract such a marriage with a non-Muslim. A wife secured through *muta* marriage is known as *sigha*.

11. Religion is the expression of the manner and type of adjustment that is effected by people in terms of their conception of the supernatural.

12. The indirect effect of religion may be dysfunctional for the society. In Europe, religion hindered the growth of science and inquiry till decline of the organized church in the nineteenth century. The superstitious superstructure that developed successively caused immense harm to the society at all levels. Religion inhibits protests and impedes social changes. Religion has resulted in wars, devastations and genocides.

4.11   QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the changing nature of the caste system.
2. Mention the classification of social classes.
3. List the characteristics of family.
4. What are the functions of family?
5. State the characteristics of the joint family system.
6. Prepare a short note on the rules of mate selection as per the Hindu law.
7. Mention the important ways of mate selection among the tribes in India.
8. What is the importance of kinship?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the various theories of caste.

2. 'Class is one of the most important bases of social stratification.' Explain the statement.

3. Differentiate between caste and class.

4. Describe the various types of family.

5. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the joint family system in India.

6. Analyse the changing nature of the joint family system in India.

7. Assess the recent changes that have taken place in the institution of marriage.

8. Discuss the categories of kinship.

9. Describe the features of kinship in different zones of India.

10. Assess the significance of religion in our daily lives.

4.12   FURTHER READING

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