

SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA

M.A. Sociology – I Semester

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SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA

Course Objective

The course addresses sociological studies of caste, religion, village, family, marriage and kinship. As a precursor to these, the first section includes two essays on the institutional framework within which sociology and social anthropology developed in India. The course is also meant as a prelude to a course on perspectives in understanding Indian society to be taken up in the following semester.

Unit I

The rise of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India

Unit II

Caste Structure and Change: Varna and Caste; Caste and Hierarchy; Caste and Colonialism; Caste and Race; Caste, Class and Politics.

Unit III

Village in India: Nature of Village community; Myth and Reality of the Indian Village.

Unit IV

Kinship & Family in India: Nature of family and kinship; Family and Household; Nuclear versus Joint debate.

Unit V

Tribes: Conceptualizing Tribes; Tribes as Indigenous people; Transformation of Tribes.

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UNIT – I

Development of Sociology and Anthropology in India

Structure

- 1.1 Learning Objectives
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- 1.3 Early Study of Indian Society
- 1.4 Emergence of Sociology in India
- 1.5 Emergence of Sociology as a Profession in India
- 1.6 Development of Sociology in India
- 1.7 Growth of Sociology in India
- 1.8 Pioneers of Indian Sociology
- 1.9 Rise of social Anthropology
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- 1.11 Growth of Anthropology in India
- 1.12 Pioneers of Indian Social Anthropology
- 1.13 Factors in the Development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India
- 1.14 Let Us Sum up
- 1.15 Keywords
- 1.16 Self-Assessment Questions

1.1 Learning Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the origins and evolution of Sociology and Social Anthropology within the Indian context.
- Analyze the interrelationship between Sociology, Social Anthropology, and the broader dynamics of Indian society.
- Assess the importance of indigenous perspectives for comprehending the social and cultural fabric of India.

1.2 Introduction

Sociology is a relatively recent discipline within the social sciences. Its emergence has been shaped by several critical historical phases in both India and the West. Sociology and social anthropology were introduced to India primarily through British influence. British scholars residing in India, along with Indian scholars trained in Britain and the United States, played a significant role in developing these disciplines in India. The formal establishment of sociology as a discipline occurred later, following the groundwork laid by social thinkers, philosophers, and administrators who sought to understand Indian society broadly and in specific aspects such as family and the caste system. The contributions of ideologists, including Henry Maine and Alfred Lyell, further advanced the development of sociology in India. These scholars emphasized the preservation of indigenous social institutions rather than replacing them with colonial practices, and they recognized the historical significance of Indian cultural and literary traditions. In addition to the ideologues, British administrators contributed extensively by studying Indian people, their races, and cultures. These studies generated a substantial body of knowledge, preserved in Census Reports, Imperial Gazetteers, District Gazetteers, and in books and monographs that continue to inform contemporary social anthropologists and sociologists. This unit examines the development of sociology in India across three phases: the impact of colonial rulers and administrators, the contributions of early Indian thinkers, and the work of post-independence Indian scholars.

1.3 Early Study of Indian Society

Indian civilisation has a history spanning over 5000 years. Indian society is characterized by a complex social structure encompassing diverse ethnicities, languages, religions, and caste distinctions. The population includes individuals from rural, urban, and tribal backgrounds. This diversity demonstrates the country's rich cultural heritage. Societal and constitutional principles serve to unite citizens and foster social peace and harmony. Following India's independence, numerous requests for state reorganisation emerged, based on cultural similarity, linguistic identity, and other factors. For instance, Andhra Pradesh was the first state reorganised on a linguistic basis in 1953 for Telugu speakers. Subsequently, the States Reorganisation Act of 1956 facilitated the creation of states such as Kerala for Malayalam speakers and Karnataka for Kannada speakers. These reorganisations enabled state boundaries to better reflect the linguistic and cultural identities of the Indian population.

The foundations of contemporary Indian culture can be traced to the Vedic era, which is generally dated between 1500 BCE and 500 BCE. Around 1500 BCE, the Aryans, nomadic herders from Central Asia, migrated to India and established the caste system, dividing society into four primary groups: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Over time, Indian culture expanded both culturally and economically, influencing regions across Southeast Asia. Between approximately 320 CE and 550 CE, the Gupta dynasty further maintained and strengthened social institutions, thereby contributing to the continued development of Indian society.

The division of Indian society by class and occupation became increasingly pronounced over time. The concept of society originating from four castes is derived from the Purusha Sukta hymn of the Rigveda, an ancient sacred text. According to this tradition, the cosmic being Purusha was divided to create the four varnas Brahmins from his mouth, Kshatriyas from his arms, Vaishyas from his thighs, and Shudras from his feet, establishing a hierarchical order with Brahmins at the top and Shudras at the bottom. The belief that Shudras were born into their caste due to misdeeds in a previous life is found in later Hindu texts, particularly those outlining the doctrines of karma and reincarnation, such as the Upanishads. These doctrines suggest that virtuous behavior could result in rebirth into a higher caste. The caste system exerted a significant influence on early Indian society.

1.4 Emergence of Sociology in India

Sociology in India was formally established as a discipline in 1919. By this time, Gandhi had returned from South Africa, and the aftermath of the First World War (1914-1917) had significantly impacted global society. Gandhi's influence during this period not only advanced the freedom movement but also inspired pioneering sociologists to focus on the study of ordinary people. Although sociology as a formal discipline has a relatively short history in India, sociological inquiry began well before its institutionalization by British administrators. The colonial administration's limited understanding of Indian social realities, local customs, and institutional arrangements led to the use of sociology and social anthropology as tools for governance. According to Yogendra Singh, "The contribution of the British administrators-cum-sociologists was quite substantial. Related to studies of the various aspects of Indian social structure, customs and traditions, it was not without ideological biases in the selection of themes and sociological paradigms. The

conceptual problems of caste, tribe, and village community, reflected in their observations, consciously or unconsciously exaggerated segmentary cleavages in Indian society, excluding the principles of organic linkage and societal unity. This bias stemmed from the ideological positions Western sociologists and scholars held while analysing Indian social reality. The 'Missionaries' derived their paradigm from their own version of the normative principles of Christianity and judged most Indian social and cultural institutions negatively. Their solution to India's problem was, therefore, its Christianization. The view of social reality that it offered was mechanistic, segmentary and instrumental in nature. It constituted a typical 'colonial paradigm' for social analysis and offered a deeply fractured picture of Indian society and, as such, of Indian reality."

Significant differences exist between Western and Indian intellectual development. While religion greatly influenced the perspectives of Western and modern intellectuals, Indian thinkers placed greater emphasis on secularism. Simultaneously, Indian sociologists were influenced by Western traditions such as rationalism, positivism, and historical materialism. Additionally, early Indian sociologists derived their value frameworks and perspectives from the nationalist reform movements of the nineteenth century.

Early pioneers of Indian sociology advocated for an Ideological approach grounded in the study of Indian society and culture. They argued that the unique and contextual specificity of Indian social realities could best be understood through textual analysis. The application of the Indological approach during the formative years of Indian sociology and social anthropology is evident in the works of S.V. Ketkar, B.N. Seal, B.K. Sarkar, and G.S. Ghurye.

1.5 Emergence of Sociology as a Profession in India

Sociology became its own academic subject in Indian universities in the early twentieth century. At first, it was closely linked to anthropology. Sociology and anthropology in India grew in three stages: 1773-1900, 1901-1950, and 1950 to today. Calcutta University started sociology studies in 1907, but there was no separate department then. Mysore University began offering courses in Social Philosophy and Sociology in 1914. Bombay University set up the first sociology department in 1919, and the University of Lucknow followed in the 1920s. Osmania University offered sociology as a B.A. subject in 1928 and as an M.A. program in 1946. After India became independent, more universities started postgraduate sociology programs.

Auguste Comte was a well-known French philosopher who created the term “sociology” and helped shape the field. His key works are Positive Philosophy, Systems of Positive Polity, and Religion of Humanity. His main ideas include the Law of Three Stages, the Hierarchy of Sciences, Positivism, Social Statics, and Social Dynamics. Comte wanted to make sociology a science that studies society. He believed sociology should use the same methods as natural sciences. He also thought that human knowledge and society develop in clear, progressive stages.

Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) was another important French sociologist who wanted sociology to be a separate science. He built on Comte’s ideas and worked to make sociology more scientific. Durkheim is known for works like The Division of Labour in Society, Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Le Suicide, and Rules of Sociological Method. He was the first modern thinker to stress that society is real and that groups are the main social reality. Durkheim believed in using objective and factual methods to study society. He said sociology should focus on social facts, which exist outside the individual.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was a British scholar who was a key figure in 19th-century social science. His approach to sociology was based on evolution. He studied how social structures grow and change over time. Spencer believed that evolution starts with non-living matter, moves through plants and animals, and ends with humans and society. He thought that everything living and non-living follows the same natural laws of evolution. His main books are Social Statics, The Study of Sociology, The Principles of Sociology, and Man versus the State.

Max Weber (1864-1920) was a German philosopher and sociologist who played a major role in establishing sociology as a scientific field. He believed that individuals are the main part of society. Weber argued that we need to study people’s motivations, actions, and relationships scientifically. He used the idea of Verstehen, or interpretative understanding, to explain society and culture, which cannot be understood by facts alone. Social scientists should look for the deeper meaning behind social events. Society and culture should be interpreted, not just measured. Understanding social actions and relationships needs both empathy and objectivity. Weber also used the ideal type as an analytical tool. For him, sociology is about understanding social action. His main works include The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Economics and Society, and Methodology of the Social Sciences.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) was a thinker, writer, and critic influenced by German idealism. His work draws on Hegel, Kant, Fichte, and Adam Smith, but Marx's writing is original and often challenges these thinkers. While he is known as a sociologist, Marx focused on the major social issues of his time. He wrote about class, class formation, struggle, exploitation, poverty, alienation, and social change. Class and class struggle are central to his work. As he said, 'the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle'. His main works include *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, *Capital*, *The Holy Family*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *The Communist Manifesto*, and *German Ideology*.

Talcott Parsons (1902-1982) Parsons is a leading American sociologist. He views sociology as the analysis of social relationships and cultural products. He tried to keep social science as close to the natural sciences as possible. Talcott Parsons (1902-1982) was a leading American sociologist. He saw sociology as the study of social relationships and cultural products. Parsons wanted social science to be as scientific as possible, and he believed reason was central to sociological theory. He called social science an action science, focusing on interaction and values. His main books are "The Structure of Social Action" and "The Social System." Key ideas include the action frame of reference, the social system, and pattern variables. Parsons said that a social system is made up of many individuals interacting in a certain situation. At its core, a social system is a set of shared rules that help people organise their lives together.

1.6 Development of Sociology in India

Sociology emerged as a distinct academic discipline in Indian universities during the first half of the twentieth century. Initially, it was closely associated with anthropology. According to Srinivas and Panini, the development and growth of sociology in India can be divided into three phases:

- The first phase, spanning 1773 to 1900, marked the foundational period of sociology in India;
- The second phase, from 1901 to 1950, was characterized by the professionalization of the discipline;
- The third phase, encompassing the post-independence years, was shaped by multiple factors such as government-led planned development, increased engagement of Indian scholars with international research, and greater availability of funding, all of which contributed to significant research activity.

Foundation of Sociology in India

During the colonial period, British administrators recognized the necessity of understanding Indian society and culture to facilitate effective governance. Knowledge of the Indian family system, traditions, and customs was essential for revenue collection. Consequently, the accurate documentation of laws and customs in Indian society became a priority, prompting the emergence of sociology in India. During this phase, British officials conducted numerous surveys of the Indian population. For example, in 1769, Henry Verelst, then Governor of Bihar and Bengal, initiated the first such effort. In 1774, William Jones established the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal to study 'nature and man' in India. Francis Buchanan conducted surveys in Bengal in 1807. In 1816, Abbé Dubots, a French missionary in Mysore, authored the influential book "Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies," which described the characteristics of the caste system and interactions between castes. These early works by British and European scholars laid the groundwork for the systematic study of Indian society.

These early scholarly works facilitated a more systematic study of Indian society in the latter half of the nineteenth century. During this period, the perceived need for comprehensive demographic data led the British government to conduct the first all-India Census in 1871, which became a critical source of information on population, society, and cultural practices. Colonial authorities also demonstrated significant interest in Indian classical literature. With the assistance of Sanskrit scholars, a book on Hindu law was prepared in English in 1776 for British judges, detailing religious practices, customs, and legal traditions. In the nineteenth century, Max Muller, a German scholar, translated several classical Indian texts into German and subsequently into English. By the late nineteenth century, numerous Western scholars were influenced by these writings on India. Although these studies and publications primarily served colonial interests, they contributed to the growing body of research on Indian society and culture.

Development of Sociology in the Pre-Independence Period

The formal establishment of sociology as an academic discipline in India began in the cities of Bombay and Calcutta. In 1917, Calcutta University introduced sociology through the efforts of B.N. Seal, with Radhakamal Mukerjee and B.N. Sarkar later overseeing the subject. However, the

discipline did not gain significant traction in Calcutta. Subsequently, the focus shifted to western India, where the first Department of Sociology was established at Bombay University in 1919 under the leadership of G.S. Ghurye. This was followed by the creation of a department at the University of Lucknow in the 1920s, headed by Radhakamal Mukerjee.

In South India, B.N. Seal and A.F. Wadia played key roles in establishing the Department of Sociology at Mysore University in 1928. Around the same time, sociology was introduced at Osmania University and Poona University in the late 1930s, with Irawati Karve serving as department head. Initially, sociology occupied a subordinate position within the organizational structure of Indian universities. In their formative years, most sociology departments operated under the auspices of other established disciplines; for instance, in Bombay and Lucknow, sociology was taught alongside economics, in Calcutta with anthropology, and in Mysore under social philosophy.

During this period, the dedicated efforts of numerous prominent scholars significantly advanced sociological research in India. Figures such as B.N. Seal, K.M. Kapadia, Irawati Karve, S.V. Karandikar, M.N. Srinivas, A.R. Desai, I.P. Desai, M.S. Gore, and Y.B. Damle played pivotal roles in shaping the discipline's trajectory. Their intellectual pursuits, data collection methods, and interpretations of Indian social systems and institutions were heavily influenced by the ethnographic works of scholar-administrators from the colonial era. Research on caste, family, marriage and kinship, social stratification, tribal communities, and both rural and urban societies was particularly prominent. The limited acceptance of sociology in Indian universities prior to Independence stemmed largely from prejudices linked to the country's colonial association with Britain. British academics regarded sociology as a foreign discipline, originating in Europe and associated with socialism. The Indian elite, educated in British institutions, often adopted these biases. In Britain, sociology was first established as an academic discipline at the London School of Economics (LSE), founded by the Fabians Sidney and Beatrice Webb and Bernard Shaw. The first professor of sociology at LSE was Edward Westermarck, a Finnish scholar.

Development of Sociology in the Post-Independence Period

The next phase of expansion and development of sociology started in 1952 with the factors that are responsible for its growth. The policy makers of Independent India pursued objectives of economic regeneration and social development, and they recognized the role of the social sciences

in attaining the objectives of national reconstruction and development. They defined the new task of Sociology as social engineering and social policy science. It meant increased participation by social scientists, particularly economists and sociologists, in research and social and economic development. At the same time the Indian sociologists got the opportunity to undertake research in the field of development because of heavy funding from the Ford Foundation to save India from sliding into the revolutionary communist path of development. The development of research activity also meant the enlargement of the employment opportunities at all levels. There were many reasons for the popularity of Sociology during this phase. The main reason for this was the beginning of planned development. In the meantime, the Bombay sociology department was flourished under the leadership of G.S. Ghurye, who supervised students from different parts of India, to carry out fieldwork in his or her region. In this way, he was able to construct a huge amount of writings on Indian communities. Thus, he founded the Indian Sociological Society in 1951 and started its journal entitled, "Sociological Bulletin". Besides, in 1969, the Indian Council of Social

Science Research (ICSSR) was established which also led to the expansion of Sociology. During this phase many sociologists had undertaken village studies which resulted in several village monographs. Some of these are McKim Marriott's "Village India"(1955), S.C.Dube's "Indian Village"(1956) and M.N.Srinivas's edited volume "India's Village"(1956). In addition, several Indian communities, castes, tribes, all were also included in the sociological studies. Another credit for the growth of sociology in the post-independence period goes to the Constitution of India, which declared the practice of untouchability in any form as an offence, and with the introduction of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SCs and STs) in the legislatures, and jobs in the government and the public sector, a new field of study was opened up to sociologists, though very few were aware of this fact. However, during the period of industrialisation Indian society moved from agriculture to industry which led to the growth of many internal inequalities in Indian social structure. Such situation led to interest group oriented Sociology, such as black sociology, gender sociology, Dalit sociology, Tribal sociology, Hindu or Islamic sociology, etc. Moreover, this situation brought the concept of middle class social base, growth in professional and services sectors, the Green Revolution, and the widening of the base of the commercial and industrial entrepreneurship, etc. But the basic problems have remained

unresolved. Nearly half of the total population was still illiterate and the rate of population growth continued to rise which led to the high poverty, at about 40 percent of the total population, and the number of urban poor was increasing at a very rapid rate due to migration from villages. This process led to multiplication of urban slums. The larger the city, the larger is the problem of urban poverty and its ghettoization. Urban slum dwellers faced miserable condition. Thus, the Indian sociologists had to take up all these social issues and proceed into a new direction.

Recent Trends of Sociology in India

The recent trends in sociology encompass the Sociology of Development and the Sociology of Globalisation. Additionally, new academic branches have emerged, including Sexuality and Reproductive Health, Social Theory, and Collective Action in Urban Areas. Prior to independence, the perspectives of Indian thinkers such as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Phule were largely unrecognized and not acknowledged as contributions to social thought. Following independence, sociology in India experienced significant development. Currently, these thinkers are acknowledged within Dalit studies, a subfield of sociology advanced by Indian scholars. Contemporary Indian sociologists increasingly emphasize the use of regional languages. The language issue is prevalent across Indian states and societies. Sociologists working in regional languages often encounter a shortage of vernacular journals, while those publishing in English face limited opportunities due to the scarcity of English-language journals.

To address these challenges, the Indian Sociological Society (ISS) has implemented measures to support regional associations by organizing special symposia on regional issues, thereby encouraging participation from sociologists across India. Emerging sociologists continue to explore new trends such as social exclusion, ethnicity, and culture within the broader framework of social justice.

1.7 Growth of Sociology in India

Sociology is the scientific study of human social life, groups, and societies. Before the 19th century, sociology did not exist as a separate field. It became a distinct discipline in the mid-19th century, when European thinkers started using scientific methods to test their ideas. Three main events led to the rise of sociology: the French Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution, all beginning in the late eighteenth century.

1. The French Revolution (1789-1799) lasted ten years and was the first modern ideological revolution. It changed society by breaking down old social divisions and ending feudal structures. Power moved from the church to the people, who were now seen as citizens for the first time. The church lost its rights and property. These changes affected not only France but all of Europe, bringing about major historical, political, and social shifts. Ideas from philosophers like Plato and Aristotle became visible in society as a result of the Revolution.
2. The Industrial Revolution (1765-1850) started in England and brought major changes to society. New technology transformed workplaces, making them more efficient and improving working conditions. Transportation also improved, which boosted trade and commerce between countries. Machines helped people produce more goods in less time. This era became a symbol of a new kind of society, where people worked together using machines. Markets grew as countries could now trade goods and raw materials more easily.
3. The Enlightenment played a key role in the rise of sociology in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It introduced core values like freedom, democracy, and reason. The Enlightenment brought together philosophers such as Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Voltaire, who challenged old beliefs and encouraged people to think for themselves. They taught people to question what they heard and to use their own judgment. Instead of relying on the church or waiting for divine help, people were encouraged to solve problems on their own. This new mindset also helped drive economic growth.

The French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the Enlightenment were the main events that led to the rise of sociology in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. During this time, life improved for many people. These changes encouraged open-mindedness and gave people more choices. This period marked a turning point, driving rapid technological and economic growth and teaching people how to live together in society.

1.8 Pioneers of Indian Sociology

G.S. Ghurye

The biography of G.S. Ghurye, drawing primarily from his book *I and Other Explorations* (1973). Govind Sadashiv Ghurye was born on 12

December 1893 in Malvan, a small town on the west coast of India, located approximately two hundred miles from Mumbai.

He was born into a prosperous Brahmin family that owned shops and other property. Named after his grandfather, who passed away the same year, Ghurye's family was recognized for its religious devotion and regional piety. He traveled to England by ship and studied under L.T. Hobhouse. During his time in England, he met Dr. A.C. Haddon, a renowned ethnologist specializing in preliterate cultures. Haddon introduced Ghurye to Dr. W.H.R. Rivers, whose intellectual influence on Ghurye was significant. Rivers, founder of the Cambridge School of Psychology, later visited India to study the polyandrous Todas tribe of the Nilgiri Hills.

During this period, Ghurye published several articles in the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute and the journal *Arthropods*. He wrote his most influential work, *Caste and Race in India*, in the 1930s. He earned his PhD from Cambridge University and returned to India after W.H.R. Rivers' death. In 1934, Ghurye became Professor of Sociology at Bombay University, a decade after joining as Reader and Head of the Department of Sociology. That same year, he was elected President of the anthropological section of the Indian Science Congress and was nominated by the Managing Committee of the Royal Asiatic Society's Bombay branch. In 1942, he became President of the Bombay Anthropological Society, a position he held until 1948. Ghurye authored numerous books and articles; his proficiency in Sanskrit enabled him to analyse religious scriptures within the context of Indian society. His research encompassed castes and tribes, rural-urbanisation, Indian Sadhus, and Indian costumes. Throughout his career, he received several prestigious honours and achieved both national and international recognition as a leading Indian sociologist. He passed away in 1984.

Important Works

Some of the important works of Ghurye in Sociology are:

- Indian Sadhus (1953)
- Family and Kin in Indo-European Culture (1961)
- Gods and Men (1962)
- Anatomy of a Rururban Community (1962)
- Scheduled Tribes (1963)
- Caste and Race in India (1969, Fifth Edition)

Some of his other works which show us the range of his interests are:

- Bharatnatyam and its Costume (1958)
- Cities and civilisation (1962)
- Indian costume (1962, Second Edition)

Caste

In the early 1930s, G.S. Ghurye published *Caste and Race in India*, a foundational text on Indian castes. In this work, he analyzed the caste system from historical, comparative, and integrative perspectives. Ghurye characterized caste as a form of social organization unique to Indian civilization, distinctly different from social groupings in other societies. Hindu society, according to Ghurye, is divided into castes that possess varying degrees of respectability and patterns of social interaction. He identified six defining features of the caste system:

Segmental Division of Society

The caste society comprises heterogeneous groups with a distinct life of their own, and the membership is determined not by selection but by birth. Castes are small and complete social worlds in themselves, marked off definitely from one another, though subsisting within the larger society.

Hierarchy

One of the principal characteristics of the caste society is the hierarchy of groups. This implies a definite scheme of social precedence among the castes, with the Brahmin at the head.

Restrictions on Feeding and Social Intercourse

There are minute rules about what sort of food or drink can be accepted by a person and from what castes. While lower castes have no scruples in accepting cooked food from any higher caste, the Brahmins and other castes did not accept food or water from other castes that stood lower than themselves in the social scale. Ghurye also mentions the theory of pollution communicated by some castes to members of higher castes.

Civil and Religious Disabilities and Privileges of the Different Sections

Ghurye noted that one of the most obvious markers of civil privileges and disabilities that prevailed all over India was the segregation of individual castes or a group of castes in a village. Southern India stands

out as the most rigid in rules about ceremonial purity and untouchability. In Southern India, certain parts of the town or village were inaccessible to certain castes. Even the types of houses to be built and the materials to be used for construction were prescribed for lower castes.

Lack of Unrestricted Choice of Occupation

The occupations have been fixed by heredity. Generally, the castes were not allowed to change their traditional occupations. All caste people maintain their supremacy and secrecy in their jobs and do not allow other caste groups to join in. The upper caste people, like Brahmins, are free to opt for the study of religious books, while other classes cannot do this. Lower-status jobs like sweeping bathrooms, washing clothes, scavenging, etc. have been kept in the untouchable category. Rules on food, drink, and social interaction were imposed on people of all castes.

Restriction of Marriage

Caste groups follow the principle of endogamy. This means that caste groups marry within their own groups. Marrying outside the caste group is strongly condemned. Later, he conducted a comparative study of kinship in Indo-European cultures. In his studies of kinship and caste, Ghurye emphasised two points: (a) the kin and caste networks of India had parallels in some other countries also; and (b) the kinship and caste in India served as an integrative framework. These networks integrated diverse racial or ethnic groups into Indian society. The Gotra and Charana were kin-categories of Indo-European languages that systematised people's rank and status. These categories derived from the names of past sages. These sages were the real or eponymous founders.

Indian Sadhus

In his work, *Indian Sadhus*, Ghurye (1953) examined the paradoxical nature of renunciation in India. In Indian culture, the Sadhu or Sannyasin is supposed to be detached from all caste norms, social conventions, etc. In fact, he is outside "the pale of society". Shaivites usually conduct a "mock funeral" for one entering the path of renunciation. It means that he is "dead" to society but is "reborn" in spiritual terms. Yet, interestingly enough, since the time of Shankar, the eighth-century reformer, Hindu society has been guided, more or less, by the Sadhus. These Sadhus are not individual hermits. Most are organised into monastic orders with distinctive traditions. The monastic organisation in India was shaped by

Buddhism and Jainism. Shankara introduced it into Hinduism. Indian renouncers have acted as the arbiters of religious disputes, patronised the learning of scriptures and even defended religion against external attacks. So, renunciation has been a constructive force in Hindu society.

Ghurye provided a detailed analysis of various Sadhu groups, including the Shaivite Dashnamis (ten orders) and Vaishnavite Bairagis. Both groups included Naga contingents, militant ascetics prepared to defend Hinduism. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Bengali novel *Anand Math* recounts the armed resistance of Shaivite monks against British forces in the nineteenth century, demonstrating their commitment to Hinduism despite eventual defeat. Sadhus who gathered at the Kumbh Mela represented a microcosm of India, originating from diverse regions and linguistic backgrounds but united by common religious orders. According to Ghurye, asceticism remains a vital aspect of contemporary Hindu practice rather than a relic of the past. Prominent modern ascetics such as Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswati, and Sri Aurobindo contributed significantly to Hinduism's advancement.

Rurban Community

Ghurye focused on the process of rural-urbanization, arguing that urbanization in India was not solely a result of industrial growth. He maintained that, at least until the 1980s, urbanization often originated within rural areas. Drawing on Sanskrit texts and historical documents, Ghurye illustrated how the expansion of agriculture created a demand for markets in rural hinterlands, leading to the transformation of parts of large villages into market centers. These markets eventually developed into townships with administrative, judicial, and other institutions. Urban centers also emerged through feudal patronage, as royal courts' demand for goods such as silk, weapons, jewelry, and metal artifacts contributed to the growth of cities like Varanasi, Kanchipuram, Jaipur, and Moradabad. Ghurye's analysis of "rural-urbanization" emphasized the indigenous origins of Indian urbanism. However, the rise of metropolitan centers during colonial times fundamentally changed urban life, as towns and cities shifted from being outlets for agricultural produce and handicrafts to becoming major manufacturing hubs. These centers utilized rural areas for raw material production and as markets for industrial goods, resulting in the dominance of metropolitan economies over village economies and a new pattern of urbanization penetrating rural regions.

Process of Rural-urbanisation

Throughout his career, Ghurye maintained that rural-urbanization could combine the benefits of urban life with the preservation of natural environments. He argued that, in India, urbanization was not merely a consequence of industrial growth but often originated within rural areas. By referencing Sanskrit texts and historical documents, Ghurye demonstrated that the development of agriculture created a need for markets in rural hinterlands, leading to the emergence of market centres and, subsequently, townships with administrative and judicial institutions. Historically, urban centres also arose through feudal patronage, as the demand for luxury goods contributed to the growth of cities such as Banaras, Kanchipuram, Jaipur, and Moradabad. Ghurye's perspective on "rural-urbanization" highlights the indigenous roots of Indian urbanism. The colonial era, however, saw the rise of metropolitan centres that transformed towns and cities into manufacturing hubs, utilizing rural areas for raw materials and as markets for industrial products. This shift resulted in metropolitan economies dominating village economies and urbanization extending into rural regions. Ghurye also emphasized the role of large cities as cultural centres, serving as hubs for higher education, research, judiciary, health services, and media, and acting as focal points for cultural integration and innovation. He argued that only cities with organic connections to their regions could fulfil these roles effectively. According to Ghurye, urban planners must address challenges such as adequate drinking water supply, human and traffic congestion, regulation of public vehicles, insufficient railway transport in cities like Mumbai, deforestation, noise pollution, indiscriminate tree felling, and pedestrian safety.

Ghurye conducted a study of a village in Pune district, Maharashtra, to illustrate the persistence of social structures over time. The village, Lonik, had previously been examined by a British officer in 1819, who documented its layout, economic infrastructure, caste composition, market activities, and political and religious characteristics. Ghurye's 1957 re-survey found minimal changes in the village's demographic, economic, and social aspects. He also observed that the village layout conformed to patterns described in ancient texts. Although the social structure was not tightly integrated and exhibited some fragmentation, the village continued to function as a viable community.

Radhakamal Mukherjee

Radhakamal Mukerjee was born in 1889 in Berhampur, West Bengal, into a large Bengali Brahmin family. His father, a lawyer and leader of the bar, was also an accomplished scholar with a keen interest in history. The Bengal famine of 1942-43 had a profound impact on Mukerjee. He received his early education in Berhampur and attended Krishnath College before earning an academic scholarship to Presidency College in Calcutta, a leading educational institution in India. At Presidency College, he pursued honours in English and History and interacted with prominent scholars such as H. M. Percival, M. Ghosh (brother of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh), and linguist Harinath De. During this period, he extensively studied works by Comte, Herbert Spencer, Lester Ward, Hobhouse, and Giddings. In 1906, Mukerjee established an Adult Evening School in the slums of Mechaubazar, Calcutta. This experience influenced his shift toward sociology and economics. He also developed a close association with Benoy Kumar Sarkar and became editor of the Bengali monthly Upasana. In 1921, Mukerjee joined the University of Lucknow as Professor and Head of the Department of Economics and Sociology on the university's inaugural day. He introduced an integrated approach to economics, sociology, and anthropology in both research and teaching. Mukerjee advocated for the scientific study of the origins of race and culture through comparative methods in the social sciences. His intellectual development was shaped by Professor Brajendra Nath Seal, Professor Patrick Geddes, and his colleague Narendra Nath Sen Gupta. Additionally, he engaged with Western sociologists such as Edward Allsworth Ross, Robert Ezra Park, McKenzie, and P. Sorokin, who influenced his writings. Mukerjee also served as Vice-Chancellor and Director of the J.K. Institute of Sociology and Human Relations at the University. He passed away in 1968, leaving a significant legacy in the field of sociology.

Methodology and Theoretical Perspectives

R.K. Mukherjee is recognized for his multidisciplinary approach and broad research interests encompassing various aspects of Indian society. His methodology integrates sociology, anthropology, history, and political science to achieve a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena. Mukherjee advocated for an interdisciplinary approach, critiquing positivism for its emphasis on objectivity, scientific methods, and the search for universal laws of social behavior. He argued that social realities are too complex for such rigid frameworks and instead promoted a holistic approach that considers historical contexts, cultural values,

and the interconnectedness of social structures. Mukherjee emphasized the interrelationship between social structures, values, and ethical considerations. The concept of ethico-economics, which he introduced, involves studying economics within a broader social and ethical context, accounting for the impact of economic systems on social values and well-being. His research was grounded in empirical investigation and data analysis, employing methods such as surveys, interviews, participant observation, and archival research. Mukherjee also adopted a comparative perspective, analyzing social phenomena across different regions, communities, and historical periods to identify patterns, variations, and trends in social structure and cultural dynamics. He highlighted the importance of historical context in understanding contemporary social issues and transformations by tracing the historical roots of social structures, cultural practices, and value systems. Furthermore, Mukherjee incorporated indigenous perspectives into his research, recognizing the significance of local knowledge, traditions, and cultural practices in shaping social life and engaging directly with indigenous communities.

Social Ecology

Mukherjee conceptualized social ecology as a complex framework involving the interaction of multiple social sciences. Geological, geographical, and biological factors collectively shape ecological zones, which are further conditioned by social, economic, and political influences. Historically, many Indian ecological regions were opened for human settlement and agrarian development through political conquests. Given the close linkage between ecology and society, the development of ecological zones should be understood as a dynamic process involving environmental challenges and human responses. Ecological balance cannot be achieved by simply designating territory and relocating populations, as such actions risk weakening or destroying the social fabric. For instance, the construction of irrigation dams in India often results in the involuntary resettlement of affected populations, which can disrupt established social life if not managed with appropriate rehabilitation strategies. Traditional systems of interdependence, such as the *jajmani* system in northern India and its equivalents elsewhere, are often disrupted when communities are relocated. Addressing these disruptions requires the planning of suitable alternatives, such as the establishment of cooperatives to replace traditional patterns of interdependence. Therefore, a social perspective is essential for the orderly and systematic transformation of India into an urban-industrial economy.

Mukerjee's approach to social ecology diverged from that of Western social scientists. In the United States, the Chicago School of Sociology prioritized empirical studies of social issues such as disorganization and urban deterioration, with figures like Park, Burgess, Louis Wirth, and Giddings emphasizing human ecology. Their focus was on social engineering, including relocating slum dwellers, improving living conditions, and enhancing employment opportunities. In contrast, Mukerjee argued that social ecology offered a more effective response to the disruptions caused by rapid industrialization. He maintained that India's long history provided a rich repository of values that should inform social development.

Mukerjee asserted that national planning for India should extend beyond addressing immediate and tangible issues to focus on value-based development. In line with his interest in social ecology, he developed the concept of regional sociology, advocating for a deeper understanding of the regional dimensions of national development. He argued that fostering self-sufficiency in various regions would benefit the nation as a whole, whereas regional imbalances could lead to dominance by certain areas and uneven development. Mukerjee emphasized the need to balance economic growth with ecological sustainability, cautioning against neglecting traditional economic networks during modernization. For example, post-independence initiatives such as the organization of traditional crafts into handloom cooperatives in Tamil Nadu and other states, as well as the Khadi Gramodyog's use of traditional skills for modern production, illustrate this approach. In his 1955 work, *The Social Structure of Values*, Mukerjee highlighted the centrality of values in understanding social structures.

Critique of the Fact-Value Dichotomy

- Western social science often separated facts (objective observations) from values (subjective beliefs and preferences).
- Mukerjee argued against this dichotomy. He believed values are not simply individual preferences but are socially constructed and embedded within social structures.

Social Structure of Values

- Mukerjee proposed a concept called the "Social Structure of Values." This framework suggests that:
 - Values are not isolated entities but form a system interconnected with other social institutions like family, religion, and law.

- These institutions create, transmit, and reinforce dominant values within a society.
- Different social groups (caste, class, gender) might hold different value priorities, leading to potential tensions and negotiations within the social structure.

The Mukerjee's theories include the origin of values, which he argued arise from social needs, experiences, and historical contexts. For instance, filial piety may reflect the need for social order and family security. Through socialization, individuals internalize the dominant values of their social groups, shaping their behavior, aspirations, and moral judgments. The social structure of values seeks integration by promoting shared values across society, but conflicts can emerge when different groups maintain competing priorities. Mukerjee envisioned a society guided by universal values such as social justice and human dignity, fostering inclusivity and harmony. However, some scholars have critiqued his focus on dominant values, suggesting it may understate the agency of individuals and marginalized groups in shaping and contesting societal values. Mukerjee's emphasis on the social construction of values and their interaction with social structures remains pertinent for analyzing social change, cultural conflict, and the pursuit of a more equitable society. Additionally, he introduced the concept of "moral territory," referring to the domain within which moral principles, values, and norms guide individual and collective behavior. According to Mukerjee, each society or social group establishes its own moral territory, which defines the boundaries of acceptable conduct and regulates social interactions.

The concept of moral territory illustrates Mukherjee's broader interest in the moral foundations of social order and the role of morality in shaping social structures and relationships. He contended that moral principles provide a framework for maintaining social cohesion, resolving conflicts, and promoting collective well-being. Mukherjee's analysis of moral territory highlights the dynamic and contextual nature of morality, which varies across cultures, historical periods, and social settings. He emphasized the necessity of examining the moral dimensions of social life to understand the principles governing human behavior and societal norms. Overall, Mukherjee's concept of moral territory advances the sociological understanding of morality as a core element of social organization and the complex interplay between moral values, social norms, and individual agency.

D. P. Mukerjee

Dhurjati Prasad Mukerjee (1894-1961), often known as D. P. Mukerjee, was a founder of sociology in India. He was born on 5 October 1894 in West Bengal to a middle-class Bengali family with an intellectual background.

D. P. Mukerjee was a Marxist who analysed Indian history through a dialectical process. Tradition and modernity, colonialism and nationalism, individualism and collectivism could be seen as dialectically interacting with each other. Here we will give you a biographical sketch of D. P. Mukerjee. This will help you to understand his central ideas in their proper perspective.

Important Work

- Diversities (1958); Basic Concepts in Sociology (1932)
- Personality and the Social Sciences (1924)
- Modern Indian Culture
- Indian Music: An introduction

Indian Culture and Diversities

D. P. Mukerjee studied Hindu-Muslim relations and believed that, despite differences, India's diverse culture shared a humanistic and spiritual unity. He focused on three main areas of interaction. First, in politics, Islamic kings ruled over Hindu subjects in North India from the eleventh to seventeenth centuries. Still, Muslim rulers and Hindu rajas often formed alliances, especially during the Mughal period. Second, in economic life, Muslim jagirdars (military chiefs) and Hindu zamindars often shared interests and worked together. Third, in culture, both groups influenced each other in literature, music, clothing, and the arts. Sufism and Bhaktism in the north encouraged these exchanges. However, Mukerjee also pointed out that Hindus and Muslims had different worldviews. He said Hindus tended to see life as a cycle of good and bad, leading to a more fatalistic outlook, shaped by their connection to the subcontinent. Islam, by contrast, was a multi-ethnic, multi-national religion. Hindus viewed nationhood in an idealistic way, while Muslims were more pragmatic. For Hindus, freedom was a "birthright"; for Muslims, it was an opportunity. Muslims tended to act directly in times of crisis, rather than seeing events as part of a cycle.

Indian Culture

Indian culture is characterized by common traditions that have shaped general attitudes, with Buddhism, Islam, and Western commerce and culture serving as major influences. Through the assimilation and conflict of these diverse forces, Indian culture developed into a unique entity, neither exclusively Hindu nor Islamic, nor a replica of Western or purely Asiatic models (1948: 1). Mukerjee recognized that Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis was weakest at the cognitive level, yet he emphasized shared economic interests and celebrated achievements in music, architecture, and literature. He regarded the partition of the subcontinent as primarily a geopolitical event and expressed confidence that the future would transcend present divisions through dialectical progress. Mukerjee advocated against politicizing culture and was deeply influenced by both traditional and modern elements. His work, *Modern Indian Culture: A Sociological Study* was first published in 1942 and revised in 1947, coinciding with partitioned independence. He identified synthesis as the dominant organizing principle of Indian culture. British rule marked a significant turning point, with the middle class initially consolidating and later challenging colonial authority. Mukerjee envisioned a peaceful, progressive India emerging from the union of diverse elements and regional cultures, asserting that reorientation to tradition were essential for progress. He denied being a Marxist, instead describing himself as a 'Marxologist'.

Modernity

The strength of Indian tradition is found in its crystallization of values derived from historical experiences and the collective habits and emotions of its people. India has preserved a range of values, both positive and negative. The challenge lies in integrating external influences such as technology, democracy, urbanization, and bureaucracy into this traditional framework.

D. P. Mukerjee maintained that Indian society possesses the flexibility necessary to adapt to external influences, unlike some indigenous groups that have disappeared following contact with Western culture. Indian culture has historically assimilated tribal elements and internal dissent, resulting in a unique blend, or *varansankara*, of Hindu-Muslim cultures. As he observed, "Traditionally, therefore, living in adjustment is in India's blood, so to speak".

D. P. Mukerjee did not idealize tradition. His concept of the “complete man” or “well-balanced personality” required a synthesis of moral fervour, aesthetic and intellectual sensibility, historical awareness, and rationality. While modernity emphasizes the latter qualities, the dialectic between tradition and modernity is rooted in understanding tradition itself. Mukerjee asserted that “the knowledge of traditions shows the way to break them with the least social cost”. His influential writings on ‘tradition and modernity’ provide a framework for evaluating these two opposing concepts. He contended that in India, tradition and modernity, British colonialism and nationalism, and individualism and collectivism are dialectically interconnected. His dialectical approach was grounded in liberal humanism, and he consistently argued that traditions are central to understanding Indian society. The relationship between modernization, introduced during the British period, and tradition is fundamentally dialectical. Mukerjee advocated defining traditions from this perspective.

Marxology

D. P. Mukerjee expressed strong confidence in Marxism, viewing it as a framework for envisioning a higher stage of human development in which individual personalities are integrated into society through collective, socially directed efforts toward a historically defined goal, namely a socialist order. However, he also voiced reservations regarding Marxist analyses of Indian social phenomena, citing three primary concerns:

- The Marxists would analyse everything in terms of class conflict. But in our society, caste traditions have long covered class conflict, and new class relations have not yet sharply emerged.
- Many of them are more or less ignorant of the socio-economic history of India.
- The way economic pressures work is not that of mechanical force moving a dead matter.

M. N. Srinivas

Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas was born in Mysore on November 16, 1916, into the traditional Brahmin family of Narasimhachar. His father, a government servant from the village of Arakere (approximately 20 miles from Mysore), relocated to provide educational opportunities for his children. Srinivas’s family placed significant emphasis on education. His eldest brother initially taught English at a school and later became an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Mysore. This brother

encouraged Srinivas to enhance his writing skills, and Srinivas sought the editorial assistance of R.K. Narayan, the renowned novelist, to improve his manuscripts. Srinivas's intellectual development was shaped by his studies at three universities: Mysore University, where he studied social philosophy under A. R. Wadia and M. H. Krishna; Bombay University, where he was mentored by G. S. Ghurye; and Oxford University, where he was trained by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and E. Evans-Pritchard. During his postgraduate studies, Srinivas worked closely with Ghurye and, under his encouragement, conducted a field-based study on marriage and family among the Kannada caste in Mysore State. This research was submitted as a dissertation and later published as *Marriage and Family in Mysore* (1942). Srinivas subsequently pursued a D.Phil. at Oxford, beginning his research under Radcliffe-Brown's supervision. Following Radcliffe-Brown's suggestion, he re-examined the Coorg material using the structural-functional approach.

Important Works

- *Marriage and Family in Mysore* (1942)
- *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1952); *Caste in Modern India* and
- *Other Essays*
- (1962) *Social Change in Modern India* (1966)
- *The Remembered Village* (1976)
- *Village, caste, gender, and method*

Structural-Functionalism

Srinivas was introduced to the concept of social structure by Radcliffe-Brown and later recognized its importance in the analysis of social life. Both E. E. Evans-Pritchard and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown supervised Srinivas's academic work, with Evans-Pritchard assuming primary supervision after Radcliffe-Brown's retirement. Although Evans-Pritchard regarded Srinivas's approach as overly dependent on Durkheim, he chose not to intervene in Srinivas's research. Radcliffe-Brown significantly influenced Srinivas's methodological orientation, while Evans-Pritchard's perspective was shaped by Radcliffe-Brown's legacy.

Dominant caste

A dominant caste is characterized by numerical superiority over other castes as well as significant economic and political influence. Such a caste

group is more likely to achieve dominance if its status within the local caste hierarchy is relatively high. Sociologist M. N. Srinivas introduced the concept of the dominant caste in 1959, specifying that a dominant caste must possess certain defining characteristics:

- It must own a sizeable amount of cultivable land.
- It must be of considerable numerical strength.
- It must enjoy a high place in the local caste hierarchy.
- Western education,
- Jobs in administration and political clout

Sanskritisation, a term introduced by Prof. M. N. Srinivas in Indian sociology, refers to the process by which lower castes collectively adopt the practices and beliefs of upper castes as a means to attain higher social status. This process signifies cultural mobility within India's traditional social system and has been a significant driver of cultural change throughout Indian history. Sanskritisation involves lower castes imitating the lifestyles of upper castes in their efforts to achieve upward mobility, often in conjunction with processes such as modernisation and Westernisation. The phenomenon is closely linked to the influence of the local dominant caste. In his work "Social Change in Modern India" (1971), Srinivas defined Sanskritisation as "a process by which a low caste or a tribe or other group changes its customs, rituals, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently twice-born caste."

Westernisation refers to the transformation of the Indian caste system and society resulting from prolonged contact with Western influences, particularly during British colonial rule. The process began with missionary activities aimed at converting Indians to Christianity and the arrival of the East India Company, which initially focused on trade and later expanded its political control. The establishment of British rule by 1858 led to profound and lasting changes in Indian society and culture. The British introduced new technologies, institutions, knowledge systems, beliefs, and values, which became significant sources of social mobility. M. N. Srinivas coined the term "Westernisation" to describe these changes in Indian society and culture resulting from Western contact during British rule.

Definition of Westernisation

According to M.N. Srinivas, "Westernisation" refers to "the changes brought about in the Indian society and culture as a result of over 150

years of British rule and the term subsumes changes occurring at different levels – technology, institutions, ideology and values.”

Westernisation, in contrast to Sanskritisation, is a more straightforward concept that describes the impact of Western contact, particularly British rule, on Indian society and culture. M. N. Srinivas used the term to refer to the changes experienced by a non-Western country as a result of sustained interaction with the West. According to Srinivas, Westernisation involves the adoption of certain value preferences, such as humanitarianism, which emphasizes concern for the welfare of all individuals regardless of caste, economic status, religion, age, or gender. Westernisation encompasses not only the introduction of new institutions but also the fundamental transformation of existing ones. For instance, while India had educational institutions prior to British rule, the schools introduced by the British differed significantly from traditional models. Other institutions, including the army, civil service, and law courts, were similarly transformed. Notably, the advancement of Westernisation does not hinder the process of Sanskritisation; both processes occur simultaneously, and increased Westernisation can even accelerate Sanskritisation. For example, improvements in postal services, transportation, and media—outcomes of Western influence—have facilitated more organized religious pilgrimages, meetings, and caste solidarities than in the past.

Meaning and Definition of Secularisation

Secularisation refers to the gradual incorporation of rationality into religious, customary, or traditional practices, resulting in public life being guided by practical rather than religious considerations. Consequently, concepts once regarded as transcendental are increasingly interpreted within a worldly context. More specifically, secularisation involves providing human, social, practical, or logical explanations for transcendental, traditional, divine, or religious ideals. Dr. M. N. Srinivas offers a pertinent definition: “The term secularisation means that what used to be religious is no longer perceived as such. It refers to a process of differentiation that affects various aspects of society—economic, political, legal, and moral—which are seen as more isolated from each other.” The meaning of secularisation is further clarified by examining its key elements.

Important Elements of Secularisation

Some of the main elements of secularisation are as follows.

Lack of Religiousness

As has already been explained, one of the major elements of secularisation is the loss of religiosity along with its intelligence. As secularisation increases in the life of the commoner, religiosity declines. As a result, individuals' thinking changes, and social objectives or practical benefits replace religious ones.

Rationalisation

A key element of secularisation is rationality. Under this, all beliefs, ideas or things involve logic. Based on logic and reasoning, people can view life's problems in light of modern knowledge. The increase in rationality is secularisation.

Process of Differentiation

Lastly, the process of differentiation can also be mentioned as a very important element or characteristic of secularisation. Differentiation in secularisation means that society becomes more differentiated. This includes various aspects of society – economic, political, religious, moral, legal, etc. In all these areas, religion's importance or influence diminishes. Take the state, for example. Earlier the king was also below the priest, but today religion and state have become separate. It is clear that under this process the bondage of religion in different areas of life ends.

Factors of Secularisation

Every process must have some or other reason or causes. The process of secularisation that is going on in India today has also had some special reasons. Although it is difficult to shed light on all the reasons for this process, some important factors can be presented as follows for ease of study.

Urbanisation

Urbanisation has played a significant role in advancing secularisation, as evidenced by its prevalence in Western societies. Factors such as urban overcrowding, improved transportation, advanced education, fashion, materialism, rationalism, and individualism are all present in urban

environments. Collectively, these elements contribute substantially to the process of secularisation.

Modern Education

Modern education is a critical factor in the process of secularisation. India's education system has undergone significant Westernisation over the past two centuries, leading to the integration of Western values into Indian culture. This transformation has notably influenced religious practices, particularly within Hinduism. Modern education has prompted individuals to reconsider traditional beliefs and practices, fostering a scientific attitude and rational thinking. As a result, actions are increasingly guided by pragmatism rather than solely by religious motivations. Additionally, modern education has promoted inter-caste marriages through co-educational opportunities and has diminished practices such as untouchability and notions of purity and pollution. These developments are clear indicators of secularisation resulting from modern education.

Social and Religious Movement

Many social and religious movements have also contributed a lot to secularisation. Leaders like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Raja Rammohan Roy, Keshavchandra Sen, Swami Dayanand, Govind Ranade, Mahatma Gandhi, etc., initiated many social and religious movements in this country during foreign rule. These movements highlighted misconceptions and shortcomings in Hinduism and, through their voices, pushed substantial reforms.

A.R Desai

Akshay Ramanlal Desai was born on April 16, 1915, in Nadiad, Gujarat. His father, Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai, served as a civil servant in the princely state of Baroda during the 1920s and 1930s and was also a prominent literary figure. Ramanlal Desai's literary works, which often depicted the lives and struggles of the peasantry, inspired youth toward social transformation. Themes such as the exploitation of peasants through excessive rent, critiques of colonialism, and the responsibilities of citizens in shaping a new India were recurrent in his novels. His admiration for Gandhi and inclination toward Fabian socialism further influenced his perspectives. Akshay Desai's travels with his father across Baroda left a lasting impact on his intellectual development.

Major Works

Some works by A. R. Desai include Social Background of Indian Nationalism.

- Recent Trends in Indian Nationalism
- Rural Sociology in India (1969)
- State and Society in India: Essays in Dissent (1975)
- India's Path of Development: A Marxist Approach (1984)

Social Background of Indian Nationalism

Nationalism served as the foundational context for the emergence of social sciences in India. Desai's social inquiries were motivated by the pressing questions and challenges confronting Indian society, as well as by the struggles in which he actively participated. This perspective is essential when evaluating his scholarly contributions. Much of Desai's work is grounded in historical materialism. His doctoral research was published as Social Background of Indian Nationalism, followed by Recent Trends in Indian Nationalism. The former, first published in 1946, has appeared in multiple editions and is noted for its comprehensive historical analysis. In Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Desai identifies distinct phases in the evolution of Indian nationalism. As Indian nationalism progressed through these stages, its social base broadened, its objectives became more defined and assertive, and its forms of expression diversified. Influenced by both domestic and global developments, the Indian populace was increasingly drawn into the national movement through a shared sense of national consciousness and vision. This awakening was evident across social, political, and cultural domains.

First Phase: During the initial phase, Indian nationalism possessed a limited social base. In the early nineteenth century, Indian intellectuals engaged with Western culture and assimilated democratic and nationalistic ideas through modern education introduced by the British in newly established institutions. These intellectuals constituted the first segment of Indian society to develop national consciousness and aspirations.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other progressive Indians were pioneers of Indian nationalism. They promoted the concept of an Indian nation and disseminated these ideas among the populace. Their efforts initiated social and religious reform movements aimed at reconstructing Indian society and religion in accordance with the principles of democracy, rationalism, and nationalism. These movements reflected the emergence of national

democratic consciousness among segments of the Indian population. Early leaders of Indian nationalism advocated for democratic rights, including freedom of the press, and demanded greater participation in governance.

Second Phase: The first phase concluded in 1885 with the establishment of the Indian National Congress. The second phase, spanning 1885 to 1905, was characterised by liberal intellectuals leading the Congress. Their ideology and strategies shaped the movement's agenda, reflecting the interests of India's emerging bourgeois society. During this period, the movement's social base expanded to include the educated middle class and, due to the growth of modern education and trade, segments of the merchant class. The gradual development of modern industries led to the rise of an industrialist class, which began to influence Congress, particularly by supporting industrialisation and organising the swadeshi campaign in 1905. Under liberal leadership, the Congress primarily advocated for the interests of the educated and trading bourgeoisie, including resolutions on the Indianisation of services, increased Indian participation in governance, and the elimination of economic drain. They also advanced democratic demands such as representative institutions and civil liberties. However, the inability to integrate socio-state systems resulted in rising unemployment among educated youth, while epidemics and famines exacerbated economic hardship. Unpopular policies, such as the Indian University Act and the Partition of Bengal, further alienated the populace and helped create a politically conscious middle class. This period also witnessed the rise of extremist leaders, including Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal, and Lala Lajpat Rai. Political dissatisfaction fuelled the growth of radical nationalist groups, some of which resorted to violence and agitation within the military to pursue political independence.

Third phase: The third phase of the national movement extended from 1905 to 1918. At this point, the Liberals became the national movement's leaders. The national movement advanced despite strong government repression. Extremist propaganda instilled in people a sense of national self-esteem and self-confidence, and instead of looking to the British for political freedom as the Liberals advised, they began to rely on their own strength to achieve it. In the third phase, the Indian national movement became extremist and challenging, gaining a broader social base involving the lower and middle classes. The agitation for wartime home rule further strengthened people's political consciousness. During this period, upper-caste Muslims developed political awareness and, in 1906, formed their All India Political Organisation, the Muslim League. For several reasons, the

growing political awareness of the Muslim elite and the educated middle class led to the formation of a community-based organisation.

Fourth Phase: The fourth phase of the Indian national movement began in 1918 and extended through the Non-Cooperation Movement, approximately until 1930–34. During this period, the movement expanded beyond the upper and middle classes to include a broad popular base. Several factors contributed to this national awakening, including the post-war economic crisis, unfulfilled government promises, and intensified state repression, all of which affected the peasantry and working class. The Congress adopted boycott strategies that aligned with the interests of its financial supporters, while Gandhi's emphasis on class unity and social harmony influenced the movement's direction. From 1918 onward, the Indian industrial bourgeoisie played an increasingly significant role in shaping the movement's strategies under Gandhi's leadership. This phase also witnessed the rise of socialist and communist groups, which by 1928 had established independent political and trade union movements grounded in class struggle. These groups advocated for a socialist nation as the objective of the national movement. After 1926, the Indian working class became actively involved, and the pursuit of independence emerged as the central political goal.

Fifth Phase: The fifth phase, spanning 1934 to 1939 and coinciding with the onset of World War II, was marked by significant developments. A faction within the Congress became disillusioned with Gandhi's ideology and methods, leading to the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, which sought to mobilize the working class and peasantry as the primary forces of the national movement. Other dissident groups, such as the Forward Bloc led by Subhash Chandra Bose, also gained prominence. Movements representing marginalized communities grew steadily, while the Muslim League strengthened both organizationally and politically. Numerous Muslim organizations with varying political orientations emerged during this period. The Communist Party expanded rapidly, increasing its influence among students, workers, and peasants. The peasant movement also experienced notable growth, with large segments of the peasantry developing heightened national and class consciousness.

Marxist Approach to the Study of Indian Society

Understanding Indian Society from a Marxist Perspective: Desai's primary objective was to analyse Indian society through a Marxist lens and to apply Marxian methodology to examine and address its structural

contradictions. These contradictions refer to systemic conflicts that shape society's fundamental structure, such as those between the working class and the bourgeoisie or between the peasantry and landlords. Desai regarded the Marxist approach as both essential for understanding Indian society and integral to the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology. In his 1980 Presidential address to the Indian Sociological Conference in Meerut, titled "The Relevance of the Marxist Approach to the Study of Indian Society" (Desai, 1984:1-19), he identified several significant developments since the 1950s, including the substantial expansion of higher education. Desai noted the remarkable growth of universities and colleges, with social sciences gaining prominence: "Knowledge generators and knowledge transmitters in the social sciences are operating on a big scale on the national scene". He observed that sociology and social anthropology had produced a considerable number of trained professionals. Desai described the institutional framework for sociological training and research as a large-scale knowledge factory producing numerous micro surveys and field reports (Desai 1984:3). His address, directed at professional colleagues, both articulated social scientists' concerns and encouraged dialogue about the broader social significance of on-going research. Key issues raised in his address include the following:

- Sociological research in India remains constrained by a colonial framework, which limits its vision, diminishes creativity, and perpetuates dependency through the adoption of concepts and methods from prestigious institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom. The uncritical acceptance of these external models, without assessing their relevance to Indian contexts, has distorted perspectives and hindered the development of Indian sociology.
- The increasing rigidity of disciplinary boundaries has produced fragmented perspectives and a reluctance to integrate insights from both Indology and history.
- A critical issue concerns the claim of value-neutrality in sociological research, which often coincides with the uncritical acceptance of values promoted by policymakers. This raises broader questions about the ethical dimension of sociology, which Desai argues has become 'a discipline without human meaning or purpose.'

1.9 Rise of social Anthropology

The development of social and cultural anthropology in India began in the latter half of the nineteenth century during British colonial rule.

During this era, systematic ethnographic studies emerged, frequently shaped by colonial perspectives and administrative objectives. Initial anthropological research in India was primarily conducted by British administrators, missionaries, and military officers, who documented the customs, practices, and social structures of diverse communities. These early ethnographers were generally colonial officials rather than trained anthropologists, and their primary purpose was to collect information to support governance. Significant works from this period include H.H. Risley's "The Tribes and Castes of Bengal" (1891) and Edgar Thurston's "Castes and Tribes of Southern India" (1909). Although these studies provided detailed documentation, they often categorized communities according to rigid racial and hierarchical frameworks that mirrored colonial attitudes rather than indigenous perspectives. In response, some Indian scholars and members of local communities began to critique these representations, questioning their accuracy and highlighting the biases inherent in colonial ethnography. Over time, indigenous voices called for more nuanced and respectful understandings of their cultures, setting the stage for later developments in Indian anthropology.

1.10 Development of the Tribal Studies

Tribal Studies is a field that investigates the lifestyles, cultures, social organisations, and economic practices of indigenous and tribal communities. The term 'tribal' typically denotes groups or communities with distinct social, cultural, and economic characteristics, often possessing their own governance systems and traditional practices, and generally not fully integrated into mainstream society. For example, the Santhal tribe of Eastern India is recognised for its agricultural practices and annual festivals, while the Toda people of the Nilgiris are noted for their elaborate buffalo-based rituals and distinctive architecture. The Bhil community in western India maintains a strong tradition of folk painting and local leadership structures. The term 'indigenous' refers to the original inhabitants of a region who preserve unique cultural identities, languages, and social practices connected to their ancestral lands. For instance, the Jarawa people of the Andaman Islands continue to practice hunting and gathering, sustaining a lifestyle closely linked to their environment. Tribal Studies encompasses comprehensive analysis of kinship, marriage, religion, economic activities, and political organisation among tribes. Additionally, the field examines the effects of modernisation, government policies, and development programs on these communities.

Cultural Practices: This area focuses on the unique cultural practices, traditions, and rituals of various tribes. For example, the Gonds of Central India celebrate the “Dandari Festival,” a traditional dance event that highlights community storytelling and shared cultural heritage.

Social Organisation: This area examines kinship patterns, marriage systems, and family structures within tribal societies. For instance, among the Khasi tribe of Meghalaya, descent and inheritance are traced through the maternal line, resulting in a matrilineal society. This system significantly influences family roles and household organisation.

Economic Activities: This area analyses subsistence strategies, modes of production, and economic exchanges among tribal communities.

Political Systems: This area studies governance structures, leadership patterns, and mechanisms for conflict resolution within tribal societies.

Impact of Modernisation: This area evaluates the effects of modernisation, globalisation, and development policies on tribal communities. For example, modernisation may result in the loss of traditional languages and the displacement of tribes from ancestral lands as a consequence of development projects.

Government Policies and Programs: This area addresses the role of government interventions in tribal welfare and development. For example, the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996, was introduced in India to empower tribal communities by granting greater control over local resources and self-governance. Similarly, welfare schemes such as the Scheduled Tribes Development Programme aim to enhance education, health, and economic opportunities for tribal groups.

1.11 Growth of Anthropology in India

Although anthropology is a relatively new discipline, it holds a significant position within the global academic community. It is taught at most leading universities worldwide, and anthropologists work in various administrative roles. The discipline required considerable time to develop as an independent field of teaching and research. While human curiosity about worldly phenomena has always existed, systematic analysis of human life began much later. This section examines the evolution of anthropology and how it attained its current status globally and in India. T.K. Penniman, in his book *Hundred Years of Anthropology* (1935), classifies the development of anthropology into four periods, which are outlined below:

- Formulation Period (1835): This period represents the earliest and longest phase in anthropology's history, beginning with the contributions of Greek historians, philosophers, and naturalists.
- Penniman identifies Herodotus (484-425 BC) as the first anthropologist and the father of Greek ethnography. Herodotus collected extensive information about peoples at various cultural stages. His work addressed the origins of culture and included descriptions of language, physical characteristics, material culture, marriage and divorce practices, social laws, and customs.
- Protagoras (480-410 BC), another Greek philosopher, also contributed to understanding human beings and culture. He asserted that "man is the measure of all things" and first proposed the theory of relativism. Protagoras also introduced an evolutionary framework to explain different social traits.
- Socrates (470-399 BC) argued that universal values guide all societies and primarily advanced the philosophical dimensions of social thought.
- Plato (428-348 BC) developed theories concerning the state, marriage, and education. He argued that individuals outside society are like animals, and that social structures transform them into social beings.
- Aristotle (384-322 BC), like Plato, articulated theories regarding the state and human nature. He distinguished between functional and structural similarities, as demonstrated by his classification of bats and whales with mammals rather than birds or fish. Aristotle asserted that the state shapes human behaviour and that, without law and justice, humans would become the worst of all animals. He also described human beings as inherently social animals.
- During the medieval period, numerous travellers and explorers documented the cultures of the peoples they encountered. Notably, Marco Polo (1224-1313) and Vasco da Gama (1397-1499) made significant contributions to the expanding body of anthropological knowledge.
- During the 17th century, Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes formulated different theories for the study of society. John Locke provided the metaphysical foundation upon which anthropologists formulated their formal definition of culture. German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) wrote the book *Anthropology* in 1789,

suggesting the animal origin of man and concluding that human knowledge comes from pre-human conditions.

- During the 16th century, many people were curious to learn about the different races of humankind. William Harvey's demonstration of blood circulation in 1628 and Leeuwenhoek's discovery of the microscope opened a new world of study. Vesalius had attempted to compare human beings with apes. He also tried to dissect the human body. In 1735, Carl Linnaeus published his book 'Systema Naturae', which included humans in the zoological classification.
- During the 16th and 17th centuries, Christian missionaries travelled worldwide to spread Christian ideology and convert people to Christianity. They studied the cultures of native peoples to make conversion attempts easier. British administrators conducted numerous studies of native peoples during colonisation to facilitate their administration. Edgar Thurston's "Castes and Tribes of India", William Crook's "Philosophy of NEFA", and John Russel made significant contributions to Anthropology by studying the cultures of different groups in India.

Convergent Period (1835-1859)

During this period, scholars from different countries expressed divergent views on the biological and social origins of human beings. Among these, the contributions of Karl Marx (1818-1883), Charles Lyell (1797-1895), and William Smith (1769-1839) are essential. Marx accepted the dialectical process as history's moving power. In archaeology, Boucher de Perthes' discoveries of a flint implement at Abbeville in 1838 and 1846, and Dr Rigmor's advances in the Acheulian, were among some of the new developments. The discovery of Neanderthals in Düsseldorf in 1857 gave a new outlook on human evolution. James Prichard classified and systematised the facts about the races of humankind in his books *The Natural History of Man* (1833) and *Physical History of Man* (1836). He proposed differences in colour, hair, stature, and form, and examined the criteria for racial classification. These ideas converged with Charles Darwin's Book "The Origin of Species" (1859). In this book, he proposed his theory of organic evolution, popularly known as 'Darwinism'. With the publication of this book, the physical evolution of human beings, based on scientific investigation, was established. Thus, the diverse arguments expressed about the origin of human beings and society ended with the publication of *The Origin of Species*.

Constructive period (1859-1900)

During this period, anthropology began to be taught as an independent discipline at many universities. Departments of anthropology were established at Oxford University in 1884 and at Cambridge University in 1900. During this period, scholars such as R. B. Tylor, James Frazer, Henry Maine, and L. H. Morgan produced scientific research and publications. Different branches of anthropology, such as ethnology, prehistory, and social and physical anthropology, also evolved. Beyond England, Germany, and the USA, anthropological research flourished in France and other countries. Émile Durkheim's contributions in France helped popularise anthropology there. Some important journals like the 'American Journal of Folklore' and the 'Bulletin of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland' started during this period. These journals published many anthropological articles. Colonial administrators also published their reports and papers in these journals. Research by British officers such as Edgar Thurston, Russel, and others helped grow the anthropological tradition in India.

Critical period (1900 onwards)

Penniman used the term "critical" to denote this period because of its crucial contribution to anthropology's development. This period also saw several significant developments. The first chair of social anthropology was established in 1908 at the University of Liverpool in Britain. Sir James Frazer chaired it. The University of Calcutta created the first anthropology department in India in 1920. In 1919, the University of Bombay introduced social anthropology as a subject in the department of sociology. During this period, various schools of thought emerged in anthropology. The functional school of thought, the structural school of thought, the diffusion school, and the culture and personality school were among the most prominent. Authors of this period specialised in theorising the concepts, definitions, and different aspects of culture for instance, B.K. Malinowski, based on his field expedition among the Trobriand islanders, proposed his idea of Functionalism. Based on his study of the Andaman islanders, Radcliffe-Brown established his theory of social structure during this period. Similarly, American scholars such as A.L. Kroeber, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Clark Wissler also played key roles in shaping the Destiny of World anthropology.

1.12 Pioneers of Indian Social Anthropology

S.C Roy

In the early 20th century, as Indian thinkers started to look more closely at their own society, Sarat Chandra Roy became a leading figure in Indian ethnography. Even though he was not formally trained as an anthropologist, Roy built the field in India through dedicated fieldwork, legal skills, and a strong commitment to helping tribal communities. Known as the 'Father of Indian Ethnography,' Roy combined his work as a lawyer with careful research and documentation. His efforts provided a solid foundation for Indian anthropology, moving away from colonial speculation toward detailed studies of indigenous cultures; the institutions he founded and the records he created remain important resources for studying tribal India.

S. C. Roy was born on November 4, 1871, in Karapara, Bengal Presidency. He studied in Calcutta, earning a degree in English Literature from Scottish Church College and then a law degree from Ripon College.

He started his career as a lawyer, working in the courts of Ranchi in the Chota Nagpur Division. There, he saw the struggles and unfair treatment faced by the Munda, Oraon, and other tribal groups under colonial rule. Seeing how little people understood about their customs and laws, Roy decided to help them both legally and by studying their cultures, languages, and histories. This shift from law to ethnography stemmed from his strong sense of justice and his desire to explain tribal life to both the people and the authorities.

Major Contributions to Anthropology

Roy's main contribution was his detailed studies of individual tribes, which were groundbreaking for their depth and historical perspective. His work can be grouped into several areas:

Foundational Tribal Ethnography

Roy's studies set a new standard for ethnography in India. He spent years living with different tribes, learning about their social structure, religion, folklore, and history.

- The Mundas and Their Country (1912): His first major study, exploring the origins and history of the Munda tribe by combining folklore, language, and historical facts.

- The Oraons of Chota Nagpur (1915) and Oraon Religion and Customs (1927): Detailed studies on the Oraon, covering their social systems, the role of the youth. The Oraons of Chota Nagpur (1915) and Oraon Religion and Customs (1927): These works looked closely at the Oraon people, describing their social systems, the importance of the youth dormitory (Dhumkuria), and how reform movements like the Bhagat movement changed their culture.
- He wrote a detailed study on social divisions called Caste, Race and Religion in India (1934-35).
- He supported Applied Anthropology, encouraging the use of anthropological knowledge to solve administrative issues and improve the lives of tribal people.
- He saw folklore as the 'pre-history of the human mind,' believing it gives important insights into how societies have developed their ideas.

Methodology and Theoretical Approach

S.C. Roy's approach was unusual for his time and showed his mix of practical, legal, and academic interests.

- Immersive and Careful Fieldwork: While colonial officials often did only short surveys, Roy spent years living with tribal communities, learning their languages, and building trust. This allowed him to create detailed and genuine records. He set a strong example for future Indian anthropologists.
- Integration of History and Culture: He was among the first to argue that understanding a culture also means understanding its history. For example, his work on the Mundas follows their story from Vedic times to the colonial period.
- Nationalist Anthropology: Later in his career, Roy aimed to create an 'Indian Outlook on Anthropology.' He suggested combining the objective methods of Western ethnology with the Indian idea of 'sympathetic immersion' (dhyana), which means deeply understanding others by putting oneself in their place. He believed this mix was important for building national unity by appreciating cultural diversity.

D.N. Majumdar

Dhirendra Nath Majumdar (1903-1960) began his career as an anthropologist at Calcutta University, where he earned his Master's

Degree in 1924. In 1928, he joined Lucknow University and remained there for the duration of his career. At Lucknow, his primary focus was on ethnographic traditions, particularly the customs and beliefs of various tribes and castes.

Majumdar's understanding of Indian traditions was shaped by his research on tribal communities. In addition to his focus on tribal groups, he also conducted studies on Indian villages. As a social anthropologist, his primary area of interest was culture, and he aimed to trace the development of local cultures through his investigations of both tribal groups and villages. Through this work, he identified tradition as a central factor in cultural development.

The following passage outlines Majumdar's perspective on the relationship between tradition and culture:

Majumdar argued that the past must be understood in relation to the present, and that the present can stabilize the future if it is anchored in the foundations of the past. He rejected the notion of a 'golden age,' asserting that life is a continuous process of adjustment. In this process, individuals who do not fit the prevailing context may both hinder and facilitate cultural progress. According to Majumdar, if these 'misfits' can be integrated into the social structure, cultural evolution will continue through ongoing adjustment and synthesis, which are central to cultural change and crises. Although D.P. Mukerji and D.N. Majumdar held different ideological perspectives Mukerji being a Marxist and Majumdar a functionalist both recognized the need for a synthesis of tradition and modernity. Mukerji emphasized adaptive changes to modernity, while Majumdar maintained that those who do not initially fit into modernity will eventually be compelled to adapt to the modernizing system.

However, D.P. Mukerji focused more on philosophy and economics, whereas Majumdar was primarily a field researcher. Due to his extensive fieldwork, Majumdar conceptualized modernity in ethnographic terms, grounding it in the customs and traditions of tribes, castes, and villages.

N.K Bose

N. K. Bose (1901–1972) is recognized as one of the most influential figures in Indian anthropology and sociology. He was a meticulous ethnographer, an insightful cultural theorist, and a public intellectual who connected academic scholarship with the ideals of the Indian freedom movement. As a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, Bose introduced

moral and humanistic concerns into the discipline of anthropology. N. K. Bose was born on 22 January 1901 in Calcutta (now Kolkata) to a Bengali middle-class family with strong intellectual traditions. His father, Prasanna Kumar Bose, was an educator, and Bose was raised in an environment that valued both Indian tradition and modern education. Bose studied at Presidency College, where he became involved in the national movement that was prominent in Bengal during the early 1920s. In 1921, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, he left college to participate in the Non-Cooperation Movement, demonstrating an early commitment to ethical action.

Following the suspension of the movement, Bose resumed his academic pursuits and later earned a master's degree in anthropology from the University of Calcutta, making him one of the first Indians to receive formal training in the discipline. His mentors exposed him to both Western anthropological theories and Indian cultural perspectives, which shaped his unique combination of empirical rigor and philosophical insight. Bose began his professional career as a lecturer in anthropology at Calcutta University. In this role, he collaborated with other pioneers of Indian anthropology and contributed to expanding the discipline's focus beyond tribal communities to encompass rural and urban societies. During this period, Bose's relationship with Gandhi became closer. He served as Gandhi's personal secretary from 1946 to 1948 and accompanied him on the Noakhali peace mission. These experiences with communal tension and reconciliation significantly influenced his understanding of India's cultural complexity and the challenges of achieving unity within diversity.

After Independence, Bose was appointed Director of the Anthropological Survey of India. Under his leadership, the institution conducted comprehensive ethnographic surveys nationwide, with a focus on fieldwork, regional documentation, and applied research. He subsequently served as Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, reflecting the increasing importance of anthropology in national development.

Major Contributions

Cultural Interpretation of Indian Civilisation

Bose regarded Indian civilisation as a vast and enduring cultural system that developed through processes of accommodation rather than assimilation. He considered diversity not as fragmentation but as a form of

unity maintained by shared values, rituals, and ethical ideals. His analysis of Hindu civilisation demonstrated how regional variations coexisted within a unified civilizational framework.

Village and Peasant Studies

Bose was among the first anthropologists to redirect scholarly attention from isolated tribal communities to Indian villages. His research on peasant life revealed the intricate interplay of caste, kinship, land relations, and ritual practices in shaping complex local social structures. This emphasis on rural social organization influenced subsequent village studies and rural development initiatives in independent India.

Gandhian Anthropology

Drawing on his close association with Gandhi, Bose incorporated Gandhian ethics into anthropology. He interpreted concepts such as Sarvodaya, non-violence, and self-sufficiency as social values that shaped daily life, rather than solely as political ideals. His writings consistently reflected a concern for moral order and cultural harmony.

Applied and Administrative Anthropology

The Anthropological Survey of India, Bose advocated for anthropology to serve societal needs. He emphasized the application of ethnographic knowledge in areas such as tribal welfare, education, and public administration, thereby establishing the foundation for applied anthropology in India.

Theoretical Perspectives and Methodology

Bose's theoretical and methodological approach integrated empirical fieldwork, cultural holism, and humanistic interpretation. Bose maintained that anthropology should begin with direct observation and dialogue with the communities under study. His methodology was rooted in respect for indigenous categories of thought and experience. By integrating descriptive ethnography with interpretive analysis, he depicted Indian society as a dynamic synthesis of continuity and change. Bose argued that anthropology in India should develop from indigenous intellectual traditions. He rejected the uncritical adoption of Western models, asserting that Indian realities necessitated the use of Indian concepts. Influenced by Gandhi's moral vision, Bose regarded anthropology as an inherently ethical discipline. He believed that understanding culture was inseparable

from fostering empathy, justice, and social equilibrium. His integration of field research with philosophical reflection contributed to the distinctively humanistic character of Indian anthropology.

Verrier Elwin

Verrier Elwin was a significant figure whose career spanned multiple continents, cultures, and academic disciplines. Originally an English-born Christian missionary, Elwin later became an anthropologist who engaged deeply with India's tribal communities. Rather than maintaining an outsider's perspective, he advocated for indigenous rights and cultural preservation. During a period when colonial attitudes frequently dehumanised tribal populations, Elwin distinguished himself by living among the tribes, acquiring their languages, respecting their customs, and documenting their lives with both empathy and scholarly rigor.

Elwin's scholarship established the groundwork for contemporary tribal welfare policies in India, shaping both academic discourse and governmental initiatives. His writings, which document communities ranging from the Gond and Baiga in Central India to tribes in the North-East, continue to serve as essential resources for understanding the subcontinent's diverse tribal cultures.

Early Life and Education: Birth & family: Harry Verrier Holman Elwin was born on 29 August 1902 in Dover, England. He was the eldest son of Edmund Henry Elwin, then Anglican Bishop of Sierra Leone.

Schooling: He studied at Dean Close School before matriculating at Merton College, Oxford, where he earned a double First in English language and literature and theology, and later received a D.Sc. He also served as President of the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union in 1925.

Initial Fieldwork among the Gonds and Baigas: First expedition: In 1928, Elwin teamed up with Indian reformer Shamrao Hivale and travelled into the Mandla district of central India, reaching Gond and Baiga villages.

Immersion strategy: Elwin adopted a long-term residence approach, living with tribal communities, learning their language (Chhattisgarhi Hindi), and engaging in daily life and traditions. This participatory, community-centered research method reflected his commitment to anthropology, which he described as "my whole life".

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Academic Positions & Roles: Anthropological Survey of India: In 1945, Elwin became the Deputy Director of the newly formed Anthropological Survey of India, cementing his transition from fieldwork to institutional influence.

Government Adviser: After India’s independence in 1947, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru appointed him Anthropological Adviser on tribal affairs, first for Assam and then the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA)-modern-day Arunachal Pradesh. His appointment reflected his expertise and advocacy.

Indian Citizenship: In January 1954, he became the first foreign-born individual to take Indian citizenship, exemplifying his deep commitment to India’s tribal people.

Major Publications & Theoretical Contributions

Elwin was a prolific author, producing nearly 26 books and hundreds of articles characterized by anthropology informed through empathy and direct experience. His key works include the following:

- The Muria and their Ghotul (1947)
- A Philosophy for NEFA (1957), with a foreword by Nehru, which outlined a progressive vision for tribal-region development.
- The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin (1964): his posthumous autobiography, awarded the Sahitya Akademi Prize in 1965, acclaimed for its blend of Western and Indian idealism.
- He also contributed to folklore anthologies such as Songs of the Forest and Folk-songs of the Maikal Hills, bringing tribal oral traditions into academic and public discourse.

Tribal Rights and Cultural Preservation: Elwin advocated for a ‘tribal bias,’ emphasizing the recognition of tribal governance, culture, and land rights while cautioning against forced assimilation. He warned, “We do not want to stop the clock of progress, but we do not want to see that it keeps the right time”.

NEFA Development Model: In his 1960 NEFA report, Elwin advocated for balanced modernization, including infrastructure development and the abolition of headhunting and slavery, while maintaining respect for tribal identity and promoting integration with the nation.

Visual Legacy: Elwin's photographs and collections of folktales formed the basis for educational resources such as the Tales of the Tribes animated series, which utilized cultural media to preserve and disseminate tribal narratives.

Critique and Controversies

Romanticism versus Reality: Some critics accused Elwin of romanticizing tribal communities as 'noble savages' and favoring isolation rather than integration. However, his supporters contended that his perspective was nuanced, respecting traditions while endorsing gradual, culturally sensitive change.

Cultural Assimilation Debates: Elwin's advocacy initiated broader discussions regarding whether tribal integration should be standardized or allow for tribal autonomy. These debates influenced the development of India's Panchsheel and Fifth Schedule protections.

Irawati Karve

Irawati Karve was among the earliest Indian women to become a prominent figure in anthropology and sociology, integrating scientific rigor with literary insight to examine the complexities of Indian society. Born during a period when both anthropology and women's participation in academia were developing in India, Karve established a distinctive intellectual trajectory that encompassed multiple disciplines, languages, and ideologies.

Karve's scholarship bridged Eastern and Western perspectives, as well as tradition and modernity. With an education in Germany and a foundation in Indian scholarship, she became widely recognized for her research on kinship, caste, and the cultural underpinnings of South Asian society. Her writings in both English and Marathi demonstrated a unique blend of methodological precision and narrative sophistication, enabling her to engage academic and general audiences alike. In addition to her academic achievements, Karve's contributions as a public intellectual and feminist pioneer significantly influenced postcolonial Indian thought. Her work continues to shape contemporary discussions in anthropology,

gender studies, history, and literature, establishing her as a foundational figure in modern Indian intellectual history.

Early Life and Education

Irawati Karve was born on December 15, 1905, in Burhanpur, now located in Madhya Pradesh, into a progressive Chitpavan Brahmin family. Raised in an intellectually stimulating environment, she developed an early interest in literature, languages, and the social sciences. The nationalist and reformist movements of early twentieth-century India, together with her family's commitment to education, played a significant role in shaping her worldview.

Karve completed her undergraduate studies in philosophy and Sanskrit at Bombay University (now the University of Mumbai). Seeking advanced academic training, she traveled to Germany in the 1920s to study physical anthropology at the University of Berlin and subsequently at the University of Bonn, where she studied under the prominent anthropologist Eugen Fischer. In 1930, she became one of the first Indian women to receive a doctorate in anthropology from a European university.

During her studies in Germany, Karve was introduced to European anthropological methods, such as racial typologies and physical measurement techniques, which were widely used at the time. Upon her return to India, she shifted her focus to cultural and social anthropology, integrating Western methodologies with Indian philosophical and historical traditions.

Major Theoretical Contributions

Karve was one of the first Indian anthropologists to employ a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to the study of society. She regularly incorporated epic literature such as the Mahabharata, oral histories, historical records, and fieldwork data, resulting in analyses that were both comprehensive and contextually grounded.

Kinship Typologies: Karve analyzed regional variations in kinship terms and systems, establishing connections between linguistic patterns and social organization.

Caste as a Social System: Instead of interpreting caste solely through religious or economic frameworks, Karve examined its integration within marriage rules, family structures, and regional histories.

Comparative Methodology: Karve situated Indian kinship and caste within broader anthropological debates, engaging with international theories while providing indigenous perspectives.

Use of Vernacular Sources: Unlike many of her contemporaries, she wrote extensively in Marathi, making her scholarship accessible to a wider Indian audience. Karve's integration of empirical observation with literary sensitivity distinguished her within Indian academia. Her writing attracted not only scholars but also writers, activists, and general readers seeking to understand the underlying structures of Indian society. In understanding the deeper logic of Indian society.

Other Contributions

- **Hindu Society: An Interpretation (1961):** A sociological overview of Indian caste and kinship.
- Numerous essays and monographs in Marathi and English on topics ranging from population studies to education, folklore, and urbanisation.

Karve's interdisciplinary approach, which integrated anthropology, literature, history, and language, distinguished her from her contemporaries. Her influence extended beyond anthropology to historians, sociologists, and literary critics, especially those examining postcolonial identity and Indian traditions from contemporary perspectives.

Irawati Karve's legacy encompasses multiple dimensions

Ethnic and Identity Groups

- In anthropology, Karve remains a foundational figure in Indian kinship studies and caste theory. Her analytical clarity and capacity to communicate complex social patterns across regions continue to inform ethnographic research.
- In literature, *Yuganta* continues to be widely read and taught, both as an academic text and as a literary work that revitalizes ancient narratives.
- In feminist thought, although Karve did not explicitly identify as a feminist, her focus on women's roles in kinship, epic narratives, and social systems has rendered her work essential to feminist anthropology and postcolonial gender studies.
- In Indian public life, Karve's bilingual legacy, through her writings in both English and Marathi, enabled her to influence elite

intellectual debates as well as grassroots discussions concerning society, tradition, and reform.

Currently, Karve's influence is evident among scholars who pursue interdisciplinary, locally grounded, and culturally sensitive research. Her work continues to be included in academic curricula, and her writings remain central to discussions of Indian identity, tradition, and modernity.

1.13 Factors in the Development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India

(a) Colonial Administration

The British colonial administration played a key role in the growth of sociology and social anthropology in India. To govern effectively, they needed detailed information about India's diverse population, social customs, caste systems, land ownership, village life, and tribal communities. British officials collected this information through district surveys, settlement reports, ethnographic studies, and administrative investigations. These studies shaped colonial policies on taxes, law enforcement, military recruitment, and local governance. Although much of this research served imperial interests and sometimes reinforced stereotypes, it produced a large amount of data that later became valuable for sociological and anthropological research. Indian scholars later reviewed these materials to understand Indian society from their own perspectives.

(b) Oriental and Indological Studies

The Orientalist movement helped shape sociology and social anthropology in India by encouraging the systematic study of Indian civilization. European scholars like Sir William Jones, Max Müller, and H.H. Wilson translated ancient Sanskrit texts into English and other European languages. This made Indian philosophy, religion, literature, law, and social institutions known worldwide. Building on this, Indian scholars created the Indological approach, which studies society using classical texts and historical traditions. G.S. Ghurye, a leading supporter, believed that India's social institutions, especially caste and family, could only be fully understood by combining text analysis with real-world research. Indological studies strengthened Indian sociology by connecting historical traditions to modern social issues.

(c) Census and Ethnographic Surveys

The British government started a systematic Census in 1871, which became a key **source** of information about Indian society. The Census collected detailed data on population, caste, religion, language, literacy, jobs, migration, and other demographic factors. At the same time, ethnographic surveys recorded the customs, rituals, marriage patterns, family structures, jobs, and beliefs of different castes and tribes. Scholars like Herbert Risley, E.T. Dalton, and Edgar Thurston wrote detailed studies about Indian communities. While colonial views affected some of these classifications, the data became very important for later sociological research. Census data are still a vital resource for studying Indian society.

(d) Social Reform Movements

Social reform movements in the nineteenth century were important for the growth of sociology because they brought attention to social inequalities and the need for change. Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotirao Phule, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Narayana Guru, and Dr B.R. Ambedkar fought against practices such as sati, child marriage, untouchability, caste discrimination, female illiteracy, and gender inequality. Their work encouraged scholars to study the roots of inequality and oppression, as well as how society changes. As a result, sociology became both an academic subject and a tool for social change and modernization.

(e) Indian National Movement

The Indian independence movement encouraged the scientific study of Indian society by stressing the need for national unity in a diverse country. Nationalist leaders wanted to understand India's caste system, languages, religions, village life, and regional cultures to help build an inclusive nation. Sociologists and anthropologists studied the roots of nationalism, community harmony, rural development, and democracy. After Independence, these studies became important for nation-building and planning policies.

(f) Industrialisation and Urbanisation

Industrialisation and fast urban growth changed Indian society by creating new jobs, social classes, migration trends, work relationships, slums, and city lifestyles. In many cities, traditional joint families were often replaced by nuclear families. New social problems included unemployment,

lack of housing, poverty, and environmental issues. These changes led to new areas of sociological research, like industrial sociology, urban sociology, labour studies, migration studies, and development sociology.

(g) Growth of Modern Education

The rise of universities and colleges created a strong academic base for sociology and social anthropology in India. Schools like Bombay, Lucknow, Mysore, Delhi, and Banaras Hindu University set up departments for teaching and research in these subjects. Indian scholars got formal training in sociological theory, research methods, statistics, and fieldwork. More academic journals, conferences, research centers, and professional groups also helped these fields grow.

(h) Influence of Western Sociological Thought

The development of sociology in India was strongly influenced by thinkers like Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and anthropologists such as Bronisław Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. Indian scholars used these ideas but adapted them to fit Indian society. Instead of copying Western concepts, they created their own ways to study caste, family, village life, religion, and social change in India.

(i) Contributions of Indian Sociologists and Anthropologists

Indian scholars have made unique and internationally recognized contributions to sociology and social anthropology. G.S. Ghurye studied caste, tribes, family, and culture using the Indological approach. M.N. Srinivas introduced important ideas like Sanskritization, Westernisation, and the Dominant Caste. A.R. Desai looked at Indian society from a Marxist view. Irawati Karve made big advances in kinship studies, and N.K. Bose, D.N. Majumdar, S.C. Roy, and Verrier Elwin expanded tribal anthropology through fieldwork. Together, their work made Indian sociology a unique intellectual tradition.

(j) Post-Independence Planning and Development

After gaining independence in 1947, India started a planned approach to economic and social development. Programs like Community Development, Panchayati Raj, land reforms, rural development, tribal welfare, literacy drives, poverty reduction, and public health needed a scientific understanding of society. Sociologists and anthropologists did

field research to study these programs, find social problems, and suggest policy improvements. As a result, these fields became closely linked with development work, public policy, and social planning.

1.14 Let Us Sum up

Sociology and social anthropology are closely related disciplines, particularly in their focus, theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and practices. Both fields originated from similar interests, as they examine human society and frequently address overlapping theoretical concerns. Consequently, many scholars regard social anthropology as a subfield or branch of sociology. However, distinctions have developed since their inception and persist today, notably in their primary areas of study and methodological preferences. Although these differences are relatively minor, they have prompted universities to establish separate academic departments for each discipline.

Sociology and social anthropology have developed both together and apart, especially in their focus, interests, theories, methods, and practices. Both fields study human society and often deal with similar theoretical issues, which is why some scholars see social anthropology as a part or branch of sociology. Both disciplines also have roots in the natural sciences. However, anthropology, especially physical and archaeological anthropology, connects more closely with the physical sciences than sociology does. Social anthropology appeared before sociology. Sociology emerged mainly due to industrial, social, political, and intellectual changes in Europe, while social anthropology grew out of a desire to understand societies outside Europe and other developed regions. Even early on, the main differences between sociology and social anthropology were in how they were applied and what they prioritised, rather than in their scope, ideas, or methods.

1.15 Keywords

Emergence, Colonialism, Social Change, Indian Society, Sociologists, Social Anthropology and Indigenous Perspectives

1.16 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Explain the significance of the emergence of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India.
2. Identify and explain the key factors that contributed to the development of Sociology in India.

3. Discuss the contributions of early Indian sociologists and social anthropologists.
4. Describe the impact of colonialism on the development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India.
5. Discuss the importance of indigenous perspectives for understanding Indian society.

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UNIT – II

Caste Structure and Change

Structure

- 2.1 Learning Objective
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Caste System
- 2.4 Origin of Caste System
- 2.5 Characteristics of Caste System
- 2.6 Theories of the Origin of the caste system
- 2.7 Changes in the Role of Caste
- 2.8 Causes for the Changes in the Caste System
- 2.9 Varna and Jati or Caste
- 2.10 Caste and Hierarchy
- 2.11 Caste and Colonialism
- 2.12 Impact of Colonialism on the Caste System
- 2.13 Caste and Race
- 2.14 Caste, Class and Politics
- 1.15 Let Us Sum up
- 1.16 Keywords
- 1.17 Self-Assessment Questions

2.1 Learning Objective

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the concepts of Varna, caste, and caste hierarchy within Indian society.
- Analyze the relationship between caste and race in the context of Indian society.
- Evaluate the evolving relationship between caste and class in contemporary India.

2.2 Introduction

The caste system is a fundamental feature of Indian society, representing a particular form of social stratification. It is an ancient and important institution of Indian society. Under the caste system, different caste groups occupy definite positions in the hierarchy. The Brahmins, at the top of the hierarchy, are followed by the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Thus, the caste system is the mainstay of Indian social stratification from a sociological perspective. Indian society is considered a Hindu society, divided into different caste groups based on feelings of high and low discrimination, and this influence can be seen in the Muslim and Christian societies of India. Regarding the caste system, Kingsley Davis has even said, “the caste system exists in all the societies of the world and affects the followers of all religions”. There have been significant changes in the form, structure, and effects of the caste system.

2.3 Caste System

The term ‘caste’ is derived from the Spanish (also Portuguese) word ‘caste’, meaning ‘breed’ or ‘lineage’. The Portuguese first used the term ‘caste’ to denote divisions in the Indian caste system. The word ‘caste’ also signifies ‘race’ or ‘kind’. The Sanskrit word for caste is ‘Varna’, which means ‘colour’. Races and colour seem to be the bases of the Indian caste system, in addition to the division of labour and occupation. The popular equivalent of caste is ‘Jati’.

The caste stratification of Indian society has its origin in the ‘Chaturvarna’ system. According to the Chaturvarna doctrine, Hindu society was divided into four main varnas, namely: the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Shudras. The Varna system, which was prevalent during the Vedic period, was mainly based on the division of labour and occupation. The caste system owes its origin to the Varna system. The present caste system can be said to be a degenerated form of the original Varna system. Varnas, which were four in number, and castes, which are found in hundreds and thousands, are not the same.

Definition of the Caste System

The word “Caste” is derived from the Latin word “Casta”, which means race or colour distinction. Thus, by caste in the literal sense, we mean a class group whose basis is birth by species. Various scholars have tried to define caste from their own perspectives.

Herbert Risley has defined caste in these words, “caste is a collection of families or group of families, having a common name, which claims its origin from an imaginary ancestor, human or God. It emphasises the practice of a single traditional occupation and is recognised as a homogenous community; this group is capable of expressing its own opinion”.

According to Charles Cooley, “when a class is almost entirely based on inheritance, then we call it a caste”.

S.V. Ketkar has defined in his book, “History of caste in India”, a caste as a group that has two characteristics: (a) the members of this group are persons who are born into it. (b) Its members cannot marry outside the group according to social rules.

Sir Herbert Risley say Caste is a “collection of families, bearing a common name, claiming a common descent, from a mythical ancestor, human and divine, professing to follow the same hereditary calling and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community.”

MacIver and Page have said that “When status is wholly predetermined so that men are born to their lot without any hope of changing it, then the class takes the extreme form of caste.”

C.H. Cooley has said that “When a class is somewhat strictly hereditary, we may call it a caste.”

A. W. Green has said that “Caste is a system of stratification in which mobility up and down the status ladder, at least ideally, may not occur”.

In the words of Majumdar and Madan, “Caste is a closed Class”. It means the caste membership is irrevocable. Once a person is born into a caste, they remain a member of the same caste for life. It is clear from the above definitions that, based on birth, caste is an endogamous group whose membership is genetic. Through its social rules, it determines the dietary habits, customs, marriage practices, occupations, and social cohabitation of its members.

2.4 Origin of Caste System

The caste stratification of Indian Society has had its origin in the ‘Chaturvarna’ system. According to the Chaturvarna doctrine, the Hindu society was divided into four main varnas, namely: the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Shudras. The Varna system, which was

prevalent during the Vedic period, was mainly based on the division of labour and occupation. The caste system owes its origin to the Varna system. The present caste system can be said to be the degenerated form of the original Varna system. Varnas, which were four in number, and castes, which are found in hundreds and thousands, are not the same.

2.5 Characteristics of the Caste System

The caste system exhibits significant complexity, which complicates efforts to define and describe its characteristics. According to G.S. Ghurye, any attempt to define caste is likely to be unsuccessful due to this complexity. The principal traditional features of the caste system are outlined below.

Segmental Division of Society: The caste system has fundamentally divided the entire Hindu society into various segments. The status, position, place and function of members of each segment are also predetermined. According to G.S. Ghurye, this segmental division means that in a society bound by the caste system, the sense of community is limited. Rather than being directed toward the whole community, members of a caste have a primary moral duty to their own caste. Members of each caste remain firm in their positions and work, following caste rules out of duty; anyone who breaks them faces punishment. Ghurye has also explained the punishments written by 'caste councils' for breaking caste rules:

- Permanent or temporary excommunication from the caste,
- Fine,
- Feast for caste members,
- Physical punishment,
- Sometimes religious penance.

The fines collected were often allocated to communal feasts. In some cases, the panchayat retained this income or used it for charitable purposes. This description of caste council activities supports the assertion that "caste is its own ruler."

Ghurye, further clarifying the segmental division of society by caste, wrote that customs related to family, religion, marriage, and death also differed among castes. Brahmins neither allowed widow remarriage nor tolerated the concubine system in the form of the caste system. This cannot be said about any lower castes. Differences existed not only in cultural matters between castes. Differences existed not only in cultural matters between

castes, but also, theoretically, in the levels of conduct they maintained. For example, while enacting a law prohibiting alcohol production and sale, the Brahmin government of Pune kept Bhandari, Koli, and other castes separate from its effect. Still, it strictly prohibited Brahmins, Shenavis, Prabhus, and government officials from using it. This difference in mortality and customs among castes was so clear that, in the early period, the British court in India not only sought the opinion of pandits but also took testimony from the heads of related castes regarding actual customs. Similarly, Hindus have no permanent system for funeral rites.

Hierarchical division of Society

A primary characteristic of caste society is the stratification of groups. Social seniority, or precedence, is evident among castes in India, with Brahmins occupying the highest position in this hierarchy. The caste system establishes a hierarchy in which each caste's status is traditionally determined by birth. Brahmins are positioned at the top, followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. This birth-based hierarchy is generally stable, making upward mobility challenging, though not entirely impossible. Lower caste members may ascend the hierarchy through increased wealth, prestige, power, or social connections. Ghurye notes that determining the precise position of castes between Brahmins and untouchables is complex. Many castes attempt to elevate their social status by associating with higher castes, which can enhance their prestige. Consequently, the positions of most castes within the hierarchy are unstable, while the statuses of Brahmins and untouchables remain relatively fixed. Brahmins, at the highest level, cannot ascend further, and untouchables, at the lowest, cannot descend. Castes situated between these extremes often perceive themselves as superior to neighboring castes.

Restrictions on Food Habits

According to Ghurye, among the caste system's prohibitory rules, food-related restrictions are notable. Rules restrict which castes can or cannot eat food prepared by other castes. No one may eat food prepared by another caste. Caste rules make clear which caste members can eat food prepared by which castes and with which caste members they can sit and eat. Members of all other castes eat food prepared by Brahmins. The strictest restrictions apply to food prepared by untouchables. Food-related restrictions also depend on the types of food. From this point of view, food is divided into three categories: fruit-based, cooked, and raw. Similarly,

many types of restrictions have been described regarding drinking water. Ghurye has given many examples of food-related restrictions in his book. In his own words, "In Bengal, there are some people who do not accept 'raw' food even from the hands of a Brahmin. 'Cooked' food can generally be accepted not only from one's own or higher caste but also from Myras and confectioners. Wells also become impure if a person of lower caste draws water from them, but it depends a lot on the bucket used to draw water and the well. A well made of solid limestone does not become impure as easily as one made of mud-clay, and if it is more than three and a half cubits wide so that a cow can move around in it, even the lowest caste can use it without becoming impure.

Similarly, the principle that some castes defile or corrupt higher castes also remains widespread. In principle, a person of a higher caste becomes impure by being touched by a member of a lower caste, but in practice, this rule is not followed so rigidly. Ghurye, giving a very interesting example, has written, "Even a Brahmin doctor wraps the patient's wrist with a small piece of silk while checking the pulse of a Shudra so that he does not become impure by touching their skin."

Civil and Religious Disabilities of certain Castes

G.S.Ghurye has also described the social and religious disabilities and privileges of different castes under the caste system. In this regard, he believes that Brahmins have the most privileges and untouchables have the most disabilities. The condition of untouchables in South India has been extremely pitiable. They could not even show their faces to high-caste people, let alone touch them. In places like Travancore and Pune, these caste people were not allowed to walk on many roads. Similarly, they had neither the right to enter temples, nor to educate their children in schools, nor to draw water from wells and ponds used by high-caste people. Ghurye found in his study that in North India, Maharashtra, and Telugu-Kannada regions, impure castes were forced to live on the outer boundaries of villages. He wrote, "In Tamil and Malayalam regions, it often happens that different castes live in separate parts; or sometimes a village is divided into three parts, in one part the main caste of the village or Brahmins reside, the second is assigned to Shudras, and the third remains reserved for untouchables. He further wrote, "All over India, untouchable castes are not allowed to draw water from those wells of the village from which members of other castes take water. In Maharashtra, a Mahar, who is one of the untouchables, could not spit on the road so that the foot of a

high caste Hindu would not become impure by touching it, but he had to carry an earthen pot with him, which hung around his neck for spitting.

Lack of Unrestricted Choice of Occupation

Ghurye has described another important feature of the caste system: almost every caste considers certain professions its traditional occupation, and it is not considered appropriate to leave it. Thus, Brahmins consider it right to do only the work of priests and cobblers only to make shoes. Generally, this is what happens, and this is also the rule of the caste system. Along with this, not only castes but also the occupations they perform have a hierarchy. Occupations that require contact with impure objects are considered low. Even among impure objects, there is a hierarchy of high and low. Excreta and urine are the most impure. Similarly, leather work and washing dirty clothes are the work of two separate classes of people.

In contrast, religious occupations are regarded as supremely pure, which contributes to the Brahmins' position at the top of the caste hierarchy. Caste rules thus delineate the relative status of occupations and the occupational choices available to each group. Nevertheless, certain occupations, such as agriculture, commerce, and military service, are accessible to members of all castes. Both intra-caste and inter-caste pressures often discourage individuals from pursuing occupations outside their traditional roles.

The Civil and Religious Privileges of a Certain Caste

If the lower caste people suffer from certain disabilities, some higher caste people like the Brahmins enjoy certain privileges. Nowhere do the Brahmins suffer from the disabilities cited above. They are given more liberty, because they are believed to be born 'pure' and 'superior'. The Brahmins never saluted others, but they always had the privilege of being saluted. They never even bowed to the idols of the lower-caste people. Education and teaching were almost the monopoly of the higher-caste people. Chanting the Vedic Mantras was a great privilege of the Brahmins. Upper-caste people generally enjoyed social, political, legal, and religious privileges.

Restrictions on Marriage

The caste system enforces strict marital restrictions, as castes function as endogamous groups. Each caste is further divided into several endogamous subcastes. For instance, Iyers, Iyengars, Smarthas, Madhvas, Kota, Shivali, and Kandavara Brahmins are all Brahmin subcastes that practice endogamy.

Similarly, the Vokkaliga caste comprises subcastes such as Morasu, Hallikar, Nonaba, and Gangadiga. Under these rules, individuals are expected to marry within their subcaste; for example, a Shivalli Brahmin would marry a Shivalli girl. Historically, intercaste marriage was strictly prohibited, and even today, such unions remain uncommon. Early violations of endogamy were met with severe consequences, leading to close inbreeding. Some scholars, such as Hutton, consider endogamy to be the defining feature of the caste system. Exceptions to endogamy are observed in regions like the hill areas of Punjab and Malabar. The caste system also permits certain exogamous marriages, which are discussed below.

Sapinda and Sagotra Exogamy: Upper castes generally forbid Sapinda and Sagotra marriages and insist on Sapinda and Sagotra exogamous marriages.

- (i) **Sapinda Exogamy:** In Hindu society, marriage within the 'Pinda' is prohibited. Pinda means common parentage. According to Brahaspathi, offspring from five maternal generations and seven paternal generations are 'Sapinda', and they cannot marry each other. However, this opinion is not universally accepted. Though there are certain exceptions in South India, Sapinda marriages generally do not take place in North India. But Sapinda exogamy, that is, marrying outside one's pinda, is commonly found.
- (ii) **Sagotra Exogamy:** Sagotra Exogamy, that is, marrying outside one's own 'gotra', is very much prevalent among the upper castes such as Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Marriage within the gotra is prohibited. This restriction has been in place since people of one gotra are believed to share similar blood. Similarly, sapravarā marriages are also forbidden, especially for the Brahmins. Persons belonging to the same pravara cannot intermarry. People who utter the name of a common saint at religious functions are believed to belong to the same pravara. The pravara is a religious and spiritual bond. Sapravarā exogamy that is, marrying outside one's pravara has been imposed as a rule for the upper castes, especially for the Brahmins.

2.6 Theories of the Origin of the caste system

The caste system represents one of the most complex topics in sociological discourse. Determining its precise origins remains challenging, as existing research has not conclusively established the circumstances surrounding its emergence. Scholarly debate on this issue continues. Dr

D.N. Majumdar highlights this lack of consensus, stating, “it is evident from the fact that after a century of painstaking and meticulous research in the history and function of the social system, we do not possess yet a valid explanation of the circumstances that might have contributed to the formation and development of this unique system.”¹ Despite ongoing controversies, various scholars have proposed their own theories regarding the origin of the caste system. Several of these theories are outlined below.

- Traditional Theory
- Occupational Theory
- Racial Theory
- Other Theories
 - Political Theory
 - Theory of Cultural Integration
 - Evolutionary Theory

Traditional Theory

Ancient Indian literature provides the main source for this theory. The traditional theory holds that the caste system was established by divine ordinance, or at least with divine approval. The main source is the Purushasukta of the Rig-Veda. According to the Purushasukta, the four Varnas¹ originated from the four different parts of the Prajapathi Brahma, or the Viratpurusha, or the Divine, or the Supreme Being. According to this theory, the Brahmins had emerged from the mouth of the Supreme Being, the Kshatriyas from the arms, the Vaishyas from the thighs, and the Shudras from the feet. These four varnas, or social divisions, have different functions according to the places of their origin. The mouth is the seat of speech or knowledge. Hence, the Brahmins serve society as teachers, counsellors or advisors, priests, thinkers, and preservers of cultural heritage. The arms or shoulders stand for strength, valour and heroism. So, the primary task of the Kshatriya is to serve society as a warrior, king, protector, and benefactor. The Vaishyas have emerged from the thighs of the Creator. The thighs are the principal repository organs nearer the stomach. Hence, the primary duty of the Vaishya is to provide food for the members of society and look after its economic well-being. The Shudras have emerged from the feet of the Creator; hence, their duty is to serve others, just as the feet serve the other parts or organs of the body.

Smritikara Manu too has supported this theory. He also gave a classical interpretation of the origin of the Varna. In the Bhagavad Gita, we also find

a similar interpretation of the origin of the Varnas. In the Bhagavadgita, Lord Krishna himself says that He created the four Varnas based on Guna and Karma. Traditional explanations of the origin of the Varnas also appear in the Shatapatha Brahmana and the Taittiriya Brahmana. Apart from the Vedic texts, various legends and puranas also offer explanations for the origin of the Varna.

Criticism: The traditional theory of the origin of the Varna has been criticised on various grounds. Firstly, the theory is criticised as unscientific because, biologically, no one can give rise to a child through the mouth, shoulders, thighs, or feet. Secondly, the theory considers four Varnas as four castes. If accepted, this would mean that Varna, not caste, is the unit of the caste system. The real unit of the caste system is not varna but Jati, a very small endogamous group. Thirdly, M.N. Srinivas considers this theory of caste, which highlights caste as the four-fold division of society, to be a gross oversimplification of facts. Fourthly, divergent explanations offered regarding the origin of the Varna, quoting various religious, literary and other sources, are also contradictory.

But despite these controversies and criticisms, this theory has its own practical importance. In the words of Dr D.N. Majumdar, “if, however, we take the divine origin of the Varnas as allegorical explanation of the functional division of society, the theory assumes practical significance.”

Occupational Theory

“The Occupational Theory of Caste” was established by Nesfield. This theory tries to establish the connection between castes, on the one hand, and occupations, on the other. The theory assumes that castes originated in different occupations. According to this theory, if a particular group follows a hereditary occupation, it evolves into a caste over time.

This theory also distinguishes different occupations based on the associated idea of relative purity and impurity. Those who performed pure, better, and respectable tasks or jobs came to be distinguished from those who pursued inferior or low-grade occupations. Those engaged in dirty or low-grade occupations were looked down upon and considered inferior. According to this theory, the hierarchy of castes is linked to the hierarchy of occupations. In this hierarchy, the superior castes follow “pure” occupations, whereas inferior castes follow “impure” occupations.

Nesfield thus made it clear that differences in occupation caused differences in caste. He emphatically concluded that occupation alone is

responsible for the origin of the caste system. To quote his words: "Function and function alone are responsible for the origin of the caste system."

Criticism: Nelsfield's theory is also criticised. Firstly, this theory fails to explain the differences in the social status of various castes which practise the same occupation. Secondly, it is wrong to consider the occupational factor alone as the cause of the birth of the caste system. Hutton, in this regard, comments that "occupation is not a cause but only a factor in the evolution of caste." Thirdly, this theory does not take into account the racial and religious factors which played their role in the formation of the caste system. Majumdar in this context states that "there may not be much racial difference between the higher castes as such, there may not be great variations of physical features in groups occupying a particular geographic region or part of it but some racial difference between high and low do exist and is apparent to one who knows the country and its people." Fourthly, D.N. Majumdar has also criticised Nesfield's idea of the hierarchy of castes in terms of the superiority or the inferiority of the occupations. He thinks that "the status of castes depends not on the superiority or the inferiority of occupations but upon the degree of purity of blood and the extent of isolation maintained by the groups."

Racial Theory

The main argument of the racial theory is that the different castes came into being because of irremovable racial differences. Scholars such as Sir Herbert Risley, Dr D.N. Majumdar and Dr G.S. Ghurye are the main protagonists of this theory.

The champions of this theory contend that the division into castes is founded on an original diversity of races. These scholars think that caste came into practice after the Aryans settled down in India. The theory holds that the so-called Aryans who came from outside were comparatively fair-complexioned, tall, and straight-postured, with a prominent nose. They conquered the Gangetic Valley and, across North India, defeated the natives of the land. The natives, or the original inhabitants of India, who were branded as Dasyus or Servants, were completely conquered by the Aryans and made to serve them. The difference between the Aryans and the non-Aryans [or Dravidians] was so prominent that it gave birth to different caste activities. The Aryans, for example, never allowed the non-Aryans to participate in religious activities.

Eminent anthropologists such as Sir Herbert Risley, Dr G.S. Ghurye, and Dr D.N. Majumdar presented the Racial Theory in a classical form. Sir

Herbert Risley placed greater importance on the invasion of Aryans into India and their efforts to conquer North India and make the inhabitants their servants. Dr G.S. Ghurye emphasised the Brahmanical aspect [i.e., socio-religious aspect] of the Aryan way of life which distinguished the Aryans from the natives. Ghurye, for example, states that “the various factors that characterise the caste society were the result in the first instance of the attempts on the part of the upholders of the Brahmanic civilisation to exclude the Aborigines and the Shudras from religious and social communion with themselves.” Dr D.N. Majumdar placed a premium on the purely racial and the anthropological aspects of the Aryans.

Criticism: The Racial Theory has also been criticised. Firstly, according to Hutton, the racial interpretation of this theory is inconsistent with the available facts. Secondly, the theory fails to explain the practice of untouchability properly. Thirdly, Hutton has sought to establish that hypergamy existed not only in India but also in other countries. At the same time, it gave rise to the caste system in India but not in other countries. Fourthly, Hutton also argues that Brahmanical influence, believed to have played a vital role in the genesis of the caste system, is not uniformly found everywhere. It was very dominant in some areas but virtually absent in others. Finally, it is argued that the racial theory is a major weakness in the sense that it highlights the importance of purely racial factors and conveniently forgets the efficacy of other equally important factors.

Other Theories

- a) **Political Theory:** According to some European scholars who are normally considered the supporters of the traditional theory, the caste system came to be established as a result of the Brahmins' strategy to establish and maintain their superiority over other people. Their theory is supported by the fact that Brahmin ritual, social, and religious supremacy continues in many parts of India.
- (b) **Theory of Cultural Integration:** Sharatchandra Roy is the originator of this theory. He argues that the caste system evolved through the integration and assimilation of different cultures. He also argues that there existed variations between different ethnic groups.
- (c) **Evolutionary Theory:** Denzil Ibbetson is the champion of this theory. According to him, the caste system originated due to the interaction of three factors, namely: (i) tribes, (ii) occupational guilds, and (iii) religion.

Each of these theories possesses distinct strengths and limitations. The preceding discussion demonstrates that there is no scholarly consensus regarding the origin of the caste system. No single factor adequately accounts for its complex development. As Hutton observes, “the Indian caste system is the natural result of the interaction of several geographical, social, political, religious and economic factors not elsewhere found in conjunction.” Therefore, only a multiple-factor approach can provide a reasonably satisfactory explanation for the origin of the caste system.

2.7 Changes in the Role of Caste

The caste system has adapted to changing social conditions by assuming new roles. In addition to industrialisation and urbanisation, factors such as Westernisation, Sanskritisation, the reorganisation of Indian states, the expansion of education, socio-religious reforms, increased spatial and occupational mobility, and the growth of the market economy have significantly influenced the caste system. Understanding changes in the role of caste requires consideration of these factors.

Increase in the organisational power of caste

Education is generally associated with liberal, rational, and democratic values, and it was anticipated that rising literacy rates in India would reduce caste-mindedness and casteism. However, caste consciousness has increased. Castes are increasingly organising to safeguard their interests, often adopting structures similar to labour unions.

Currently, the number of caste organisations is increasing. These organisations primarily address the educational, medical, and religious needs of their members by operating hostels, hospitals, schools, colleges, reading rooms, libraries, dharmashalas, and temples. Additionally, caste-based organisations often promote certain members as spokespeople.

Political role of caste

Caste and politics are increasingly interrelated, with caste becoming a central aspect of political processes. Elections are frequently contested along caste lines, influencing candidate selection, voting patterns, leadership appointments, and the allocation of ministerial portfolios. Even political parties advocating for a casteless and classless society are affected by caste considerations. According to M.N. Srinivas, state politics often

reflect confrontations between dominant castes, such as the Ligayats and Vokkaligas in Karnataka and the Reddys and Kammas in Andhra Pradesh. Srinivas also differentiates between caste at the ritual level, which is a smaller unit, and caste at the political level, which encompasses broader groupings.

Protection for scheduled castes and other backward classes

The Constitution of India includes provisions to protect the interests of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, offering increased political, educational, and employment opportunities through reservation policies. Seats are reserved for these groups from the Mandal Panchayat to Parliament and across government departments. Although the reservation policy appears to contradict the goal of a casteless society, most political parties support it for political reasons. According to M.N. Srinivas, “The provision of constitutional safeguards to Scheduled Castes and Tribes has given a new lease of life to caste.” These measures have led some groups to develop vested interests in maintaining reservation benefits and have encouraged other castes to seek similar recognition.

Sanskritisation and Westernisation

M.N. Srinivas identifies two significant trends affecting caste: Sanskritisation and Westernisation. Sanskritisation involves lower castes adopting the values, practices, and lifestyles of dominant upper castes. Westernisation refers to upper-caste groups shaping their lifestyles according to Western models.

Backwards classes movement

Non-Brahmin castes have increasingly organised to challenge Brahmin dominance and assert their rights. The founding of the “Satyashodhak Samaj” by Jyotirao Phule in Poona in 1873 marked the beginning of this movement, which became known as the Backwards Classes Movement. Initially, the movement sought to reduce Brahmin control over education and government appointments. Today, it is a significant political force that has altered the political landscape, particularly weakening Brahmin influence in states such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The movement has also pressured political parties to create opportunities for lower-caste groups, leading to the establishment of Backward Classes Commissions at both Central and State levels, which recommended reservation policies for backward castes and classes.

Competitive role of castes

The historical mutual interdependence of castes, reinforced by the jajmani system, has diminished. As M.N. Srinivas notes, “vertical solidarity” has been replaced by “horizontal solidarity.” The former “live and let live” approach is largely absent, with castes now viewing each other as competitors. Increased caste-mindedness and caste-patriotism have intensified this competition. The economic resources and political influence of a caste largely determine the extent of this competitiveness, which in turn reinforces caste consciousness. New attempts to strengthen caste-loyalty, caste-identity, caste-patriotism and caste-mindedness Today caste organisations are increasing and are making every attempt to obtain the loyalty of currently, caste organisations are proliferating and actively seeking to strengthen member loyalty, caste identity, and solidarity. Several examples illustrate these efforts. Organisations have their own written constitutions and managing committees through which they try to preserve some of the caste rules and practices.

- Caste organisations publish their own newspapers, bulletins, periodicals, and newsletters to regularly inform members about caste-related activities and the achievements of fellow members.
- These organisations also promote caste integration by establishing caste-based trusts and trust units. These trusts organise annual gatherings, social events, and festival celebrations. They provide shelter for needy members and offer scholarships to economically disadvantaged students. Some trusts operate schools, colleges, hostels, and maternity homes for caste members.
- Occupational castes are actively working to improve the economic conditions of their members by establishing cooperative credit and industrial societies. In states like Bihar, some upper and lower castes have formed their own ‘senas’ (militant groups) to protect their interests.

2.8 Causes for the Changes in the Caste System

The caste system has experienced significant transformation in modern times. This section provides a concise overview of the primary factors responsible for these changes.

Uniform legal system

The legal framework introduced by the British established the principle that “all men are equal before the law.” Several British laws

directly challenged the foundations of the caste system. Independent India retained this legal structure. The Constitution of India guarantees equality for all citizens and explicitly prohibits untouchability (Articles 15 and 16). Additionally, Articles 16, 164, 225, 330, 332, 334, 335, 338, and the 5th and 6th Schedules of the Constitution provide special provisions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to promote social parity.

Impact of modern education

The British introduced a uniform, secular education system across India. In post-independence India, educational opportunities have been extended to individuals of all castes, including those from the lowest strata. Modern education has diminished the intellectual dominance previously held by certain upper castes and has fostered greater social awareness, thereby weakening the influence of caste. However, it should be noted that caste-based distinctions persist even among the educated population.

Industrialisation, urbanisation and westernisation

Industrialisation generated numerous non-agricultural employment opportunities, thereby reducing the dominance of upper-caste landowners. Individuals from diverse castes, classes, and religions began to work together in various sectors, a development that was unprecedented two centuries earlier. Urban growth attracted people from all castes, many of whom adopted Western lifestyles and values. As a result, adherence to traditional caste restrictions diminished.

Influence of modern transport and communication

The advent of modern transportation, including trains, buses, ships, aeroplanes, and trucks, facilitated increased mobility of people and goods. This mobility rendered the strict observance of caste-based rules regarding purity, pollution, and untouchability impractical. Furthermore, advancements in communication technologies, such as newspapers, postal services, telegraph, telephone, radio, and television, have broadened social perspectives and reduced the insularity associated with caste.

Freedom struggle and the establishment of democracy

The collective struggle for independence united individuals from all castes in pursuit of a shared objective. Following independence, the establishment of a democratic government further undermined the caste

system by providing equal socio-economic opportunities to all citizens, irrespective of caste.

Rise of the non-Brahmin movement

In 1873, Jyotirao Phule initiated a movement opposing Brahmin dominance. Over time, this movement gained significant traction, especially in southern India. It heightened awareness among lower castes and fostered a sense of self-respect. As a major political force, the movement compelled the government to establish Backward Classes Commissions at both central and state levels. The implementation of these commissions' recommendations created substantial opportunities for the advancement of lower castes.

Other Significant Causes:

- (i) **Social Legislation:** A series of legislative measures enacted by both the British and Indian governments, including the Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1872, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, and the Untouchability Offences Act of 1956, among others, directly and indirectly transformed the structure of the caste system.
- (ii) **Social Reform Movements:** Numerous social reform movements, including Satyashadhak Samaj, Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, and Sri Ramakrishna Mission, emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These movements contributed to reducing the rigidity and eliminating several harmful practices associated with the caste system.
- (iii) **Impact of the West:** The influence of Western thought, especially the principles of rationalism, liberalism, humanitarianism, and egalitarianism, encouraged educated Indians to challenge and move beyond the constraints of the caste system.
- (iv) **Threat of Conversion:** Social disadvantages imposed on lower castes prompted some individuals to convert to Christianity or Islam. The use of pressure tactics and inducements further facilitated these conversions.

2.9 Varna and Jati

Varna is the most suitable term for analyzing the distinctive features of the caste system in India and should not be conflated with the more nuanced concept of jati or the European term "caste." Varna refers to a

theoretical classification based on the division of labor, while jati denotes a sub-caste. Both terms are essential for comprehending the Indian social system and each plays a significant role in the lives of Hindus.

Although the word varna literally translates to 'color' in Hindi, it originally had no association with an individual's skin color. Instead, it signified classifications based on a person's attributes and economic or social contributions to society. Over time, however, the system became corrupted, and varna came to be determined by birth rather than by personal qualities. The continued practice of caste-based customs and beliefs perpetuated inequality, corruption, and the dominance of higher castes.

The term 'jati' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'jata,' meaning 'born into existence.' Jati refers to a subdivision within the Indian social order, which was broadly categorized into four varnas. Thus, a jati functions as a sub-caste within the varna system. The emergence of jati was driven by the need for a more specific social identity, often linked to trade or profession. For instance, within the Vaishya varna, there are multiple trader communities, such as the Gandhi jati, which specializes in perfumes; the name Gandhi is derived from 'gandha,' meaning smell. This classification system persisted into modern times but is now declining due to increased occupational mobility and various socio-political and economic changes.

Dominant caste

M. N. Srinivas introduced the concept of the 'dominant caste,' referring to a caste group in a village that is numerically large and possesses significant economic and political power. To achieve dominance in a region, a caste typically owns substantial arable land, constitutes a numerical majority, and holds a higher position in the caste hierarchy. With modernization, additional factors such as Western education, administrative employment, urban income sources, and political participation have contributed to caste dominance, often surpassing traditional determinants. These factors provide legal, administrative, social, and political advantages, elevating the caste's status within the locality. Consequently, dominant castes exert influence across various aspects of social life and enjoy specific privileges. Lower castes often regard them with reverence and seek to emulate their customs, beliefs, and lifestyles. Thus, dominant castes play a crucial role in cultural transmission and social mobility.

Mobility in a Caste system

Caste constitutes a closed social group characterized by a distinct culture, including specific codes of conduct and restrictions regarding food, marriage, social interaction, and occupation to maintain group purity and differentiation from other castes. Historically, the caste system has been rigid, with privileges largely confined to upper-caste members. However, since the 21st century, factors such as modernization, industrialization, urbanization, expanded education, social movements, and legislative reforms have reduced this rigidity, resulting in increased social mobility. Mobility within the caste system is typically vertical, either upward or downward. M. N. Srinivas described this process through the concepts of 'sanskritisation' and 'westernisation.' He argued that lower castes could ascend the hierarchy within one or two generations by adopting the rituals, customs, and beliefs of upper castes, a process he termed Sanskritisation. Lynch and Barnett referred to similar processes as 'elite emulation' and the 'kingly model' of emulation, respectively. However, Srinivas noted that untouchables could not elevate themselves above the Shudras through these means.

Sanskritisation is a reciprocal process in which a caste not only adopts practices from upper castes but may also contribute cultural elements in return. Simply adopting Brahmanic customs or changing occupations does not guarantee social mobility; the process also requires factors such as increased awareness of industrialization, advancements in science and technology, expanded education, and the abandonment of harmful customs and practices. Alongside Sanskritisation, westernisation has also facilitated social mobility. In this context, higher castes adopt the ideologies, values, institutions, and lifestyles associated with Western societies. Srinivas introduced the term westernisation to describe the transformation of Indian society and culture under Western influence, particularly since British rule. Westernisation has accelerated the process of Sanskritisation. As Brahmins adopted more Western practices, lower castes increasingly adopted Brahmanical customs. Thus, while lower castes assimilate Brahmanical traditions, Brahmins themselves may abandon them. Sanskritisation enables mobility within the caste framework, whereas westernisation facilitates mobility outside of it.

Jajmani System

The term Jajmani is derived from the Sanskrit word 'yajman,' meaning the patron who conducts the yajna or fire ritual, typically a Brahmin.

The Jajmani system represents a traditional framework of occupational obligations in rural India, fundamentally rooted in the caste system. Within this system, lower castes were required to provide services and goods to higher castes, receiving compensation either in cash or in kind, such as grains, fodder, clothing, milk, butter, and other animal products. The recipient castes, known as jajmans, were primarily food-producing families who owned substantial landholdings. The service-providing castes were called kamins, and in various regions, they were also referred to as Parjan, Pardhan, or Balutedar. Examples of kamins include Nais (barbers), Kumhars (potters), Lohars (blacksmiths), and Dhobis (washermen). The jajmani system can be characterized as a jajman-praja relationship, which contributed to the self-sufficiency of Indian villages.

Constitutional Provisions

The caste system in India has resulted in widespread discrimination against lower castes, particularly the Shudras and the Untouchables, who were historically denied fundamental rights. In response, the framers of the Indian Constitution aimed to protect and uplift these marginalized groups by granting them specific privileges. Politically, lower-caste groups are generally referred to as Scheduled Castes or Backward Classes. Although the Constitution does not explicitly define 'Backward Classes,' the term is commonly understood to refer to groups that are inadequately represented within the state.

- Article 15(4), nothing shall prevent the State from making provisions for the advancement of any socially and economically backward classes of citizens, or for SCs and STs.
- Article 15(5): This clause allows the State to make provisions for backward classes or SCs and STs for admission in private educational institutions, aided or unaided.
- Article 16(4): This clause allows the State to reserve vacancies in public service for any backward classes of the State that are not adequately represented in public services.
- Article 14(4A): This allows the state to implement reservation in matters of promotion for SCs and STs.
- Article 16 (4B): This allows the state to consider unfilled vacancies reserved for backward classes as a separate class of vacancies not subject to a limit of 50% reservation. ‘

- Article 17: This clause abolishes untouchability and its practice in any form.
- Article 19(5): It allows the state to impose restrictions on the freedom of movement or residence in the interest of STs.
- Article 40: This provides reservation of 1/3 seats in Panchayats for SC/ST.
- Article 330/332: This allows reservation of seats for SC/ST in the Parliament as well as in state legislatures.
- Article 335: This clause allows relaxation in qualifying marks for admission in educational institutions or promotion of SCs/STs.
- Article 338/338A: This establishes a National Commission of SCs and STs.
- Article 339: This allows the central govt. to direct states to implement and execute plans for the betterment of SCs/STs.
- Article 340: This allows the President to appoint a commission to investigate the condition of socially and economically backward classes and table the report in the Parliament.

2.10 Caste and Hierarchy

The caste system in India represents a complex social phenomenon that has been the subject of extensive debate among sociologists and anthropologists. Although frequently described as a form of social stratification, closer analysis indicates that it functions more fundamentally as a hierarchical system. Social stratification involves ranking individuals and groups based on factors such as wealth, power, and prestige, and typically allows for some degree of social mobility. In contrast, the Indian caste system, both historically and in contemporary society, is characterized by rigid boundaries, hereditary status, and deeply embedded notions of purity and pollution, indicating a more fixed and hierarchical structure.

The caste hierarchy refers to the system of social stratification within Indian society. The caste system categorizes individuals into occupational groups and has influenced various aspects of Indian society for centuries. This system determines the types of occupations individuals may pursue and shapes their social interactions. Castes are organized in a hierarchy that prescribes the behavior and conduct of their members within society.

Caste continues to play a significant role beyond voting, influencing candidate selection during elections, the appointment of ministers, and

the transfer and posting of public officials. The reservation policy has further reinforced the influence of caste in politics. Caste is a crucial factor in electoral processes and voting behavior, with political parties frequently selecting candidates based on the caste composition of constituencies. Electoral voting and the mobilization of political support are predominantly shaped by caste affiliations. Additionally, caste operates as a pressure group within the political landscape, and political negotiations frequently occur along caste lines.

Social Stratification and Hierarchy

In sociological terms, social stratification refers to a system by which a society ranks categories of people in a hierarchy. This ranking is based on factors such as economic resources, occupational prestige, and political power, and allows for some degree of upward and downward social mobility. In contrast, hierarchy denotes a rigid, often ascriptive ranking system in which positions are determined by birth or other unchangeable characteristics, with limited opportunities for movement between strata.

Caste as Stratification

Caste exhibits certain elements of social stratification. Different castes have traditionally occupied distinct economic roles, resulting in variations in wealth and income. For example, Brahmins, who were traditionally priests and scholars, held high social prestige, whereas Shudras and Dalits were assigned to menial tasks and experienced social discrimination. This unequal access to resources and prestige reflects a form of stratification. Additionally, within each Varna (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra), numerous Jatis existed, which demonstrated internal stratification based on occupation and economic status.

Caste as Hierarchy: The Dominant Perspective

However, the perspective that caste functions primarily as a hierarchical system is more persuasive. Several key features distinguish caste from other forms of stratification:

- **Ascriptive Status:** Caste is determined by birth and is largely immutable. Unlike class, which allows for social mobility through economic advancement, changing one's caste is virtually impossible.
- **Endogamy:** The practice of marrying within one's caste is a cornerstone of the system, reinforcing its boundaries and preventing

social mixing. This rigid adherence to endogamy is a key feature of hierarchical systems.

- **Hereditary Occupation:** Traditionally, occupations were linked to caste, limiting occupational choices and perpetuating social inequalities. While this has become less rigid in modern India, its historical impact remains significant.
- **Purity and Pollution:** The concepts of purity and pollution, central to the Hindu worldview, served to justify the hierarchical arrangement of castes. Higher castes were considered 'pure' and lower castes 'polluted', reinforcing social distance and discrimination.
- **Social Restrictions:** Historically, lower castes faced numerous social restrictions, including limitations on access to education, temples, and public spaces. These restrictions were explicitly designed to maintain the hierarchical order.

2.11 Caste and Colonialism

Caste and colonialism are two significant forces that have shaped Indian society. The caste system existed in India long before the British arrived. It was a traditional system of social stratification based on birth, occupation, ritual status, and hierarchy. However, British colonial rule (1757–1947) brought major administrative, political, economic, and educational changes that transformed how the caste system functioned. Colonialism did not create caste, but it reorganised, codified, and strengthened caste identities through policies such as the census, legal codification, land settlements, and administrative classification. At the same time, colonial rule also provided opportunities for social reform movements and anti-caste struggles. Therefore, the relationship between caste and colonialism is both complex and contradictory.

Caste System before British Rule

Before British colonial rule, the caste system was already integral to Indian society; however, its manifestations varied across regions. Local customs governed caste practices, and some communities could improve their social standing through wealth accumulation, military service, or political influence. Occupational roles and social positions exhibited greater flexibility in specific areas. Furthermore, local rulers and village communities largely maintained caste relations, rather than a centralised governmental authority.

Arrival of British Colonial Rule

The British East India Company gradually established political control over India, and the British Crown assumed direct rule after 1858. To manage such a large and diverse population effectively, the British needed comprehensive information about Indian society. They began studying caste, religion, language, and customs. This administrative interest rendered caste a significant tool for governance.

British Census and Caste Classification

The British conducted the first comprehensive census of India in 1871 and subsequently administered it every decade. During this process, each individual was asked to specify their caste. The government systematically categorised numerous castes into fixed classifications and preserved official records. Previously, caste identities could differ across regions; however, the census rendered these identities permanent and official. Consequently, this initiative reinforced caste identities across India.

Colonial Administration and Caste

The British utilised caste information to enhance administration, taxation, recruitment, and law enforcement. Government records incorporated caste details across schools, courts, land records, and official documents. Administrative decisions often considered caste identity, making it a significant factor in public affairs. Consequently, caste became closely linked to government policies and administrative practices.

The Divide and Rule Policy

The British frequently employed a strategy called “Divide and Rule,” which promoted divisions among social and religious groups. By categorising and addressing caste groups separately, they diminished unity among Indians—this increased competition for government jobs, education, and political influence among castes. Ultimately, the policy unintentionally deepened caste divisions and undermined collective efforts against colonial rule.

2.12 Impact of Colonialism on the Caste System

British colonial rule influenced the caste system in several significant ways. The introduction of official records and administrative categories increased the rigidity of caste identities, reducing the flexibility that previously existed. Simultaneously, the expansion of modern education,

urbanisation, and industrial growth generated new opportunities, enabling some individuals to transcend traditional caste roles. Consequently, colonialism both reinforced and challenged the caste system.

Caste and Education under Colonial Rule

The British established modern schools, colleges, and universities across India. Although educational opportunities expanded, access remained uneven. Social reformers encouraged lower-caste groups to pursue education as a means of social mobility. Educated individuals from marginalised communities became leaders who advocated for equality, justice, and social change. Thus, education emerged as a crucial instrument in combating caste discrimination.

Caste and Employment during Colonial Rule

The British administration created new government positions in sectors such as the railways, postal services, judicial system, and civil administration. Employment practices began to prioritise education and qualifications rather than hereditary occupations. However, individuals from higher castes often benefited disproportionately due to their greater access to education. Despite this, the emergence of new employment opportunities gradually weakened the traditional association between caste and occupation.

Social Reform Movements against Caste

During the colonial period, numerous social reform movements arose to challenge caste discrimination and untouchability. Reformers advocated for equal rights, expanded educational opportunities, and social justice for all communities. They critically examined traditional caste practices and promoted the principles of equality and human dignity, thereby laying the groundwork for future constitutional reforms in independent India.

Role of Jyotirao Phule

Jyotirao Phule was one of the earliest leaders to oppose caste oppression. He asserted that education was fundamental to ending social inequality and established schools for girls and lower-caste children. Phule also criticised Brahmanical dominance. His writings and activism inspired marginalised communities to pursue their rights and dignity.

Role of B. R. Ambedkar

Dr B. R. Ambedkar was a leading advocate for the rights of Dalits and other marginalised groups. He strongly opposed untouchability and caste discrimination, emphasising education, organisation, and political participation as essential means to achieve equality. As Chairperson of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, Ambedkar ensured the inclusion of constitutional safeguards against caste-based discrimination and promoted social justice.

Positive Effects of Colonialism on Caste

Colonial rule introduced modern educational systems, legal reforms, and new employment opportunities. These changes facilitated the social and economic advancement of many individuals from lower castes. Social reform movements gained momentum, and public discourse increasingly addressed equality and human rights. Collectively, these developments contributed to the gradual weakening of some traditional caste restrictions.

Negative Effects of Colonialism on Caste

Although these positive developments occurred, colonial rule also reinforced caste divisions. The census and official classifications solidified caste identities as more fixed and enduring. Administrative policies frequently highlighted caste distinctions, increasing competition and conflict among different communities. Consequently, caste became firmly rooted in politics and government administration.

Caste after Independence

After India's independence in 1947, the Constitution abolished untouchability and guaranteed legal equality. The government introduced reservation schemes and welfare initiatives for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to address historical injustices. However, despite the elimination of legal discrimination, caste continues to influence social interactions, marriage, politics, and opportunities in many regions of India.

2.13 Caste and Race

Race is a socially constructed category, similar to gender, used to classify individuals according to biological traits that society considers significant. Physical appearance is frequently used to delineate or identify race, although these distinctions are not always applied consistently.

Race and ethnicity are distinct concepts. An ethnic group consists of individuals who share a common cultural heritage, which may include language, traditions, and religious practices. Individuals of different races may share the same ethnicity, and conversely, individuals of the same race may belong to entirely different ethnic groups. Race refers to physical or genetic differences among humans that are believed to distinguish one group from another, based on characteristics such as skin and hair colour, physique, and facial features.

Caste: According to Ghurye, the caste system is a social institution exclusive to India, distinguished by hereditary membership, endogamy (marriage within the group), and restrictions on social interaction and occupational roles. Caste represents not merely a division of labour but also a stratification of labourers.

Race: Ghurye examined the racial theories of caste, especially those proposed by Western scholars who tried to link Indian castes to racial groups. He argued that while some physical differences exist among castes, they are not sufficient to classify them as distinct races.

- **Caste as Race Theory:** Ghurye critically analysed the theory that Indian castes originated from racial differences, particularly the Aryan invasion theory. He pointed out that the physical differences among castes are minor and do not justify classifying castes as races.
- **Social and Cultural Factors:** He emphasised that caste is primarily a social and cultural phenomenon, shaped by historical, religious, and economic factors, rather than biological or racial ones.
- **Endogamy and Heredity:** Ghurye noted that endogamy (marriage within the caste) and hereditary occupation have contributed to some physical differences among castes, but these result from social practices, not racial origins.

Racism or racialism

Racism constitutes an ideological construct that ascribes a position of dominance to certain races or ethnic groups over others based on physical characteristics, cultural attributes, and economic status. This involves hierarchical relationships wherein a superior race exerts domination and control over subordinate groups. Racial discrimination encompasses any act of distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin, intended to nullify human rights and fundamental freedoms across political, economic, social, cultural, or other

domains of public life. Although the terms 'racialism' and 'racism' are often used interchangeably, 'racism' more accurately pertains to prejudice or hostility directed towards individuals because of their racial origin, regardless of whether a developed racial theory underpins this hostility.

Social class

Social class represents the principal form of social stratification, particularly in modern, industrialized societies. While the caste system is unique to India, the class system is considered universal. The term 'class' may sometimes refer to specific occupational groups, such as professors, artists, engineers, doctors, or students. Additionally, 'class' can denote the quality of objects or experiences. However, within sociology, the concept of social class is most commonly employed to describe patterns of social stratification. Social class can therefore be defined as a segment of society whose members, regardless of age or gender, share a similar general status.

Definition and Meaning

The term 'class' is employed in various contexts with differing meanings. In sociology, however, 'social class' possesses a distinct definition. The following are several definitions of social class provided by prominent scholars.

P. Gisbert: A social class is 'a category or group of persons having a definite status in society which permanently determines their relation to other groups'.

Ogburn and Nimkoff: A social class is the aggregate of persons having essentially the same social status in a given society'

MacIver and Page: A social class is any portion of the community marked off from the rest by social status.

Max Weber: Social classes are aggregates of individuals 'who have the same opportunities of acquiring goods, the same exhibited standard of living.

Lapiere: A social class is a culturally defined group that is accorded a particular position of status within the population as a whole.

Ogburn and Nimkoff: A social class is the aggregate of persons having the same social status in a given society.

According to **Marx**, class is defined by two primary criteria: members share long-term economic interests, particularly regarding ownership or nonownership of the means of production, and members recognize

their similarity and common interests. Marx referred to this awareness as class consciousness. Although class consciousness is not necessarily objectively accurate, Marx regarded it as a significant determinant of class actions.

Anthony Giddens defines class as “a large-scale grouping of people who share common economic resources, which strongly influence the lifestyle they can lead.” Social class represents a segment of society comprising individuals of all ages and genders who share a similar general status. MacIver states, “Whenever social intercourse is limited by the consideration of social status by distinctions between higher and lower, there exists social class.”

Characteristics of Social Class

- Class is based on status. It is basically a status group. Different statuses arise in society because people are engaged in different activities and vocations. When we consider class as a status group, it becomes easy to apply it to any society having social stratification.
- It is based mainly on achieved status. In the class system, status is achieved, not ascribed. In this case, status is not fixed at birth. Individuals can improve their class position through their performance.
- Income, occupation, wealth, education, and “lifestyle” are some of the factors that determine class.
- Class is found in most of the human societies. It is a phenomenon that is absent only in the smallest and simplest societies. Today, all societies have some form of social class.

Modes of feelings: In a class system, three modes or types of feelings may be observed. These are as follows:

- There is a feeling of equality in relation to the members of one’s own class.
- There is a feeling of inferiority in relation to those who occupy the higher status in the socio-economic hierarchy,
- There is a feeling of superiority toward those who occupy lower status in the hierarchy. These feelings lead to class consciousness and ultimately result in class solidarity.
- The class system is hierarchical. Classes are arranged in order from high to low.

Prestige elements: We have seen that each class has its own status in society, and status is generally associated with prestige. In society, a class's relative position arises from the degree of prestige attached to status. In this way, the status or prestige enjoyed by the ruling or wealthy classes is superior to that of common or poor people. This is true for all societies. Now let us know how prestige is determined. Our evaluations measure prestige based on knowledge, race or descent, religion, wealth, heroism, bravery and such other qualities. Qualities society considers desirable have a high degree of prestige. The more desirable the qualities, the higher are the prestige. Remember that these qualities vary from society to society and from time to time.

Stability: A social group is more or less stable. Unlike a crowd or a mob, it is not transitory and unstable. Status in a class system may change over time, yet it remains relatively stable.

Lifestyle or mode of living: A social class is distinguished from others by its culture or customary modes of behaviour. This is referred to as the lifestyle of a particular class. What constitutes a person's lifestyle? One's lifestyle includes matters such as the mode of dress, the type of house and neighbourhood, means of recreation, books, magazines, and TV programmes to which one is exposed, one's friends, mode of travelling and communication, ways of spending money, and so on. A class's special preferences, tastes, and values are reflected in its lifestyle.

Social classes are an open group: Social classes represent an open social system. Vertical social mobility is possible in case of an open class system. Because class status is achieved, there are few or no restrictions on an individual moving upward in the class hierarchy through one's own effort. Social classes are based mainly on economic criteria. But the importance of other factors should not be ignored. There are two types of criteria: Subjective criteria and Objective criteria. Subjective criteria include class consciousness, class solidarity, and class identification, while objective criteria include wealth, property, income, education, and occupation.

Class Consciousness: As we have just noted, class consciousness is associated with the class system. Class consciousness implies the sense of togetherness that characterises relations between members of their own and other classes.

Factors or Conditions for Class Determination

This section examines the factors involved in class determination. Social classes are established based on subjective criteria, objective criteria,

or a combination of both. Subjective criteria refer to individuals' personal perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about social class. In contrast, objective criteria are based on measurable and observable factors such as income, occupation, or education. Understanding the distinction between these two types of criteria helps clarify how class status is determined.

Subjective criteria encompass class consciousness, class solidarity, and class identification. These criteria are primarily psychological. Individuals who share common interests and attributes tend to develop in-group solidarity and perceive their socio-economic opportunities as comparable. In their study of the American class system, Warner and Lunt identified subjective elements as significant factors in class determination. According to their findings, important subjective elements include:

- belonging to the right family
- doing the right things
- knowing how to act properly
- associating with the right people
- living in the right section of the town
- one's beliefs and feelings concerning certain things

All these factors influenced individuals' status, thereby determining their class. Warner and Lunt also observed that the mere possession of wealth does not suffice for admission to the upper class. For example, a person may have recently acquired great wealth but, without established social connections or the right family background, may still not be accepted into elite circles or recognised as upper class. This illustrates how social acceptance and shared values are critical for full membership in the upper class.

Objective criteria for class determination include the following:

- wealth, property or income
- family or kinship
- location of residence
- occupation
- level of education
- physical features such as skin colour, height, etc.

Many sociologists emphasize objective criteria because these can be clearly observed and documented. Karl Marx, in particular, prioritised objective characteristics, especially economic factors. Marx focused on

how economic relationships and material conditions shape society, arguing that class divisions are fundamentally rooted in ownership or control of the means of production. He believed that economic status determines an individual's position in the class structure and influences all other aspects of social life, making economic factors the core criterion of class.

In societies with class structures, objective criteria determine class. These include personal or household per capita income or net worth, ownership of land and property, control of the means of production, occupation, educational attainment, qualifications, and family background.

Individuals who attain positions of power in society frequently adopt distinctive lifestyles to emphasise their prestige and further differentiate themselves within the dominant class. These stylistic traits, often referred to as cultural capital, can be as significant as wealth in determining class status, particularly at higher social levels. Cultural capital refers to the non-financial social assets individuals possess, such as education, tastes, mannerisms, and knowledge, that can confer social advantages and help them gain acceptance within a particular class.

- costume and grooming
- manners and cultural refinement. For example, Bourdieu distinguishes between high and low classes, differentiating bourgeois tastes and sensitivities from those of the working class. political standing vis-à-vis the church, government, and/or social clubs, as well as the use of honorary titles
- reputation of honour or disgrace
- language, the distinction between elaborate code, which is seen as a criterion for "upper-class", and the restricted code, which is associated with "lower classes".

These factors reflect individuals' class status. Upon encountering someone, observers often subconsciously attempt to identify their class status. While occupation, wealth, educational attainment, or income level may not be immediately apparent, people often infer class status from visible criteria such as dress, manners, style of speech, and mode of transport.

Classification of Social Class

The classified social classes in various ways. Sociologists commonly employ a threefold classification: upper class, middle class, and lower class.

- Sorokin has spoken of three major types of class stratification: economic, political, and occupational classes.

- Warner classified classes into six types: upper-upper class, upper-middle class, upper-lower class, lower-upper class, lower middle class, and lower class.
- Anthony Giddens's three-class model comprises the upper, middle, and lower (working) classes. Most sociologists therefore use a threefold classification, with subclasses under each main category.

* Karl Marx, however, identified only two major social classes: the haves and the have-nots, or the rich and the poor, also called the capitalists and the workers, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This two-class model is fundamentally different from the threefold or sixfold classifications used by other sociologists. While the threefold and sixfold models recognise multiple layers and subdivisions within society, such as the upper, middle, and lower classes or various subclasses, Marx's approach emphasises the sharp division between those who own and control the means of production and those who sell their labour. Marxist theory focuses on the conflict and relationship between these two groups as the driving force of social change. In contrast, multi-class models highlight a more nuanced and graded social hierarchy.

Sociologists have given a threefold classification of classes which consists of (i) Upper Class, (ii) Middle Class, and (iii) Lower Class. Warner and Lunt, in their study of a New England town, 'The Social Life of a Modern Community', divided each traditional class into two sub-classes. They have given a sixfold classification consisting of (i) the Upper-Upper Class, (ii) the Lower-Upper Class, (iii) the Upper-Middle Class, (iv) the Lower-Middle Class, (v) the Upper-Lower Class, and (vi) the Lower-Lower Class. Karl Marx, the champion of the theory of social class and class conflicts, 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 describes three major types of class stratification. They are economic, political, and occupational classes.

Class consciousness: The class system is associated with class consciousness. Class consciousness is "the sentiment that characterises the relations of men towards the members of their own and other classes." It "consists in the realisation of a similarity of attitude and behaviour with members of other classes. "Class consciousness is the means by which the integration of persons possessing a similarity of social position and of life-chances is transformed into a common group activity."

Conditions of class Consciousness: Ginsberg mentions three conditions of class consciousness. The first is the ease and amount of social mobility. If movement up and down is easy and rapid, differences in mode of life disappear; if it is possible but not easy, the consciousness of differences is increased. The second condition of class consciousness is rivalry and conflict. When the members of a class realise their common interests, then they may think of defending their interests against the common enemy. The third factor is the growth of a common tradition that embodies shared values and experiences. When people develop common traditions and experiences, they may develop class consciousness.

Class consciousness and Class Struggle: Karl Marx, who championed the cause of workers, placed great emphasis on 'class consciousnesses among the working classes. According to Marx, the rise of class consciousness among workers leads to class identification, class solidarity, and finally class struggle. Hence, he gave a clarion call to the workers in his Manifesto of the communist party of 1848 that "workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to win". Class consciousness can be transformed into group activity with the help of an organ or instrument. A political party is such an organ. Hence, Lenin added the idea of a party in Marxism to prepare the workers for class struggle.

Criteria of Class

Societies have historically been divided into different classes. Social classes may be classified according to objective criteria, subjective criteria, or a combination of both.

Subjective criteria may include class consciousness, class solidarity and class identification; these subjective criteria are essentially psychological. Members with common interests and attributes develop a sense of in-group solidarity. They feel that their socioeconomic opportunities are almost equal. Warner and Lunt, in their study of the American class system, six have observed the importance of subjective factors in determining a class. According to them,

- belonging to the 'right family',
- doing the right things,
- knowing how to act right,
- associating with the 'right people',
- living in the 'right' section of the town,

- one's feelings and beliefs concerning certain things all have an impact on the status of individuals according to which their class is determined. 'Wealth' alone is not a sufficient qualification for being admitted to the upper class that is maintained.

Objective criteria include factors by which one's status may be determined. They may include:

- wealth, property or income,
- family or kinship,
- location of residence,
- occupation,
- level of education,
- Physical marks of differences such as skin colour, etc.

Some sociologists have given more importance to the objective factors. It may be noted that the criteria upon which class is determined vary from time to time and place to place. For example, in pure-Nazi Germany, the combination of an old aristocratic family line and high rank in the army put one in the top position. In Russia, during the Czarist regime, nobility with a military career represented the top-class position. In Soviet Russia today, a high position in the Communist Party is a basis for becoming a member of the top class. In the U.S.A. today, the combination of high-level business, high political status, wealth, education and old family descent represents a man's high status in society. Karl Marx, by contrast, placed a premium on objective factors, particularly economic ones. According to him, social classes originate only from economic struggle. He neglected other subjective factors. His theory of social class is therefore regarded as one-sided, misleading, and deterministic.

Marxian analysis of Class

Marx defined a social class as all those people who share a common relationship to the means of economic production. Those who own and control the means of production (enslavers, feudal landowners or owners of property such as factories and capital) are the dominant class. They exercise power because of their ownership of the means of production. In an industrial society, the means of production include factories, machinery, and the raw materials used to manufacture goods. Marx called them the class of 'bourgeoisie', or capitalists or owners of property.

All those who work for the dominant class are slaves, peasants, or industrial labourers. They constitute the subordinate class. Marx called this class the 'proletariat', or the labour class, working class, or poor class. Member of the proletariat own only their labour, which they hire out to the owners of industry in return for wages.

The relationship between these two classes is not only one of dominance and subordination but also of 'exploitation'. The workers produce more wealth in the form of food, manufactured products and services than is necessary to meet their basic needs. It means they produce 'surplus wealth'. But they do not enjoy the surplus they have created. On the contrary, those who own the means of production can grab this surplus wealth as 'profit' for their own use. The capitalists are a non-producing class. They do not actually produce anything. Still, capitalists take much of the wealth the proletariat produces. According to Marx, this kind of exploitation has been the main source of conflict between the two classes throughout history.

Marx thought that, as a result of capitalists exploiting workers, the gap between the two keeps widening. Thus, the rich become richer, and the poor become poorer. This results in an imbalance in production and distribution. Goods are produced and flooded into the market in abundant quantities, and only a handful of people can purchase them. Most people in society, who mostly belong to the working class, cannot purchase the goods because of their limited purchasing power. Marx calls this situation 'the anarchic character of production'. Hence capitalism suffers from its own internal contradictions. "The seed of destruction of capitalism is ripening in the very womb of capitalism," Marx said. He had foretold that capitalism would fail. "The prophecy of capitalism is a prophecy of doom Marx stated emphatically.

Marx believed that the members of the proletariat would eventually realise that they were being exploited and oppressed. They would then join together to overthrow the bourgeoisie either by force or by voting their own representatives into the government. As a champion of the workers' cause, Marx urged workers to hasten the destruction of the capitalist system. Marx and Engels made a fervent appeal to the working class in their Manifesto of the communist Party of 1848 in the following way: "Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win." Marx has even predicted that a historic revolution would mark the end of capitalism and lead to a

classless society. After their successful revolution, the workers would set up a communist society, which means that the forces of production would be communally owned, that is, jointly owned by all members of society. Goods produced would be equally shared, and everyone would work for themselves and for the benefit of society as a whole.

Criticism

Marx's views on class are part of his more general theory of the history of society. Some sociologists agree that they are more appropriate to 19th-century Europe and have little relevance today. Marx's definition of class and its interpretation can be misleading in many marginal cases. When Marx wrote, individual capitalists owned and controlled industry. But this is no longer the case today. Large corporations now run most industry; thousands of stockholders own them, but salaried managers control them. As a result, the ownership and control of the means of production have been largely separated. Executives, technicians, scientists, and other professionals may control the means of production, but they do not own it. They are on the payroll like any other workers. In this way, Marx's definition does not help much in determining their social class.

Difference between Caste and Class

Caste and class represent two main forms of social stratification. They can be distinguished on the following grounds.

Caste	Class
1. Particular: The system with all its peculiarities is unique to India. It is peculiar to India, and hence it is not universal.	Universal: The class system is universal in nature. It is found in almost all modern complex societies.
2. Ascribed Status: Status is ascribed to individuals by birth. Birth is the criterion of status, and not achievement; status can neither be changed nor improved.	Ascribed Status: Status is ascribed to individuals by birth. There is scope for achievement. Hence, status can be changed or improved.
3. Closed System: caste is a closed system. It restricts social mobility; i.e., the movement of people from one social status to another.	Open system: Class is an open system. It provides for social mobility. Individuals can move from the lower class to the upper class.

4. Divine Origin: The caste system is believed to have had a divine origin. It is closely associated with Hindu tradition.	Secular: The caste system is secular. It has nothing to do with religion. It has been given no religious explanation.
5. Purity and Impurity: The idea of purity and impurity is associated with the caste. Some castes are called 'pure' while others are regarded as 'impure'. 'Impure' castes are regarded as 'untouchables'.	Feeling of Disparity: There is a feeling of disparity on the part of the members of a class. The question of purity and impurity does not arise. Hence there is no practice of untouchability.
6. Regulation of relations: the caste system controls the activities and regulates the relations of its members to a great extent. As MacIver says, it fixes the role of a man in society. It regulates even the routine activities of the members.	Limits Relations: The class system, on the other hand, limits the range of contacts and communications of its members. Individuals are freer in a class. It does regulate the daily tasks of its members.
7. Greater Social Distance: There is comparatively a greater distance being kept between different castes.	Less Social Distance: There is less social distance between different classes. Members are more tolerant than others.
8. Conservative: The caste-ridden system tends to become conservative, orthodox and reactionary. Castes become, in course of time, watertight compartments.	Progressive: The class-ridden system is regarded as more progressive. Classes give more freedom to the members. It permits greater social mobility.
9. Endogamous Group: Caste is an endogamous social unit. Accordingly, every caste member has to marry within the group, selecting the life partner from their own caste. Inter-caste marriages are not allowed.	Not endogamous: A class is not an endogamous unit. The members are free to select their life partner from any other class. The class system never imposes restrictions on marriage.
10. Complexity: The caste system is complex. The very fact that more than 2800 castes and subcastes are found in India makes it evident how complex it is.	Simplicity: The caste system is known for its simplicity. Broadly speaking, there are only three classes: the upper, middle, and lower and hence the network of relations is also simple.

11. Caste-consciousness: caste consciousness is more dangerous to democracy. Democracy and caste, strictly speaking, cannot go together, because caste is based on inequality. Caste-feeling may also endanger the growth of national 'sentiments and unity'. Caste restricts the amount of community feeling. Casteism has been a great hindrance to national integration in India.	Class-consciousness: Class-consciousness is not inimical to democracy. Class and democracy go together. Class, on the other hand, does not restrict the amount of community feeling. Despite the communist influence to internationalise, the class system never disturbs the growth of national sentiments.
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Social Class in India

About 74 per cent of India's population lives in villages. To understand rural society, it is important to distinguish between caste and class. Caste is a hereditary system of social stratification that assigns individuals to a particular social group, usually based on birth, and is often linked to traditional occupation and rituals. Class, by contrast, refers to social ranking based primarily on economic status, access to resources, and power, and is not fixed at birth. In these rural areas, caste and class often intersect in how society is organised. The following discussion examines the connections between these two systems.

- Members of the higher castes generally belong to the propertied class that holds significant power. Anthropologist Miriam Sharma has emphasised this relationship. According to her, "Large landholders who employ hired labour are overwhelmingly from the upper castes, while the agricultural workers themselves come from the ranks of the lowest predominantly untouchable castes."
- Sharma also notes that proprietors who rely on household labour typically originate from the middle agricultural castes.
- The distribution of additional resources and access to political power also reflects similar patterns of caste and class distinctions.

Anthropologist Harold A. Gould, in his analysis of class formation in India, identifies a three-tier system of stratification emerging across rural regions. He designates these levels as:

- Forward Classes (higher castes),
- Backward Classes (middle and lower castes), and
- Harijans (very low castes)

Members of these groups occupy similar positions in relation to land and production; specifically, they are large-scale farmers, small-scale farmers, and landless labourers, respectively. As these caste groups share common economic interests, they develop a collective consciousness regarding their socio-economic and political status. Although these groups may differ in ritual status, they often collaborate to advance shared class interests. The higher castes encompass a broad spectrum, with varying ritual rankings, yet all belong to the upper strata of the caste hierarchy. Increasingly, some caste groups are forming alliances within regions and across caste boundaries to pursue political power and access to valuable resources. For instance, since the late 1960s, certain middle-ranking cultivating castes in northern India have cooperated politically to promote their agrarian and market-oriented interests, motivated by competition with higher-caste landed elites. In contemporary India, a notable example of cross-caste and class-based mobilisation is the political coalition known as the Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) in states like Bihar, where parties representing different caste groups including Other Backwards Classes, Scheduled Castes, and minorities have joined forces to challenge established upper-caste political dominance. Additionally, recent farmer protests (2020-2021) saw participants from diverse caste backgrounds unite around shared economic demands, demonstrating how issues like land rights and agricultural policy can foster collaboration across caste boundaries. This trend demonstrates that shared economic concerns can unite different caste groups under a common class identity.

Class, in contrast to caste, is determined by economic factors and power dynamics rather than ritual status. Consequently, class formation often occurs independently of caste, particularly in urban areas. The expansion of the market economy and the adoption of modern production methods have contributed to the emergence of a modern class system, even in rural India. In urban settings, groups with vested interests frequently transcend caste boundaries, indicating the potential for new class formations. These groups include prosperous industrialists and entrepreneurs, who have influenced the central government toward pro-business policies; bureaucrats, who rely on higher education rather than land ownership to maintain their civil service positions; political officeholders, who benefit from substantial salaries and privileges; and the military, which is among the most powerful armed forces in the developing world.

Government policies have also played a significant role in shaping class-caste intersections. Land reform initiatives implemented after

independence, though uneven in impact, sought to break up large landholdings and redistribute land to tenants and the landless, aiming to reduce rural inequalities. Additionally, the policy of reservations in education and government employment for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes has provided historically disadvantaged caste groups with greater opportunities for upward social mobility, influencing class dynamics over time. Welfare schemes targeting marginalised communities and rural development programs have further reshaped the composition and economic positions of different social groups.

In contrast, members of the menial underclass, present in both rural and urban areas, remain economically disadvantaged. As privileged elites advance, low-ranking menial workers continue to experience economic insecurity. Gould suggests that if these workers were to mobilize politically across class and religious divisions, they could potentially leverage their numerical strength.

Agrarian Classes

The term 'agrarian class structure' denotes the class organisation characteristic of agricultural societies. Scholars have noted agrarian classes in pre-independence India. The agrarian social structure comprises various classes representing distinct social groups in rural India. Analysis of the post-independence rural context identifies four primary classes:

- land owners
- tenants
- labourers
- non-agriculturists

According to A.R. Desai, landowners constitute about 22%, tenants about 27%, agricultural labourers about 31%, and non-agriculturists about 20% in rural India. Daniel Thorner had classified rural classes into three categories. These are:

Maliks, or landowners, are categorised into two types: absentee landlords and wealthy resident landlords. Absentee landlords reside in distant towns or cities and oversee cultivation through managers or supervisors; their landholdings often span multiple villages. Wealthy resident landowners live in the villages where they own land but typically do not engage in manual agricultural labour, instead delegating work to others.

Kissans, or working peasants, represent the intermediate class within the three-tier agrarian structure. This group comprises small landowners whose holdings are significantly smaller than those of the maliks. Unlike maliks, kissans and their family members actively cultivate their land and seldom hire external labourers because of limited income.

Non- Agrarian Classes

As the term implies, this class structure is rooted in non-agrarian systems of production. Manufacturing and service-sector activities generate a social organisation distinct from that of agrarian societies, resulting in a different class system.

The non-agrarian class system is a defining feature of urban society. However, as non-agrarian productive systems emerged in rural areas, corresponding class structures also developed there. The class structure generally comprises three basic categories:

These categories are the upper (or higher), middle, and lower classes. In India, the non-agrarian upper class, comprising approximately 1 per cent of the population, includes industrialists, former maharajas, and top executives. This group owns substantial properties, participates in exclusive social circles, and frequently travels internationally. Their agrarian counterpart is the wealthy landlord class.

The middle class sits between the upper and lower classes and makes up about one-third of the population. This group includes tradespeople, artisans, workers, and a diverse range of professionals within the non-agrarian sector. In the agrarian context, peasants represent the middle class.

At the bottom of the economic scale are low-income people, who make up the lower class. According to more recent estimates, approximately 220 million people in India were living below the national poverty line in 2019-2021, representing roughly 16 per cent of the population. These individuals often live in inadequate homes, lack sufficient food, work for minimal wages, have undereducated and frequently unhealthy children, and remain the victims of numerous social inequities. Agricultural labourers are the agrarian counterpart of the lower class.

Emergence of the Middle Class in India

Around the 1770s, the term “social class” entered the English vocabulary, coinciding with the growing significance of the “middle class” within this structure. The Industrial Revolution enabled a larger segment

of the population to pursue education and cultural activities that were previously limited to the upper classes of the European feudal system, which included the aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and peasantry. During this period, the peasantry encompassed groups that would later become the industrial proletariat in urban areas.

Features

India's rapidly expanding economy has led to a significant transformation: the emergence of a new middle class. This group increasingly influences the nation's political and economic trajectory. The Indian middle class is characterized by mobility, ambition, consumer orientation, and a forward-looking outlook. Precise definition remains challenging, as it does not constitute a single social stratum. Instead, it spans both urban and rural areas, exerting influence nationwide. Members include prosperous farmers, white-collar professionals, businesspeople, military personnel, and others striving for economic advancement. Common characteristics include ownership of consumer goods such as cars and televisions, stable incomes, substantial savings, and well-educated children, often fluent in English. Many also maintain connections with relatives who have achieved success abroad.

Growth

There is no universally accepted set of criteria for defining the middle class, resulting in widely varying estimates of its size. The expansion of the new middle class has been driven in part by the doubling of salaries for approximately four million central government employees in 1986, followed by similar increases for state and district officials. Economic liberalisation and market reforms in the 1980s and 1990s have further contributed to this growth. The middle class is expanding rapidly and now encompasses diverse religious and ethno-linguistic groups. While it was once primarily composed of urban Hindu and aristocratic families, a consumer-oriented middle class is now also emerging among Muslims and affluent rural populations. According to V.A. Pai Panandikar, director of the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi, as cited by Dubey, by the end of the twentieth century, 30 percent, or approximately 300 million, of India's population would be considered middle class.

Dominant Caste

The concept of dominant caste illustrates how economic, political, and social factors interact to establish a caste group's dominance within

a region. This dynamic demonstrates the intersection of caste and class. While every caste occupies a specific position in the ritual hierarchy, dominance over other castes is shaped by factors associated with class status. M.N. Srinivas contends that a caste achieves dominance when it is numerically superior to others. In his study of a Mysore village, he identified the peasant Okkalanga, who made up nearly half the population and consisted of nineteen jati groups, as the principal landowners. In addition to numerical strength, other criteria contribute to dominance. The primary criteria for a caste to be considered dominant are:

- Economic growth
- Political power
- Ritual purity
- Numerical strength

The dominant caste exercises both economic and political authority over other caste groups, with numerical strength serving as a foundation for regional power. Although the dominant caste may not occupy the highest ritual status, it attains elevated standing through wealth, political influence, and population size. The presence of educated individuals and high occupational rates further reinforce its dominance. In some cases, a single dominant-caste clan governs multiple villages. The dominant caste often mediates disputes within and between jati or caste groups. Its authority is maintained by social norms that discourage villagers from seeking justice from external authorities, such as government officials, courts, or police. Members of the dominant caste, especially those from affluent and influential families, typically represent the village in official matters.

Caste and Politics

Caste has consistently functioned as a foundational element in modern Indian politics. Even during the medieval period, power structures were deeply rooted in caste hierarchies. Throughout the colonial era, caste operated as a principal mechanism for the distribution of power and resources. Although colonialism introduced opportunities for democracy and modernity, these spaces were predominantly controlled by upper-caste groups. The nationalist movement against imperial rule often reinforced caste and class hegemony. During this period, non-Brahmin and lower-caste groups pursued two primary objectives: upward mobility within caste and class structures, and the elimination of caste-based distinctions. The caste system has profoundly influenced political socialisation, mobilisation, and

institutionalisation within Indian democracy. The interaction between caste and class remains central to the complexities of Indian politics. Beneath the surface of religious and communal movements following independence, the persistent struggle for caste and class dominance has been a driving force. Both anti-caste movements and initiatives for upward mobility are closely associated with the pro-reservation campaign, which aims to enhance the social and economic status of historically marginalised castes. Furthermore, the policies and resistance of the ruling bourgeoisie are shaped by ongoing tensions within caste and class dynamics.

Scope of Caste and Politics

The scope of caste and politics includes a range of issues affecting various castes and the institutions that mobilise them, such as caste organisations and political parties. Central to caste politics are dynamics of subordination and dominance, caste-based violence, reservations in public sector employment, social welfare initiatives, cultural recognition, self-respect, human rights, and social justice. Competition among castes often translates into competition among political parties and conflicts among caste groups seeking power. Political parties develop strategies to consolidate caste groups to secure electoral victories. Power sharing through institutional representation and policy initiatives can facilitate caste empowerment, particularly through representation in legislative bodies such as the Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha, as well as in local, educational, and administrative institutions. Given India's federal political structure, the relationship between caste and politics operates at multiple levels, including local governance, state legislative assemblies, and the national parliament.

Role of Caste in Indian Politics

Caste plays a significant role in the Indian party system. Many political parties in India are either directly or indirectly organised along caste lines and seek to advance the interests of specific caste groups. This influence is particularly evident among regional political parties. For instance, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in Tamil Nadu are associated with Brahmin and non-Brahmin constituencies, respectively. In Punjab, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) is shaped by community identity and the Jat versus non-Jat dynamic. Numerous regional parties in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, such as the Lok Janshakti Party and Samajwadi Party, are identified with the Yadav community, while the Bahujan Samaj Party is regarded as a Scheduled

Caste party. Similarly, the Shiv Sena Party in Maharashtra is associated with Marathi identity.

Caste is a critical factor in India's electoral system. Political parties often consider both candidates' caste and the caste composition of constituencies when selecting nominees, aiming to secure votes from specific caste groups. Parties strategically utilise caste affiliations to maximise electoral success. Candidates often promise socio-economic development, poverty alleviation, and improvements in education before elections. However, many of these promises remain unfulfilled after elections.

Caste and Socialisation: People of different castes have loyalties and beliefs shaped by political parties and their ideologies. From birth, a person grows up as a member of a particular caste and is bound by the caste system. Some are high caste, and some are low caste. In many cases, a person's thinking is also based on his caste, and he supports parties that value his caste interests. Thus, the caste system has a special impact on socialisation.

Caste and Pressure Groups: A pressure group is an organisation that seeks to influence the government to advance the common interests and objectives of a particular group. However, several pressure groups in India are formed in the interests of particular castes. Caste also has special effects on the functioning of pressure groups, which can force the government to work for the interests of certain castes. Several caste-based pressure groups exist, such as the Scheduled Caste Federation, Arya Samaj Sabha, and Sanatan Dharma Sabha.

Caste exerts considerable influence on the formulation of government policies and programmes in India. Political parties often consider caste dynamics when making policy decisions. Caste also shapes individual voting behaviour, political participation, and the formation of political parties. Additionally, caste plays a significant role in the composition of the Council of Ministers and the appointment of individuals to various political positions.

Caste and Indian Constitution: Before independence, certain sections of Indian society were economically, socially, and politically backward, such as SCs, STs, and OBCs. They had to live in dependence, and as a result, they had to face various problems. Therefore, after independence, the Indian Constitution included provisions to develop these least advantaged groups, providing them equal rights and reserving seats for them in various fields. Article 46 enjoins the State to act for the welfare

of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and take steps to protect their interests. It will protect SCs and STs from all forms of injustice and oppression. Article 330 provides for reservation of Lok Sabha seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Similarly, Article 332 reserves seats in every State Legislative Assembly for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Caste and Local Politics: The Panchayati Raj is a system of local self-government that is prevalent in India. It addresses local administrative issues in rural areas through elected members. The Panchayati Raj system played a significant role in India and brought governance to village communities. The Panchayati Raj system makes the country's governance system more effective. However, this caste system has a special effect on local politics. Upper castes gained more privileges because they were economically and politically strong, while lower castes were much less privileged. This caste-based political system can hinder the independent functioning of the Panchayati Raj Institution.

Although the caste system was legally abolished in 1950, caste-based discrimination persists in Indian society. Caste-based violence remains widespread and manifests in various forms. Caste identity is hereditary, determined by birth, and has historically dictated both social status and occupational roles. Marginalised groups such as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) have experienced discrimination, including harassment, illegal land appropriation, forced evictions, and other forms of violence perpetrated by upper-caste groups.

Caste influences administrative processes in India. Certain castes are often given preferential treatment in administrative appointments, transfers, and promotions. Political parties may base such decisions on caste considerations, requiring administrators to align their actions with the interests of these parties. Caste and religious identity significantly shape political leadership in India. Many individuals support political leaders from their own caste or religious community, reflecting a broader mistrust of leaders from outside these groups. This dynamic is particularly pronounced among upper-caste communities.

Main Features of the Caste System in India

Segmentary Division of Society: Indian society is mainly divided into castes, with membership based on birth rather than merit or achievement. This ascriptive, birth-based system is what sets caste apart from class,

which is determined by individual achievement. This segmentary structure divides society into mutually exclusive, internally hierarchical groups.

Hierarchy: Castes are arranged in a defined social and ritual hierarchy that establishes superiority and inferiority. This ranking is governed by the ideology of purity and pollution, with Brahmins occupying the highest position due to ritual purity and Dalits at the bottom, linked to “polluting” occupations. The hierarchy is both social and ritual, extending beyond mere economic status.

Restrictions on Feeding and Social Interaction: Restrictions exist on the types of food that can be eaten, received, or exchanged among different castes. Historically, commensality rules determining who can dine with whom and which foods are acceptable served as prominent indicators of caste hierarchy. Although industrialisation and urbanisation have considerably relaxed these taboos, they remain in rural regions and during social gatherings.

Endogamy: Marriage within one’s own caste or sub-caste is a fundamental aspect of the caste system. Endogamy, or in-caste marriage, guarantees the continuation of caste groups through generations. In many communities, inter-caste marriages are still socially taboo, and honour killings used to enforce caste norms are documented, especially in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

Restricted Occupational Choice: Traditionally, each caste was linked to a hereditary occupation: Brahmins as priests and teachers, Kshatriyas as warriors and rulers, Vaishyas as merchants and traders, Shudras in service sectors and agriculture, and Dalits engaged in “polluting” occupations such as manual scavenging, leather work, and cremation. Although industrialisation has diminished much of this occupational rigidity, caste still influences access to occupations, especially in the informal economy.

Prescribed Social Norms: A specific set of norms, values, and sanctions governs social conduct within and between castes, including interactions, dress, rituals, marriage, food, and occupation. Historically, caste panchayats enforced these rules, occasionally using violence. The SC/ST Atrocities Act amendments (2015) later included social boycott, the economic and social exclusion of caste norm violators, as an offence.

Factors Contributing to Changes in the Caste System

Sanskritisation (M.N. Srinivas): Sanskritisation is the process where lower castes adopt the customs, rituals, beliefs, and lifestyle of higher

castes to enhance their social standing. Examples include adopting vegetarianism, teetotalism, the sacred thread, and claiming Kshatriya ancestry. Sanskritisation does not challenge the caste hierarchy; instead, it aims for upward mobility within the existing system. Ambedkar criticised this approach, arguing it maintains the hierarchy. Sociologically, Sanskritisation explains how groups seek upward mobility without advocating for structural change.

Westernisation (M.N. Srinivas): Western education has shifted focus toward merit and personal achievement rather than caste roles. Adopting Western clothing, cuisine, and customs diminishes traditional caste identifiers. During colonial times, new careers like law, medicine, and engineering emerged, where caste restrictions mattered less. Western ideas of individual rights, equality, and democracy have also offered intellectual tools to question caste hierarchy.

Modernisation: The establishment of scientific, technological, and educational institutions; the rise of nationalism; and the emergence of a new political culture and leadership. Modernisation-driven job creation reduces occupational rigidity. New institutions such as schools, universities, hospitals, and courts offer spaces where caste-based interaction norms are officially set aside. However, modernisation has also led to new forms of caste discrimination, including institutional biases in promotions, hiring, and access to opportunities.

Industrialisation and Urbanisation: Industrial growth and urban expansion have created new employment opportunities beyond traditional caste-based jobs, enabling occupational mobility. Urban anonymity diminishes social caste monitoring. Taboos surrounding food sharing began to weaken as industrial workers from various castes started living and working together. The IT sector, where caste identity is less prominent within workplace culture, stands out as the most influential post-caste professional environment in India.

Constitutional & Legal Reforms: Article 17, which abolishes untouchability; the SC/ST Atrocities Act (initially passed in 1989 and amended in 2015 and 2018); reserved quotas in education and government jobs; the Mandal Commission's 1980 recommendations; and the electoral democratic process have all strengthened lower castes and altered caste-power dynamics. The presence of Dalits in top constitutional positions, such as President and Chief Justice, exemplifies the post-independence transformation of caste hierarchy.

Democratic Politics: The implementation of adult franchise, characterised by the principle of one person, one vote, has fundamentally transformed caste power dynamics. Numerically substantial lower-caste groups have emerged as decisive electoral forces. The rise of OBC leaders such as Lalu Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav, along with Dalit parties like the BSP and broader caste-based political mobilisation, has shifted significant political authority to historically marginalised castes. The politicisation of caste has, paradoxically, both reinforced caste identities and augmented the empowerment of marginalised communities.

1.15 Let Us Sum up

The caste system represents a traditional form of social stratification in Indian society, determined by birth, hierarchical status, hereditary occupation, and social restrictions. Varna refers to the broad division of society into Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, while caste, or jati, denotes numerous localized, hereditary social groups. Historically, caste has been characterized by a hierarchical order based on concepts of purity and pollution, as well as restrictions regarding marriage, food, occupation, and social interaction. During colonial rule, the British administration classified and documented caste groups through censuses and administrative practices, which influenced the organization and political significance of caste identities. Although colonial authorities interpreted caste using racial theories, caste and race are distinct social categories. In contemporary India, caste is closely associated with class and politics, as economic status, education, occupation, political participation, reservations, and social movements have shaped caste relations. As a result, caste has undergone significant transformation due to modernization, education, urbanization, democracy, and social reform, yet it continues to influence social identity and perpetuate inequality in present-day Indian society.

1.16 Keywords

Varna, Caste, Hierarchy, Colonialism, Race, Class and Politics

1.17 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Discuss the various theories of origin of caste system in brief.
2. What is the meaning of caste? Describe the characteristics of caste.
3. What are the restrictions related to marriage in caste?

4. Describe the theory of Primitive culture.
5. Analyse the two important theories of caste system with criticism

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Notes

UNIT – III

Village in India

Structure

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3.1 Learning Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the village community in India and elaborate on its significance.
- Analyze the primary characteristics and distinctive qualities of Indian village communities.
- Examine the social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions of life within Indian villages.

3.2 Introduction

The Indian village life during the 1950s and 1960s reflected a growing Western academic interest in the peasantry. In the aftermath

of decolonization, newly independent governments in the Global South sought to reform stagnant agricultural sectors and analyse agrarian relations, thereby elevating the concept of 'peasantry' within sociology. The village was regarded as the social foundation of the peasant economy, with Robert Redfield's 'little community' concept frequently applied to Indian villages. Given the close association between rural life and agriculture in India, the term 'agrarian' was commonly used, while some, such as Deepankar Gupta, emphasised the increasing integration with urban areas. A 2011 study of Haryana villages near Panipat demonstrated growing urban connections; however, caste remains a significant factor, with caste-based occupational roles persisting. For instance, some Dalits are employed as city sanitation workers but resist similar roles in rural settings. Caste-based interdependence in agriculture is prevalent, often involving cooperative labour arrangements. Foundational studies by anthropologists, later compiled by M.N. Srinivas as 'India's Villages,' along with D.N. Majumdar's 'Rural Profiles' and S.C. Dube's 'Indian Village,' documented various aspects of village life.

The initial examination of Indian villages began in the 18th century through detailed land surveys. In the 20th century, scholars including Munro, Metcalfe, Maine, and Baden-Powell conducted empirical studies of village social structures. These investigations often depicted the Indian village as a closed and isolated system. Sir Charles Metcalfe, for example, described it as a monolithic, atomistic, and unchanging entity. He observed that village communities operated like small republics, possessing most necessities internally and maintaining relative independence from external influences.

During British colonial rule, administrators constructed a particular image of the Indian village, which significantly influenced perceptions of Indian society for decades. However, recent anthropological and sociological research indicates that Indian villages were seldom republics and rarely self-sufficient. Villages maintained connections with broader society through migration, exogamy, mobility, inter-village trade, caste networks, and religious pilgrimages. These relationships historically linked villages to each other and to the wider society. Furthermore, contemporary modernisation has intensified both inter-village and rural-urban interactions.

Despite increasing external connections, the village continues to serve as a core social unit, as noted by Mandelbaum and Orenstein.

Residents share a collective identity and sustain intra-village bonds across familial, caste, and class divisions within social, economic, political, and cultural domains. Village life is characterised by reciprocity, cooperation, dominance, and competition. Nevertheless, not all colonial officials concurred with Metcalfe's perspective, and his view did not become the prevailing image of India.

Colonial discourse portrayed the Indian village as a self-sufficient community with collective land ownership and a coordinated structure of diverse occupational groups. It was regarded as the fundamental unit of Indian civilisation, marked by stagnation, simplicity, and social harmony. Each village was perceived as an insular world: a traditional, economically self-reliant community governed by patriarchal authority and surrounded by hostile villages and oppressive governments.

Nationalist rhetoric also relied on a similar imaginative framework, presenting the village as a symbol of authentic indigenous existence. Although Gandhi did not idealise the declining village under British rule, he praised the perceived simplicity and authenticity of rural life, an image largely shaped by colonial representations. The decline of the village was attributed to colonial dominance; thus, village reconstruction was considered essential for reclaiming lost identity in addition to attaining political independence.

Following independence, villages continued to serve as the fundamental unit of Indian society. Village studies gained particular prominence among sociologists and social anthropologists researching India, resulting in numerous publications on rural social and cultural life, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. These studies contributed to the establishment of sociology and social anthropology as respected academic disciplines in India. Anthropologists typically relied on direct fieldwork, often conducted in a single village, to examine social relationships, institutional structures, beliefs, and values within rural communities. The publication of these works marked a significant phase in Indian social sciences, highlighting the value of fieldwork-based understanding, or the "field view," in contrast to the earlier "book-view" developed by Ideologists and orientalists.

3.3 Indian Village

The village has historically constituted the basic unit of Indian society. For centuries, India has remained predominantly rural, and a substantial proportion of the population continues to reside in villages. Rural

settlements represent not only a demographic reality but also a significant cultural and social institution that shapes Indian civilisation. Despite the growth of industrialisation and urbanisation in recent decades, villages maintain a central role in India's social and economic life. A considerable segment of the population remains dependent on agriculture and rural occupations for their livelihood.

In addition to serving as a key structural feature of Indian society, the village has functioned as an ideological category through which India has frequently been conceptualised. Numerous scholars and thinkers have regarded the village as embodying India's "authentic" social and cultural life. Sociologist Andre B  teille asserts that the village was not merely a place of residence but reflected the fundamental values of Indian civilisation and social organisation.

3.4 Historical of the Indian Village

Indian village as a self-contained, autonomous community was largely constructed during the British colonial period. Colonial administrators and scholars sought to understand rural India to facilitate governance and revenue administration. By promoting the idea of villages as self-governing, stable entities, colonial officials could justify indirect rule and simplify their administrative challenges. This depiction also helped legitimise colonial authority by suggesting that intervention at higher levels was unnecessary. Sir Charles Metcalfe provided one of the most influential accounts, describing Indian villages as "little republics" that possessed all resources necessary for survival and remained largely independent of external influences.

According to this colonial interpretation, the village community was characterised by several key features:

- a self-sufficient economy
- communal ownership of land
- functional interdependence among occupational groups
- stability and continuity over extended periods

Metcalfe contended that, despite frequent changes in political regimes and dynasties, the village community remained relatively stable. This depiction of the village as a timeless, harmonious social unit became widely accepted in colonial discourse. However, later scholars such as D.N. Majumdar and M.N. Srinivas challenged this characterisation by highlighting significant variations among villages and their connections

to larger economic and social systems. These sociologists used empirical studies to argue that the colonial portrayal overlooked the diversity and dynamic nature of village life in India.

However, subsequent sociologists and anthropologists criticised this romanticised perspective. Empirical studies demonstrated that villages were not isolated entities but were closely integrated with broader economic and political structures. For example, M.N. Srinivas's studies of Rampura village in the 1950s highlighted how villagers regularly participated in regional markets and how cash crops and state policies influenced local social and economic life. This evidence showed that outside forces continually shaped rural communities, challenging the colonial notion of complete autonomy.

3.5 Emergence of Village in India

Village studies became a major focus of sociological research in the 1950s and 1960s. Pioneering scholars such as M.N. Srinivas, S.C. Dube, and André Bêteille played foundational roles in this field through their influential village monographs and fieldwork. Their work, including studies of villages like Rampura and Shamirpet, established methodological approaches and provided empirical insights that have shaped our understanding of rural society. Following independence, the need to understand rural society increased in order to facilitate the implementation of development programmes and agrarian reforms.

In the post-independence period, India's rural society underwent significant transformation. The government launched multiple development programmes to restructure villages' economic and social fabric. Among the most notable of these were the Bhoodan Movement, which sought voluntary land donations for redistribution to the landless, and the Green Revolution, which promoted agricultural modernisation through the adoption of new technologies. Other key initiatives included abolishing intermediary systems such as zamindari through land reforms, implementing tenancy reforms, imposing land ceilings, and redistributing surplus land to promote social justice and economic growth in rural areas. The Community Development Programme also played a critical role by improving basic amenities and participatory governance at the village level.

The Community Development Programme, initiated in 1952, aimed to advance rural development by encouraging local community participation. This programme integrated Gandhian principles of village self-governance

with modern agricultural extension approaches influenced by American development models. These initiatives underscored the need to understand the structure and functioning of rural society to formulate and implement effective policies.

As a consequence, social scientists increasingly recognised villages as critical sites for examining processes of social change, development, and modernisation. Village studies were anticipated to yield valuable insights into the social organisation of rural communities and the effects of development policies on village life. Numerous sociologists and social anthropologists undertook intensive fieldwork in villages, concentrating on the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of rural communities. To collect accurate, nuanced data, researchers commonly used methods such as participant observation, in-depth interviews with villagers, group discussions, and structured or semi-structured surveys. These approaches enabled them to document everyday life, understand social relationships, and capture the complexities of village society.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, village studies in India experienced rapid expansion. Both Indian and foreign sociologists and anthropologists conducted extensive field research in rural areas. Several influential village monographs were published during this period, including 'The Remembered Village' by M.N. Srinivas, 'Indian Village' by S.C. Dube, and 'Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village' by André Beteille. These works provided in-depth accounts of village life and became foundational texts for the study of rural India.

3.6 Features of the Indian Village

The Indian villages have identified several common characteristics of rural communities.

Internal Diversity

Villages were not homogeneous entities. They comprised multiple caste groups, including Brahmins, Dalits, and Other Backward Classes, and encompassed a range of occupational categories such as farmers, artisans, weavers, and shopkeepers, as well as various economic classes.

Social Interdependence

Distinct caste groups were interconnected through systems of mutual obligation and service exchange, most notably the Jajmani system. Within this framework, specific services such as pottery, carpentry, or laundry

were provided by designated castes to other villagers, typically in exchange for a portion of agricultural produce or other goods. This arrangement established a network of economic and social interdependence.

Integration with Wider Society

Contrary to earlier assumptions, villages were not isolated communities. They maintained connections with markets, towns, and regional political structures. Over time, the nature and extent of this integration evolved. The development of transportation, communication, and administrative networks further strengthened these links, demonstrating the dynamic and evolving character of rural society.

Corporate Identity

Despite internal divisions, villagers frequently exhibited a strong sense of collective identity and solidarity in their interactions with outsiders. These features indicate that villages functioned as complex social systems rather than as simple, self-sufficient communities. Foundational studies by sociologists such as M.N. Srinivas, S.C. Dube, and André Beteille have significantly advanced the understanding of the intricate social, economic, and political structures of Indian villages. Their research underscores the value of detailed village studies for appreciating the diversity and dynamism inherent in rural India.

3.7 Importance of Village in India

- Indian villages have been significant for multiple reasons. Following World War II and India's independence in 1947, sociologists contributed by offering systematic and reliable accounts of traditional social structures and their transformations, which was a central concern during that period. Additionally, many sociologists collaborating with development agencies conducted studies to construct a comprehensive understanding of village life in India.
- An additional focus of village studies involved the evaluation of rural reconstruction programs. Sociologists, including Lewis, collaborated with the Programme Evaluation Organisation of the Planning Commission to develop systematic methods for assessing these initiatives. Their research identified community needs in areas such as housing, education, health, land consolidation, and the establishment of new Panchayats.

- Sociologists also contributed to economic planning by providing perspectives that extended beyond quantitative data. They examined villages holistically, focusing on interconnected and interdependent cultural practices. This qualitative understanding was essential for interpreting data related to rural life.
- Sociological research provided nuanced insights that differed from the quantitative approaches employed by economists, political scientists, and social workers. Sociologists concentrated on small communities such as villages, engaging in extended fieldwork to understand complex social interactions.
- Villages have demonstrated stability and continuity over time, rendering them valuable sites for observing social processes and issues prevalent throughout India. They have played significant roles in administration and social life, exerting considerable influence on individual behavior.
- Not all sociologists participated in development programs; many regarded their work as strictly professional and refrained from involvement with political groups. Although anthropologists provided detailed, firsthand insights into societies and could anticipate responses to government actions, the discipline lacked a robust theoretical foundation necessary to function as an applied science comparable to economics. In this context, 'applied sciences' are defined as disciplines that employ scientific methods and theoretical knowledge to address practical problems and inform decision-making in real-world situations, such as the application of economics to policy development.

3.8 Theoretical Approaches to Indian village

Theoretical perspectives have shaped village studies in post-colonial India. Early research prioritised holistic descriptions of rural communities. For example, in his pioneering study of Rampura village, M. N. Srinivas examined the intricate relationships between caste, kinship, religion, and economic activities, illustrating how these institutions worked together to sustain village life. Scholars conceptualized villages as integrated social systems, emphasizing the close interconnections among institutions such as caste, kinship, religion, and the economy.

The functional approach represented a significant perspective in village studies. This framework viewed the village as a cohesive unit, with

various caste groups performing complementary roles. The social structure was maintained through systems of interdependence, such as the jajmani system, in which different caste groups provided reciprocal services. The jajmani system refers to a traditional arrangement where landowning or dominant castes (the jajmans) received specialised services from other service-providing castes in exchange for payments in kind or customary dues, reinforcing mutual dependence within the village.

Caste became a central theme within village studies. Researchers considered the village an ideal context for examining the structure and functioning of the caste system. Consequently, many studies focused on caste hierarchy, ritual status, and relationships among different caste groups. The functional perspective by incorporating additional analytical frameworks. For instance, Andre Beteille's work "Caste, Class and Power" applied Weberian concepts of status and power to analyse social stratification in rural society. This approach demonstrated that caste alone was insufficient to explain rural inequality, highlighting the significance of class and power relations. Other influential contributions include S.C. Dube's study of Shamirpet, which explored the dynamics of tradition and change in rural communities, and Oscar Lewis's research on Rampur, which highlighted issues of poverty and the impact of external forces on village societies. These foundational works provide broader perspectives and guide students toward further reading in the field.

Social Structure of the Village

Village studies have focused extensively on the social structure of rural communities, with particular emphasis on caste, class, and gender relations.

Caste System in Villages

Caste has been regarded as the primary organizing principle of village society. Villagers are divided into hierarchical caste groups, each associated with specific occupations and ritual status. For instance, in the hypothetical village of Rampur, Brahmins perform religious duties, while the Kurmi and Yadav castes are primarily engaged in agriculture. Artisans such as the Kumhar (potters) and Lohar (blacksmiths) occupy distinct positions in the local hierarchy, and Dalit communities often undertake tasks considered impure by higher castes. These examples demonstrate how caste divisions structure daily life and social interactions within villages.

The caste system has traditionally been conceptualized through the varna hierarchy, which divides society into five major categories. Varna denotes broad social categories, such as Brahmins or Shudras, found throughout India. In contrast, jati refers to more localized and specific endogamous groups defined by occupation, custom, and region. While varna provides a generalized framework, jatis function as the practical social units that organize daily life in villages.

- Brahmins
- Kshatriyas
- Vaishyas
- Shudras
- Untouchables (Dalits)

However, village studies have demonstrated that actual caste relations are significantly more complex than the idealized varna model suggests. Within villages, numerous jati groups contest their relative status. For instance, in some regions, the Yadav and Kurmi jatis have both claimed to be superior cultivators and have sought greater recognition from higher castes and local authorities. These groups frequently compete for control over village resources, including access to fertile land, water, and positions in the local panchayat. Disputes often arise during festivals or ceremonies, where jatis compete for the right to perform specific rituals, reflecting ongoing negotiations of prestige and power within village society.

The Indian Context of Rural Sociology

Following India's independence, rural sociology gained prominence, especially in relation to agrarian societies. Although research on caste, kinship, and village communities was well established in Indian sociology, agrarian relations were comparatively underexplored. Scholars such as D.N. Majumdar, who focused on village community studies and rural life, N.K. Bose, who examined the dynamics of caste and rural development, S.C. Dubey, known for his research on Indian village structure and modernisation, and M.N. Srinivas, who pioneered work on social stratification and the concept of 'dominant caste', contributed to the field. However, André Beteille's 1974 publication, *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*, with its systematic analysis of class, status, and power in rural India, conferred professional recognition on agrarian sociology.

The emergence of village studies introduced peasant studies to India. Village studies refer to systematic, in-depth investigations of individual

villages, often using fieldwork to understand their unique social, economic, and cultural characteristics. These studies typically mapped the organisation of village life, examining patterns of kinship, caste interactions, land ownership, and forms of local governance. The book *Village India*, edited by Marriott under the supervision of Robert Redfield, highlighted the significance of both small and large communities. This approach shifted scholarly attention from agriculture and land to social institutions, including kinship, religion, and caste hierarchy.

Rural society has served as the foundation of human life since ancient times, functioning as the cornerstone of development and the primary unit of social structure. In contrast, cities are relatively recent, while villages have persisted for centuries. This historical continuity underscores the particular significance of rural sociology in the Indian context. The enduring features of rural life, such as caste dynamics, landholding patterns, and kinship networks, continue to shape contemporary rural challenges, including persistent social inequalities, access to resources, and the implementation of rural development policies. Understanding this historical context enables a deeper analysis of present-day issues like rural poverty, migration, and the impact of modernisation initiatives.

S.C. Dubey asserts that the village has consistently served as a fundamental unit in organising Indian social life. India's distinctive transformation, which juxtaposes traditional and modern cultural elements, necessitates a systematic examination of rural organisation, structure, function, and evolution. For example, while joint family systems and caste-based occupations remain enduring in many villages, there is a growing shift toward nuclear families and new economic roles driven by education and migration. Features like traditional panchayats now often coexist with formal local governance institutions. Furthermore, the growing impact of industrialisation and urbanisation makes studying villages as basic units essential for rural development and democratic decentralisation.

In contemporary India, rural sociology has emerged as a dynamic social science, attaining considerable significance and urgency. The field's urgency is underscored by contemporary issues such as rural-urban migration, which has far-reaching social and economic consequences for both sending and receiving communities. Additionally, ongoing policy reforms in sectors like agriculture and social welfare require a nuanced understanding of rural social structures to ensure effective design and

implementation. These real-world challenges highlight the necessity for rigorous rural sociological research to inform policy decisions and promote equitable rural development.

3.9 Myth and Reality of the Indian Village

Indian villages have often been characterised as the fundamental units of Indian society and as self-contained communities with strong social bonds. However, sociological research indicates that this traditional portrayal does not fully capture the complexities of village life. The prevailing myth depicts Indian villages as peaceful, self-sufficient, homogeneous, traditional, and unchanging communities. In contrast, Indian villages are diverse, marked by inequality, and constantly changing. For example, in a typical village in Uttar Pradesh, upper-caste families may own most of the agricultural land. At the same time, members of Scheduled Castes work as landless labourers, often living in separate hamlets and facing social barriers. Some villagers may practice different religions or follow local customs, creating a mosaic of identities and experiences. Villagers belong to various castes, classes, religions, and occupational groups, and these distinctions significantly shape their social relationships and access to resources.

A significant myth is the notion of the Indian village as self-sufficient. While villages have historically relied on agriculture and local production, contemporary villages are increasingly integrated with towns and cities. Residents frequently travel for employment, education, healthcare, and business. Migration has further established robust economic and social linkages between villages and urban centres. For instance, a 2022 national survey by the Ministry of Rural Development found that nearly 35% of rural households reported having at least one family member living or working in an urban area. Sociologist A.R. Desai also documented that rural-urban migration is a major factor reshaping village life, as remittances and urban influences penetrate rural communities. Consequently, the village cannot be regarded as an isolated community.

Another common misconception is that the village is a harmonious, conflict-free society. In practice, caste, class, land ownership, economic status, and political interests generate significant inequalities and conflicts. For example, conflicts over land can arise when landless labourers try to access common village resources, sometimes leading to disputes with powerful landowning families who assert control. Tensions may also develop between different caste groups during local elections or festivals,

revealing underlying divisions. The caste system has historically shaped occupation, social interaction, and status. Land-owning groups often possess greater economic and political influence than landless labourers. Thus, rural society encompasses both cooperation and conflict.

Villages are frequently perceived as homogeneous, yet Indian villages comprise individuals from diverse social groups. Multiple caste groups, religious communities, economic classes, and occupational categories often coexist within a single village. Their experiences and social positions can differ substantially. Therefore, the assumption that all villagers share identical interests and lifestyles is an oversimplification.

A further prevalent myth is that village society remains traditional and unchanging. In reality, Indian villages have changed significantly because of education, urbanisation, industrialisation, migration, mass media, technology, government welfare programs, and democratic politics. For instance, the widespread adoption of digital payment platforms and mobile internet in recent years has increased access to financial services and information in rural areas, changing how villagers conduct business and communicate. Advances in education and employment have created new opportunities for younger generations, while modern communication has connected rural populations with broader society.

Myth of the Self-Sufficient Village

The perception that Indian villages are self-sufficient and economically independent persists widely. Historically, villages relied primarily on agriculture and local trades. However, contemporary rural communities increasingly depend on towns and cities for employment, education, healthcare, markets, and other essential services. For example, a 2017 study by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) found that over 30 percent of rural households had at least one member working in urban areas. Dependence on urban markets for agricultural produce and essential goods has also grown steadily in recent decades.

Myth of the Harmonious Village

Villages are often depicted as peaceful and free from conflict. In reality, caste divisions, land ownership patterns, economic disparities, and political interests frequently generate social tensions. Disputes over access to water sources or land boundaries, for example, can escalate into conflicts between families or caste groups. Consequently, rural society is characterized by both cooperation and conflict.

Myth of the Homogeneous Village

The belief that all villagers share similar social and economic conditions is also a misconception. Villages consist of diverse castes, classes, religions, occupations, and status groups, each influencing social relationships and access to resources.

Caste and Social Inequality

Caste has historically played a central role in Indian village society, shaping marriage patterns, social interactions, occupations, and status. Distinctions among landowners, tenants, and laborers further contribute to economic inequality. Conflict theory offers a framework for understanding how caste and economic divisions generate and perpetuate unequal power structures and social stratification in rural communities. Functionalism offers an alternative perspective by emphasising how caste and economic divisions contribute to the stability and organisation of village societies, even as they produce inequalities. Symbolic interactionism, in contrast, focuses on how everyday interactions and the social meanings attached to caste identities influence relationships and behaviours in rural settings.

Myth of the Unchanging Village

Villages are frequently perceived as traditional and unchanging. In reality, rural communities have undergone significant transformation due to education, urbanisation, industrialisation, migration, technology, mass media, and government programs. Indian villages also maintain close connections with towns and cities, facilitated by migration, transportation, communication, market exchanges, and employment opportunities. Many villagers pursue work or educational opportunities outside the village while maintaining close family ties.

Democratic Politics

Panchayati Raj institutions, elections, and local leadership have significantly transformed village power structures. A broader range of social groups now participate actively in local political processes.

Changing Family and Kinship

Traditional joint family and kinship structures persist in many villages, yet these arrangements are evolving in response to education, migration, employment, and urban influences. Nuclear families and alternative household forms are becoming increasingly prevalent.

Tradition and Modernity

Indian villages embody both tradition and modernity. Although caste, kinship, and community ties persist, modern education, technology, political participation, and emerging occupations are actively reshaping rural life.

3.10 M.N. Srinivas and S.C. Dube's Perspective on Indian Village

The village community of Shamirpet demonstrated several factors contributing to status differentiation, as outlined by S.C. Dube. These factors include religion, caste, landownership, wealth, positions within government service and village institutions, age, and distinctive personality traits. Achieving higher ritual status was a complex process that required negotiation with local authority structures. Furthermore, Dube noted that caste panchayats among lower castes operated as unions to secure employment and enhance their bargaining power with dominant land-owning castes.

While both Dube and Srinivas emphasised the importance of caste and local authority in shaping social hierarchy, Dube focused on the structural aspects and collective strategies used by marginalised groups. In contrast, Srinivas highlighted the everyday interactions and changing nature of status based on ritual recognition and social mobility.

Srinivas observed that women's social roles were largely restricted to the household and kin-related groups, while men participated in a wider range of social activities. Dube reported that women in a Telangana village were secluded from public affairs and expected to walk with their eyes lowered as a sign of respectability. Patriarchal laws were clearly defined, and gender served as the primary basis for the division of labour within the village. The roles associated with masculinity and femininity were distinctly separated. However, the degree of gender segregation and the strictness of these roles may vary by region and caste. For example, in some regions of South India and among certain agrarian or artisan castes, women may participate in agricultural labour or market activities. Similarly, communities that practice matrilineal kinship, such as certain groups in Kerala and the Northeast, display different patterns of gender relations. These variations highlight the need to consider regional and caste-based differences when analysing gender roles in rural India.

Srinivas noted that the two occupational groups were both distinct and perceived as unequal. Men exercised authority over the domestic

economy, including making annual grain payments at harvest to artisan and service caste members who had provided labor. The dominant male viewpoint regarded women as incapable of understanding activities beyond the household.

3.11 Determinants of Rural Social Formation

Rural sociologists contend that rural social life emerges from the interaction of several key factors. These elements have shaped village social formation. Caste, clan, kinship, polity, and economy have all been influenced by conditions specific to village habitation.

Rural Social Structure in India

India possesses an ancient civilisation dating back to the Indus Valley civilisation, which flourished during the third millennium B.C. Since then, except for a brief period during the Rigvedic era (circa 1500-1000 B.C.) when urban centres declined, rural and urban settlements have coexisted. Populations have predominantly lived in settled villages, and researchers have documented the primary settlement patterns in rural areas.

The nucleated village is the most prevalent settlement type across India. It comprises a dense cluster of houses surrounded by villagers' fields. Some villages also include outlying or multiple satellite hamlets.

In some regions, linear settlements are found, where houses are arranged in a line, each with its own compound. Physical boundaries between villages in these areas are often indistinct.

A third settlement type consists of scattered homesteads or small clusters of two or three houses, with unclear physical boundaries between villages. These settlements are typical of hill regions, including the Himalayan foothills, the highlands of Gujarat, and the Satpura range in Maharashtra.

Rural life is defined by a direct relationship between people and the natural environment, including land, animals, and plants. Agriculture serves as the primary occupation. Enduring rural social institutions in India such as family, kinship, caste, class, and village have persisted across millennia of social, economic, political, and cultural development.

3.12 Village and Economic System

The perception of economic self-sufficiency in pre-British Indian villages stemmed from the Jajmani system, grain-based payments, and

limited communication that restricted the movement of goods. Weekly markets in neighbouring villages showed reliance on towns for items not available locally, such as silver and gold, which were essential for weddings. These markets fulfilled economic, political, recreational, and social functions. Additionally, not all artisan and service castes resided within a village, especially in smaller settlements.

However, the Jajmani system has been criticised for perpetuating hereditary occupations and reinforcing rigid social hierarchies based on caste. Critics argue that its emphasis on inherited roles hindered economic mobility for lower castes and often led dominant landholding castes to exploit service and artisan castes. The system's reliance on patron-client relationships also contributed to social inequality and could limit the bargaining power of those in subordinate positions. Over time, the decline of traditional occupations, changes in the rural economy, and the influence of modern institutions have further exposed the limitations of the Jajmani system.

The prevalence of smaller settlements was likely high during the pre-British period, as large-scale irrigation projects were implemented only during British rule. Irrigation facilitated support for larger populations within specific areas. Villagers have consistently relied on neighboring villages, while urban populations have depended on village produce for essential needs such as food grains, raw materials for processed foods, and handicrafts.

Colonial expansion integrated Indian villages into the global market for products such as jute and cotton. The emergence of new economic opportunities in the twentieth century, particularly after the First World War, along with industrialisation and urbanisation, further incorporated villages into the broader economic system.

M.S.A. Rao identified three forms of urban impact on Indian villages. First, some villages have a significant proportion of residents employed in Indian cities or overseas. These individuals regularly remit money to their families in the village, using their earnings to build modern houses, invest in land and industry, and help establish educational institutions. These activities enhance the social prestige of their families, resulting in urban influence even in villages geographically distant from urban centres. Recent data from the Reserve Bank of India indicates that personal remittances to rural areas reached a record high in 2022, with states such as Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar being prominent recipients. For example, in Kerala's

Malappuram district, substantial remittance inflows from the Gulf region have significantly shaped the local economy, leading to visible changes such as more modern housing and investments in education and infrastructure. These contemporary examples underscore the ongoing significance of remittance economies in shaping rural social and economic structures.

The second form of urban impact occurs in villages located near industrial towns, which experience an influx of migrant workers, increasing demand for housing and stimulating local markets. The third type involves the expansion of metropolitan cities, which absorb peripheral villages. Many such villages lose land to urban development, and residents who receive cash compensation may invest in distant land, engage in commerce, or spend the money without long-term benefit. These villagers often seek urban employment. Villages on the urban fringe, whose land has not been fully acquired, may pursue market gardening, dairy farming, and poultry keeping.

Indian villages were not economically self-sufficient even during British rule. Industrialisation and urbanisation, initiated under British administration and accelerated after independence, have integrated villages into a broader economic network. Planned rural development has further transformed the rural economy.

3.13 Village caste and Kinship System

Village society is characterised by vertical interdependence among castes, as exemplified by the Jajmani system. These vertical relationships are intersected by horizontal ties of caste and kinship, which extend beyond the village to other villages and towns. Relatives often live in different villages, requiring interaction for births, marriages, and deaths and providing mutual support in times of need. In North India, village exogamy coexists with caste endogamy, requiring individuals to seek marriage partners outside their village but within their caste. In South India, where village exogamy is less common and marriages between a woman and her mother's brother or his daughter are preferred, individuals may still look outside the village for marriage partners. Since caste endogamy prevails, kin typically belong to the same caste. Inter-caste relations and related matters are regulated by caste panchayats composed of members from different villages. In pre-British India, the horizontal expansion of caste ties was constrained by the political boundaries of small kingdoms and inadequate infrastructure. The unification of the country under British rule, along with improved roads,

railways, affordable postage, and printing, facilitated the rapid spread of intra-caste relations by making regular communication easier.

Since independence, land reforms, the abolition of untouchability, increased educational opportunities, and rural migration have led to significant changes in caste and kinship patterns. Formal legal challenges to caste-based discrimination and the expansion of state welfare schemes have gradually reduced the rigidity of traditional hierarchies in many villages. The spread of mass media and communications, along with employment-linked migration, has fostered wider kinship networks and sometimes created more fluid notions of caste identity, especially among younger generations. Inter-caste marriages, though still uncommon in many areas, are becoming more visible, and urban influences have begun to shape expectations regarding kinship and marriage. Nonetheless, caste and kinship ties remain important for social organisation, support, and identity in most rural communities.

3.14 Let Us Sum up

The Indian village attends as a significant social institution and represents a traditional unit within rural society. The characteristics of village communities can be analyzed through social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions. Historically, villages have been defined by close social relationships, communal life, agriculture-based occupations, family and kinship networks, caste-based social structures, and shared customs and traditions. Although villages have often been perceived as self-sufficient and harmonious communities, this perception is largely a myth. In practice, Indian villages have experienced caste-based inequalities, economic disparities, gender-based discrimination, land disputes, and various social divisions. Furthermore, villages have undergone substantial transformation due to factors such as education, urbanization, migration, technological advancements, government initiatives, improved transportation and communication, and increased democratic participation. Consequently, the Indian village is neither entirely traditional nor completely isolated; rather, it is a dynamic social community where traditional practices and modern influences intersect.

3.15 Keywords

Village Community, Agrarian Society. Caste and Social Stratification. Myth and Reality and Rural Social Change

3.16 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Define the concept of a village community.
2. Describe the characteristics and nature of the Indian village community.
3. Identify and discuss the major myths associated with the Indian village.
4. Analyze the contrast between the myths and realities of the Indian village.
5. Examine the significant changes currently occurring in Indian villages.

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UNIT – IV

Kinship and Family in India

Structure

- 4.1 Learning Objectives
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- 4.3 Kinship System
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- 4.15 Types of the Family
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- 4.18 Keywords
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4.1 Learning Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the nature and defining characteristics of family and kinship within Indian society.
- Examine the structural characteristics and evolving patterns of nuclear and joint families.
- Analyse the debate between nuclear and joint family systems in the context of social change and modernisation.

4.2 Introduction

Kinship, family, and marriage are core concepts in anthropology that shape social organisation, identities, and relationships across various cultures. These institutions determine how people interact, organise their daily lives, and pass down traditions, property, and responsibilities. Kinship extends beyond biological connections to include social relationships that define obligations, rights, and social status. Anthropologists examine different kinship systems- such as lineage, clan, and descent groups- to understand how societies understand relatedness. Terms like consanguinity (blood relations) and affinity (marriage relations) are used to differentiate types of kinship.

Family, often seen as the fundamental unit of society, takes various forms. While nuclear families comprising parents and children are prevalent in many cultures, extended, joint, and other household arrangements are shaped by cultural and economic influences. Families are essential for socialisation, financial cooperation, and emotional wellbeing.

Marriage, as a socially recognised union, varies greatly in its forms and roles. Different practices like monogamy, polygamy (including polygyny and polyandry), showcase cultural diversity. Marriage can fulfil economic, political, and social objectives, such as forming alliances, regulating inheritance, and ensuring social reproduction. The rules surrounding exogamy, endogamy, arranged or love marriages mirror cultural values and social organisation. This unit will examine kinship, family, and marriage across various cultures, offering a thorough understanding of their types, functions, and changes in modern society.

4.3 Kinship System

Kinship represents “the most universal and basic of all human relationships that are based on ties of blood, marriage, or adoption”. Families, in fact, are part of what is more broadly considered to be kinship systems. Thus, “A kinship system is the pattern of relationships that defines people’s family relationships to one another”. Kinship systems vary enormously across marriage, but they comprise both. Kinship, like family, is one of the most universal social institutions. It is ubiquitous and, in most societies, plays a significant role in the socialisation of individuals and the maintenance of group solidarity. It is supremely important in primitive societies and extends its influence on almost all of their social, economic, political, religious, etc.

4.4 Definition of Kinship

Kinship is the system of mutual relations between persons related by reproduction and actual lineage. They are related to each other by kinship; that is, persons connected by marriage or blood relations form a kinship system. From the biological point of view, the word 'kinship' refers to relatives tied by heredity. Rivers has tried to explain kinship in this way: legally and socially recognised material relations are called relatives, and relatives based on blood relations are called consanguineous relatives. Robin Fox has used the word kinship in this sense. The following are the main definitions of kinship:

Robin Fox: "The most general definition of kinship is that kinship is only kin, i.e., it is a relationship between people with real, reputational or imaginary ties."

Dr S.C.Dubey: "In human society, family members are related to each other based on birth or marriage, and they come very close to each other in terms of behaviour. Due to this process, some types of social relations are created. The practice employing this specific, well-organised series of relationships is called kinship."

Majumdar and Madan: "Members of all societies remain bound to each other in the form of many groups based on various types of relationships. Among these relationships, the most universal and most basic are the ones based on reproduction. These relationships based on the innate human drive to reproduce are called kinship. "

A.R. Radcliffe-Brown: Kinship is "a system of dynamic relations between person and person in a community, the behaviour of any two persons in any of these relations being regulated in some way, and to a greater or lesser extent by social usage".

Murdock: Kinship is "a structural system of relationships in which individuals are bound to one another by complex interlocking and ramifying ties".

4.5 Nature of Kinship system

The kinship system, which represents a social system, reveals to us some of the nature which may be noted below:

- Kinship systems appear to be a universal feature of all social organisations or societies, both primitive and modern.

- Kinship systems establish relationships between individuals and groups on the model of biological relations between parents and children, between siblings, and between marital partners.
- The kinship group is an important group for an individual apart from his immediate family. Because in times of crises and emergencies, he can rely on it for help and co-operation.
- The kinship groups, which include the consanguineal kin members, are all related by blood, and this bond unites the members, especially in times of need. The presence of all types of kinship relatives is found to be necessary, especially in tribal and simple societies, to help the family in performing its functions.
- The kinship members who are related as a result of marriage are treated as one's kinship members. The two groups are considered to be merged into one, resulting in increased social solidarity, and both groups would provide mutual aid and security to their members.
- Blood relatives, that is, consanguineal relatives, have greater importance since a person feels much closer to them than those who are related by marriage.
- Different kinships have different responsibilities to carry out on different occasions in the family depending upon the importance of the status and roles of these kinships.

4.6 Types of Kinship

Kinship implies a kind of socio-biological bond that brings people together and welds them into a unity. Two types of kinship bonds are universally recognised. According to Duncan Mitchell, "when we use the term kinship, we are referring to people who are related by consanguinity and affinity". Hence, relatives, which also include Hindu relatives, can be broadly divided into two categories: (i) one is the "consanguineal Kinship group" and (ii) the other is the "affinal kinship group".

Consanguineal kinship: Consanguineal kinship depends on consanguinity. A consanguine is a relative who is born into the family, as well as one who is adopted into the family concerned. This bond of blood is called consanguineal kinship. The relatives linked by blood are called consanguineal kin. The relatives linked by blood or common ancestry are known as consanguineal kin. For example, father, mother, son, and daughter are consanguineal kin who share a common ancestry

and descent. Blood is not the only determining factor, but what is more significant is the social recognition of such a blood bond. For example, the adopted child is also recognised as a real son. He shares the surname of his so-called “father,” who has adopted him, and also shares descent. Blood ties are traced through descent. The consanguineal types of kinship are based on blood ties that trace descent through the mother, father, or both.

Meaning of Descent : “Descent” refers to the social recognition of the biological relationship that exists between the individuals. The rules of descent refer to a set of principles by which an individual traces his descent. There are three basic rules of descent: patrilineal descent, matrilineal descent and bilateral descent.

- (i) **Patrilineal Descent:** According to this rule, descent is traced through the father’s line or male line. Hence, the descent is restricted to males, and only descendants of a common ancestor in the male line will be recognised as kinship. These are known as agnatic or patrilineal kinship.
- (ii) **Matrilineal Descent:** Here the descent of the individual is traced through the mother or female line exclusively. The descendants are called uterine or matrilineal kinship.
- (iii) **Bilateral Descent:** This is a rule in which the descent is traced through both lines, the female line and also the male line for one or the other purpose.

Affinal Kinship: Kinship ties based on marital bond, adoption or other connections are known as affinal ties. The relatives linked in such a manner are known as “affinal kinship”. Not only are the husband and wife related by marriage, but also the families of both become related. Other relatives by marriage have not yet established a relationship between two men and women, but also many other people related to these two become related to each other. For example, after marriage, a man not only becomes husband but also becomes a brother-in-law, son-in-law, uncle, etc. similarly, after marriage a woman, apart from becoming a wife, also becomes daughter-in-law, aunt, maternal aunt, etc. the basis of each of these relationships are two people, like brother-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, sister-in-law husband-wife, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, etc. in this way, all the relatives or kinship related by marriage are called affinal kinship.

Categories of Kinship

Based on contact and closeness, different types of relatives can be divided into many categories. Mainly, relatives are divided into the following three categories: (i) primary kinship, (ii) secondary kinship and (iii) tertiary kinship.

- (i) **Primary Kinship:** kinship with some people based on matrimonial and blood relations is direct, close and in contact, like husband-wife, father-son, brother-sister, etc. These are called primary relatives. According to Dubey, primary relatives include husband-wife, father-son, mother-son, younger-elder brother, younger-elder sister and brother-sister; these are the people intertwined in a series of eight types of relationship.
- (ii) **Secondary Kinship:** on the contrary, secondary relatives are those relatives who are the above-mentioned 'primary kinship of primary relatives', i.e. they are related through primary relatives. We do not have direct kinship with this second class of relatives, but they do have direct kinship with our direct or primary class of relatives. For example, I have a direct relationship with my sister; that is, my sister is a primary relative. This sister also has a direct or primary relationship with her husband, but I do not have a direct relationship with that sister's husband; my relationship with him is through my sister. Thus, the sister's husband is a primary relative. Similarly, the wife's brother is also a secondary relative.
- (iii) **Tertiary Kinship:** Tertiary relatives are those who are our secondary relatives. For example, a person's Salahaj becomes a tertiary relative because this person's wife's brother becomes that person's secondary relative, and the wife of this secondary relative and the wife of this secondary relative's brother-in-law become his brother-in-law's primary relatives. In these ways, the wife of a person's brother-in-law, being a secondary relative of that person, will be called a tertiary relative.

4.7 Regional variations in kinship system in India

In Irwati Karve's book 'Kinship Organisation in India', the kinship system is studied at the all-India level. These studies are related to northern, central, southern and eastern regions. Karve found in his study that the kinship system takes different forms in these areas. He explained this based on the inter-relationship between geographical areas, language

regions, and kinship patterns. In some areas, there is a patrilineal tradition, and in others, a matrilineal tradition. Similarly, differences are also found in kinship terminology. There are also differences across areas in terms of marriage rules. Taking this analysis as the basis, the main differences related to kinship can be stated as follows.

(i) **Differences regarding kinship groups:** Mostly patriarchal families are found in the northern region. These families are also patrilineal and patrilocal. The number of monogamous exogamous groups is almost negligible, whereas in the southern region, patriarchal, patrilineal, patrilocal families predominate but are not universal. There is also part of this region in which communities reside that are matrilineal and matrilocal. Similarly, monogamous exogamous clans are prevalent in the southern region. There is a tradition of patrilineal gotras in patrilineal clans and matrilineal clans in matrilineal clans.

(ii) **Differences related to marriage rules:** regarding the rules of marriage, they are also clearly found in the North and South regions. Sapinda marriage is prohibited in the northern region. Thus, marriage between siblings (i.e., cousins) is not permitted. Marriage through daughter exchange is also not done in this area. Outside marriage is generally prevalent in villages. It is also not done in this area. Outside marriage is generally prevalent in villages. It is also preferred that marriages should mostly be done between familiar families; that is, marriages between such families keep repeating.

Sapinda marriage prohibition is not applicable in the southern region. There, uncle-niece marriage is in the category of preference. Similarly, marriage between cousins and sisters is also considered good. Two families can also marry each other through daughter exchange. In the south, marriage between unfamiliar families is more prevalent. There is no objection to marrying within the same village.

(iii) **Differences in succession rules:** the rule of succession in the northern region is linear. Being patrilineal, inheritance goes from father to the eldest son and from son to his eldest son in the same manner. On the other hand, in the southern region there are both patrilineal communities and matrilineal communities. Therefore, the rules of succession are also different in these kinship systems. In patrilineal kinship groups, succession follows the order of generation, but in matrilineal groups, succession follows chronology; that is, among

the suitable heirs, the older one will inherit, such as from a man to his younger brother or sister. The son, whichever is older, will inherit. Similarly, even in matrilineal families, inheritance is usually given to the male only. The only difference is that instead of a man going to his son, it will go to either his younger brother or his sister's son, whichever is older of the two.

- (iv) **Differences related to kinship behaviour:** in the northern region, there are differences in behaviour towards daughter and daughter-in-law. Similarly, there is a ban on eating at the son's in-laws' house or receiving any gift from them. Generally, parents do not go to the daughter's husband's house, and the daughter and daughter-in-law are in the southern region. There is only one code of conduct. There is no restriction on the daughter's parents visiting her in-laws' house, eating, or taking anything.
- (v) **Difference in Kinship terminology:** in the northern region, there are different terms for blood relatives and marriage relatives. Similarly, the terminology of kinship is also different based on generation. The address used for one generation cannot be used for relatives of another generation. In the southern region, the same word is used for blood relatives and marriage relatives. Similarly, there is terminology based on age order. For example, if we want to know the kinship terminology of a person, then keeping him at the centre, we will have to divide his relatives into two parts: one is those who are older than him in age, and the other is those who are younger than him in age. There will be one word to express relatives older in age and another for those younger in age, without caring whether they are older or younger in generation. Thus, we see that there is no single pan Indian pattern of kinship system; it takes different forms in different regions.

4.9 Social Functions of Kinship System

The kinship system has played an important role in Indian society. The details of its contribution to the social system are as follows.

- (i) **Determination of rules of social behaviour:** The kinship system talks about the groups of a person among whom he spends a significant part of his life. The kinship system determines the norms of behaviour among them. There are three specific occasions in social life on which such behavioural patterns are particularly active: (i) Rituals related to the life cycle, such as birth, beginning of education,

marriage, business beginning, death, etc. (ii) While determining inheritance; and (iii) On special occasions in farming or business.

- (ii) **Regulation of social behaviour:** The kinship group plays an important role in controlling the behaviour of an individual. The role of a particular relative on a particular occasion is closely watched by other relatives, and he is praised and criticised. Therefore, the person feels obliged to behave in the same manner as is expected of him. Generally, every person worries about what the world will say about his behaviour and by the world he mostly means his own kinship group. In this way, the kinship system helps keep social behaviours in line with the society's ideals.
- (iii) **To maintain socio-cultural continuity:** People associated with the kinship system feel close to each other. Therefore, they take care that society's behaviour, ideals, and cultural values are transmitted from one generation to the next; probably with this very purpose in mind, society has especially linked kinship to two important events in a person's life: marriage and inheritance. Shyamlal Sharma has rightly written that "the role of brotherhood is extremely important in maintaining socio-cultural continuity."
- (iv) **Providing social support and security:** the kinship system serves as social support on special occasions in life; for example, in some cases in the northern region, rice has to be given to the maternal uncle at the time of a girl's marriage. This provides some help at that time. Similarly, the kinship system provides security against life risks, such as old age, accidents, illness, and unemployment. If a child is left orphaned, then in Indian society the first thing that will be expected is for his relatives to take care of him, and generally people do this.
- (v) **Protection of the individual from feeling of isolation:** If seen from the point of view of the individual's security, it can be said that the kinship system does not allow the feeling of loneliness or isolation to arise in the mind of the individual. This arrangement widens the circle of his own 'kin'. He feels powerful and takes pride in his relatives because much of his identity is tied to their social standing.

4.10 Kinship in Modern India

Kinship plays an important role in most Indian societies. Examples of kinship are often seen in Indian societies during times of crisis. When

someone's relative dies, his relatives, men and women, rush to sympathise and support the family. Similarly, when someone's relative migrates to another state or abroad, the person's relatives attend the relative's wedding and various religious ceremonies. If a relative is unemployed, his other relatives help him in every possible way in getting employment. In such a situation, relatives consider it their duty to arrange accommodation and food at their place. Even in matters of marriage, relatives often mediate marriage proposals. Similarly, when a marriage takes place in a family, its relatives present many gifts to the bride and groom. In most Indian societies, good kinship relations are evident in social and cultural life. In human societies, the importance or role of kinship is greater than that of caste, class, group and neighbourhood.

4.11 Family

The family has remained a vital institution and a primary social group in India. Typically, the term 'family' refers to a group comprising parents and children, but it may also encompass relatives and their dependents forming a single household. Members usually share a common residence and possess reciprocal rights and duties toward one another. In the Indian context, two primary types of families are prevalent: the nuclear family and the joint family. The nuclear family is commonly defined as 'a small group composed of a man, his wife, and their unmarried children.' In contrast, a joint family includes parents, children, and other members related by blood or marriage, such as siblings of the parents and their families. The term 'extended family' is sometimes used interchangeably with 'joint family.' The joint family system constitutes a foundational social institution in India. In recent years, family structures in India have begun to evolve, with more families shifting from joint to nuclear arrangements, especially in urban areas. Changes in economic conditions, work migration, and the influence of modern values have contributed to new patterns in family life.

Meaning and Definition of family

The term 'family' is derived from the Latin word 'famulus,' meaning servant. In Roman law, it referred to a group that included producers, enslaved individuals, and other servants, as well as those connected by common descent or marriage. Historically, the family comprised a man and woman, their children, and servants. The following definitions further clarify the concept of family:

M.F. Nimkoff says that “Family is a more or less durable association of husband and wife with or without child, or of a man or woman alone, with children”.

Burgess and Locke say that “Family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, creating a common culture”.

Eliot and Merrill: Family is “The biological social unit composed of husband, wife and children”. MacIver says that Family is “a group defined by sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children”.

4.12 Characteristics of the Family

The acclaimed Greek philosopher Aristotle famously argued that humans are naturally social creatures and cannot thrive in isolation. The idea of a person living entirely alone is unimaginable. Every day, individuals engage in various social roles, often starting within the framework of a family unit. Among all social groups, the family holds particular significance as the fundamental unit. Throughout history, no society, ancient or contemporary, has functioned without a family structure. MacIver and Page have delineated the fundamental traits of the family as follows:

A Mating Relationship: A family’s foundation is establishing a mating bond. When a male and a female enter into a sexual relationship, the family unit is formally constituted; this bond, called a mating relationship, is essential to family formation. The duration of this bond may be temporary or permanent, and its dissolution typically signifies the breakdown of the family unit.

A Form of Marriage: The institution of marriage is another essential aspect that defines a family, as it formalizes the mating relationship. Marriage can take various forms, including monogamy, polygamy, group marriage, and other variations. Each family adheres to one of these forms. Marriage serves as a societal mechanism for regulating sexual conduct between individuals, making it vital for the establishment and maintenance of families.

Some Rules of Mate Selection: Households observe specific customs or protocols in establishing marriage, which is central to family dynamics.

Mate selection may be determined by parental authority or individual choice and typically follows rules of endogamy or exogamy. A suitable living space is also essential for family activities such as childbearing and upbringing, necessitating a shared residence for nurturing future generations.

A System of Nomenclature: Each family is associated with a specific name, serving as a unique identifier. Naming practices are customary, with new members adopting the family name. Families may determine lineage through the male line (patrilineal), the female line (matrilineal), or both (bilineal). In Indian Hindu culture, the “Namkaran” ceremony is significant as it socially acknowledges the name given to a newborn.

An Economic Provision: Each household must establish an economic system to meet the diverse needs of its members, with financial obligations as a priority. Traditionally, the head of the household provides for the family by earning income and fulfilling familial needs.

A Common Habitation: Every family requires a shared dwelling to support the upbringing of children and the nurturing of all members. Various norms determine the formation of such residences. After marriage, a woman may reside in her husband’s parental home (patrilocal residence), return to her own parental home (matrilocal residence), or both partners may establish a new household (neolocal residence).

4.13 Distinctive Features of the Family

Universality: The family is a pervasive institution present in all human societies. Malinowski observes that the traditional family unit, comprising parents and children, is found in societies ranging from the most basic to the most advanced civilisations. This widespread presence is attributed to fundamental human needs, including reproduction, sexual companionship, and economic cooperation. Regardless of societal complexity, the family serves as the cornerstone of social organisation. As MacIver states, “It transcends cultural boundaries, appearing universally across various stages of societal evolution, and even exists among numerous animal species.” Thus, every individual belongs to a familial unit in some capacity.

Emotional Basis: The foundation of the family is rooted in human emotions and instincts, including partnership, childbirth, nurturing, and the bonds between parents and children. These emotional connections underpin familial relationships, fostering bonds characterized by love, sacrifice, and mutual support. Emotions such as care, empathy, collaboration, and

companionship are central to the functioning and cohesion of the family unit.

Limited Size: The family, recognised as the fundamental nucleus of society, functions as a compact social unit. It typically consists of a husband, wife, and their biological or adopted children. The family's small size contributes to its effectiveness as a social institution.

Nuclear Position: Among various family types, the nuclear family prepares individuals to engage with and adapt to their expectations and environments. As a foundational institution, it fosters group dynamics and supports children's early cultural learning.

Formative Influence: The family profoundly influences the development of its members' personalities. Within the family environment, particularly during childhood, it shapes characteristics. As a primary agent of socialisation and social control, the family plays a significant role in individuals' development.

Responsibility of the Members: The family unit is characterised by a strong commitment to each member's duties and obligations, fostering a culture of shared responsibility. This collective accountability is a defining feature of family dynamics and provides children with essential lessons in people living together, emphasising a communal and expansive viewpoint. It establishes norms and customs to ensure individuals within a community fulfil vital roles toward one another. Broader social cohesion relies on these roles. For instance, nearly all societies maintain social regulations concerning divorce.

Persistence and Change: The family exhibit both enduring and adaptive characteristics. As an institution, it maintains a permanent status. Once a couple forms a union and establishes a household, the family persists and adapts to incorporate new members. A family's composition is dynamic, and its members' roles may evolve.

4.14 Nature of the Family

The family constitutes a foundational social entity essential for human development and socialisation. It comprises individuals connected by biological, legal, emotional, or social ties. Examining the nature of family requires consideration of its multiple dimensions:

Biological Dimension: The family often originates from biological ties, establishing essential connections among parents, children, and siblings. These relationships are influenced by genetics and inheritance, creating a

lineage that links individuals across generations. The biological aspect of family is significant not only for transmitting physical traits and genetic characteristics but also for fostering a strong sense of identity and belonging rooted in ancestral heritage. This dimension influences cultural practices and societal norms, shaping individuals' perceptions of their relationships and roles within society.

Legal Dimension: The family extends beyond biological connections to include legal relationships such as marriage, adoption, and guardianship. These legal ties create formal frameworks that define family members' rights and responsibilities. For instance, marriage creates a recognised partnership that influences property rights, inheritance, and social status. Adoption establishes a legal parent-child relationship, providing security and belonging for the child while assigning caregiving responsibilities to adoptive parents. Legal dimensions are essential in structuring familial bonds within society and ensuring the welfare and support of family members.

Emotional Dimension: The family is fundamentally characterised by deep emotional bonds that unite members through love, care, and mutual support. These connections shape the familial experience by providing comfort, belonging, and stability. Families offer an environment where individuals can express themselves, share experiences, and seek support during challenging periods. This supportive atmosphere fosters personal development and resilience, enabling individuals to overcome obstacles and develop a strong sense of identity. Emotionally, the family functions as a critical support network throughout the lifespan.

Social Dimension: The family serves as a fundamental social institution that shapes societal norms, values, and roles. It offers a primary environment for socialisation, where individuals learn behaviours, customs, and traditions essential for integration into society. Through family interactions, individuals acquire language, social skills, and cultural values that influence their behaviour and perspectives. Additionally, families promote social cohesion by fostering accountability and civic engagement among members. The social dimension highlights the family's essential role in forming social identity and preserving cultural heritage.

Functional Dimension: Families care for, support, and nurture their members. This responsibility includes addressing children's emotional, educational, and economic needs to promote holistic well-being. Families create the foundational environment for early learning and development,

enabling children to acquire essential skills and knowledge for future roles in society. Furthermore, families offer economic support, ensuring basic needs are met and fostering security and stability. The functional dimension emphasises the family's role in shaping individual capabilities and perspectives, thereby facilitating personal development and societal integration. **Dynamic Nature:** The concept of family is continually evolving in response to changes in societal expectations, cultural norms, and legal standards. Traditional family structures have diversified to include nuclear families, extended families, single-parent households, and blended families. These changes result from shifting gender roles, increased mobility, and changing economic conditions. The family's adaptability allows it to meet the demands and complexities of contemporary life, maintaining its significance in society. This flexibility helps families provide support and stability in a rapidly changing world.

Cultural and Societal Variations: Family structures and roles differ significantly across cultures and societies, reflecting diverse organisational patterns. In some cultures, extended familial networks that include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins play a central role in daily life and decision-making. In contrast, other societies focus on nuclear family units, emphasising immediate relatives. These cultural differences shape family dynamics, role distribution, and societal expectations, affecting both intra-family relationships and broader community interactions. Recognising these variations is essential for appreciating the diverse expressions of family life worldwide and understanding each structure's unique contribution to social cohesion.

Challenges and Transformations: Contemporary families encounter numerous challenges, including economic pressures, changing gender roles, and shifting societal expectations. Financial instability can strain family resources and limit their ability to support members. Changing gender roles challenge traditional structures and require adaptation to new family models. Additionally, evolving perspectives on marriage, parenting, and gender identity are redefining what family means. Despite these challenges, families demonstrate resilience and adaptability, adjusting to new circumstances to meet the diverse needs of their members. This capacity highlights the enduring significance of families in human society. The family integrates biological, legal, emotional, social, and practical elements. It evolves alongside societal changes, maintaining its essential role in individual and community development and well-being.

4.15 Types of the Family

The family, as a social institution, manifests in diverse forms across cultures. Anthropologists classify families according to structure, residence, descent, authority, function, and social context. These classifications illuminate how societies organize reproduction, caregiving, inheritance, identity, and cooperation. With ongoing changes driven by migration, technological advancement, legal reforms, shifting gender roles, and personal choice, new family forms have emerged. Consequently, it is increasingly important for anthropologists to examine and understand these evolving configurations. The following section outlines the major types of families studied in anthropology, encompassing both traditional and contemporary forms.

Nuclear Family: A nuclear family consists of a married couple and their dependent children living as a single unit. This family type is prevalent in industrial and urban societies, where independence, mobility, and neo-local residence are emphasized. Although often idealized, the nuclear family is neither universal nor consistently dominant across cultures.

Extended Family: An extended family includes multiple generations such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins either living together or maintaining close, interdependent relationships. This family type is common in agrarian and collectivist societies and supports shared caregiving, labor, and economic pooling. Extended families may be vertically extended, spanning multiple generations, or horizontally extended, including siblings and their families.

Joint Family: The joint family, a subtype of the extended family, typically includes two or more nuclear families connected through male lineage, living together and sharing resources. This structure is characteristic of patrilineal and patriarchal societies, such as those in India, where male siblings and their families reside in the same household under a common patriarch.

Matrifocal and Patrifocal Families: A matrifocal family centers on a mother and her children and is often found in contexts where men are absent due to migration, economic instability, or non-marriage, such as in the Caribbean and parts of Latin America. In contrast, patrifocal families are male-centered households in which the father assumes the dominant role, typically associated with patriarchal authority structures.

Matrilineal and Patrilineal Families: In matrilineal families, descent and inheritance are traced through the mother. In such systems, authority

may reside with the maternal uncle rather than the father, as observed among the Garos of North-East India and the Minangkabau of Indonesia. Patrilineal families, which are common globally and especially prevalent in South Asia and the Middle East, trace descent, inheritance, and family name through the male line.

Polygynous and Polyandrous Families: In polygynous families, one man marries multiple women, forming a family unit with several wives and their children. This arrangement is common in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. In polyandrous families, one woman marries multiple men, a practice observed in certain Tibetan and Himalayan societies, often to maintain landholdings among brothers. These forms challenge monogamous ideals and illustrate the influence of marriage practices on family structures.

Fraternal and Sororal Polygamy: Fraternal polyandry, in which brothers share one wife, and sororal polygyny, where sisters marry one man, are variants of polygamy. These forms are generally classified under polygynous or polyandrous family types.

Levirate and Sororate Families: These are marriage customs (e.g., a man marrying his deceased brother's widow: levirate), not distinct family types, though they influence household structure. They're typically covered under marriage practices rather than types of families.

Single-Parent Families: Single-parent families consist of one parent raising children, often as a result of divorce, death, separation, or individual choice. These families are increasingly common worldwide and may encounter economic and social challenges, but they can also provide flexibility and foster strong parent-child relationships.

Same-Sex and LGBTQ+ Families: Anthropology recognizes same-sex and queer families as legitimate and culturally significant. These families may involve co-parenting, adoption, surrogacy, or chosen kinship arrangements. As Kath Weston (1991) demonstrates, LGBTQ+ families challenge traditional norms and illustrate how affective and voluntary ties shape kinship.

Chosen Families: The chosen families are formed outside traditional blood or legal relationships, often by individuals who are estranged from or lack support from their natal families. These families are particularly significant in migrant, queer, and activist communities, where kinship is grounded in care, solidarity, and shared experience rather than descent.

Blended or Reconstituted Families: Blended or reconstituted families, formed after remarriage, include step-parents, step-siblings, and half-siblings. These families are increasingly prevalent in societies with high rates of divorce and remarriage. Anthropologists examine how members of blended families negotiate identity, roles, and belonging across complex relational networks. The diversity of these family forms reflects the adaptability of human societies. Cross-cultural comparisons in anthropology demonstrate that the family is not a static or universal institution, but one that evolves in response to changing social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts.

Functions of Family: As one of the most enduring and universal institutions, the family performs a wide range of functions essential to the survival, stability, and continuity of societies. Although the specific roles of families vary across cultures, anthropologists have identified several core functions common to most family systems. These functions may be biological, social, economic, emotional, or cultural in nature.

Reproduction and Biological Continuity: Biological reproduction is one of the most fundamental and universal functions of the family. Families ensure the continuity of society through procreation, providing a socially sanctioned context for bearing and raising children. Although reproduction can occur outside traditional family structures, most societies have historically placed it within the family framework. Families play a crucial role in socialisation by teaching children the norms, values, beliefs, language, and behaviours needed to function within their culture. Through interactions with parents, siblings, and extended kin, children learn about gender roles, kinship obligations, religious practices, and social responsibilities.

Economic Cooperation and Support: In many societies, the family functions as an economic unit by pooling resources, dividing labor, and ensuring mutual support. In subsistence-based societies, family members collaborate in agriculture, herding, or crafts. In contemporary contexts, families contribute to economic security by sharing incomes, managing expenses, and providing financial assistance during times of need.

Emotional and Psychological Support: The family provides emotional security and affection, helping individuals cope with stress, loneliness, and life transitions. It fosters a sense of belonging, identity, and self-worth, and offers emotional support during illness, loss, or hardship. The

family's nurturing function contributes to its members' psychological development.

Regulation of Sexual Behaviour: Most societies establish rules governing sexual relations, specifying who may have sexual access to whom and under what conditions. The family, through culturally sanctioned marriages, regulates sexual behavior, discourages incest, and maintains social order. This regulatory function is closely associated with kinship systems and the perpetuation of lineage.

Transmission of Property and Status: Families play a central role in inheriting property, titles, and social status. Rules of descent patrilineal, matrilineal, or bilateral determine the transmission of land, wealth, and rights. Through this function, families help maintain economic and social hierarchies.

Care for the Elderly, Sick, and Disabled: Families have traditionally been responsible for caring for dependent members, including the elderly, chronically ill, and individuals with disabilities. This caregiving role strengthens intergenerational relationships and ensures that vulnerable members of society receive necessary support.

Cultural and Religious Transmission: Through daily life, ritual, and storytelling, families transmit cultural practices, language, beliefs, and religious values. They serve as the primary context for maintaining and passing on cultural identity to the next generation. The family thus functions as a multifaceted institution that adapts to its cultural, economic, and historical context. Although the expression of these functions may change, particularly in response to globalisation, legal reforms, and shifting gender roles, their core significance in human societies endures.

Changes in the Family

Family in India has undergone significant changes both in its structure and functions. In sociological terms, family structure refers to how the family is organized, such as the number of generations living together, family size, or the distribution of authority. For example, a joint family has multiple generations under one roof, whereas a nuclear family has only parents and children. Family functions refer to the roles or responsibilities the family performs, such as providing economic support, socializing children, and caring for older people. Structurally, the present-day family is smaller, with fewer members, less centralized authority, and a more divided division of labour.

Previously, members of four to five generations lived together. Today's joint family consists of people belonging to only two or three generations. The size of the joint family is decreasing.

The traditional joint family has been associated with the subordination of women. Women were often expected to stay at home, follow the directions of male family members, and had little influence in family decisions. In recent years, the emerging trend in the joint family has changed women's status. Women now contribute financially, participate in decision-making, and have greater access to education and employment. For example, many women are choosing to work in professional fields such as education, healthcare, and technology. Recent data show that India's female workforce participation rate has increased, especially in urban areas. Despite these advances, women still face ongoing challenges, such as wage gaps, limited representation in leadership positions, and persistent expectations to manage household responsibilities. While women now hold a more respectable position in the family, full equality with men has not yet been fully achieved.

The economic functions of the joint family have changed radically. As traditional skills and household crafts declined, the family lost much of its productive role.

In the traditional joint families, grandparents used to take all the responsibilities of bringing up the children and even giving them basic education. Now, this responsibility has shifted to babysitting centres and child care centres.

The joint family provided social security to its members who were physically disabled, mentally disabled, aged and diseased. Today, the family is no longer in a position to provide security to all these members. Many secondary agencies, such as homes for the aged and special homes for the mentally disabled, now share the family's responsibilities.

There is nothing like family occupation. Nowadays, technical training centres and vocational education institutes have taken over the job of providing occupational training.

Factors Responsible for Change in the Family

Indian family is changing due to the influence of several factors. A host of interrelated factors, viz., education, legal provisions, urbanisation, industrialisation, etc., have affected the family.

Education

Education is a major factor contributing to change in the structure and functions of the family. Education has not only changed people's attitudes, beliefs, values, and ideologies but has also encouraged individualism. Education has been primarily responsible for creating new attitudes in and towards women. It has helped many women seek employment opportunities in the service sector. When women become economically independent, their role and importance in society change. Education has brought about changes in the traditional joint family. Nuclear families are becoming more popular among educated sections. From a sociological perspective, different theories can explain these changes. For instance, functionalist theory views education as helping families adapt to modern society by equipping members with new skills and promoting merit-based achievement. On the other hand, conflict theory highlights how education can challenge traditional power structures within the family, such as promoting greater gender equality and questioning established roles. Linking these changes to sociological frameworks helps us understand education's broader role in driving family transformation.

Urbanization

Urbanization is another factor that has affected family patterns. Nowadays, people migrating from rural to urban areas are a common feature of Indian cities. Urban life offers greater freedom of choice, and many traditional family values may seem impractical to urban dwellers. Urban life has also changed women's attitudes towards gender stereotypes in the family. When women become aware of their changing roles, they tend to protest against gender-based discrimination.

Industrialization brought far-reaching changes to society in general, and to the family in particular. The family, once a major unit of production as well as consumption, was largely reduced to a unit of consumption. Many traditional skills, crafts, and household industries associated with the joint family system have declined because of the onslaught of the factory system. For example, in recent years, many young adults have migrated from villages in states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to work in urban industrial centres like Mumbai and Bengaluru. According to a recent government report, over 30 per cent of rural youth migrate to cities mainly for factory or service-sector jobs. This migration has led young men and women to leave their joint family for distant places in search

of better prospects and employment. It has resulted in the breakdown of the link between the kinship and occupational structure. They become independent. This financial independence has weakened the authority of the head of the household over those earning members.

Legal Provisions

Legislative measures have played a role in bringing about changes in the family. India has introduced many legal provisions over time. These include the Child Marriage Restraint Act, Hindu Marriage Act, Widow Remarriage Act, and Hindu Succession Act. These laws have brought far-reaching changes to the Indian family.

Changes in Marriage System

Laws relating to age at marriage, inheritance, divorce, adoption, and maintenance have brought marked changes to the institution of marriage. Adults now marry later and make personal decisions. Parents' role in mate selection has diminished. Marriage is not considered a religious affair but a social ceremony. Similar trends appear in many other societies worldwide. For example, in countries such as Japan, the United States, and several European nations, people also tend to marry at older ages and increasingly choose their partners independently. This shift toward marriage based on personal preference and later marriage age reflects a broader global movement toward individualism and greater freedom in personal life decisions.

Joint family in India

The joint family system represents a distinctive aspect of Indian social life. Iravati Karve defines a joint family as 'a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked in one kitchen, who hold property in common, participate in common family worship and are related to one another as some particular type of kindred.' This definition describes the ideal corporate character of joint family life. A joint family comprising grandparents, parents, and grandchildren is referred to as a lineal joint family. When married brothers, their wives, and offspring reside together, it is termed a lateral joint family. In addition to patrilineal joint families, matrilineal joint families also exist. For example, in a typical joint family, two brothers may live with their wives, children, and elderly parents in the same house. All adults care for the children, prepare meals in a common kitchen, and

manage property collectively under the family head's guidance. Such an arrangement demonstrates the close relationships and cooperation that define the joint family system.

Features of Joint Family

The principal characteristics of the joint family system include the following:

Common Residence: The members of a joint family usually live under the same roof. The joint family consists of people from three or more generations, including grandparents, parents, and children.

Common Kitchen: All members of a joint family share a common kitchen. A family is not considered a joint family unless a single kitchen serves the entire group, even if they live together.

Joint Ownership of Property: Joint ownership of property is a significant feature of the joint family. The family head manages the property in a trustee-like capacity, and members pool their earnings to meet collective expenses.

Common Religious Beliefs and Practices: Members of a joint family typically adhere to a common religion. Each family often has its own deity. In many regions of South India, joint families maintain traditions of worshipping a specific clan or village deity.

Exercise of Authority: Authority within the joint family rests with the family head, whose directives all members follow. **Rights and Obligations:** Each member has specific duties and obligations toward the family. While the head holds certain privileges, all members are expected to fulfill economic and social responsibilities according to their age, status, and relationship within the family.

A Productive Unit: The joint family often functions as a productive unit, particularly among agricultural families, where all members work on the same land. In artisan families, labor is divided according to gender, age, and skill.

Merits of Joint Family System

Prevention of Land Fragmentation: A primary advantage of the joint family system is that it prevents property division, particularly the extreme subdivision of land. All members are expected to share the benefits of property collectively.

Division of Labour: The joint family system typically features a clear division of labour among members, especially in agricultural and artisan families. Each member contributes to economic production according to their abilities.

Protection of Members: The joint family system offers support and care to all members, including children, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, widows, and those in need. It provides essential assistance during critical times and supports vulnerable members.

Agent of Social Control: The joint family system functions as an effective agent of social control. Older members monitor younger members' behaviour, provide guidance on appropriate conduct, and reinforce social norms.

Demerits of Joint Family System

Hindrance to Individual Development: A significant drawback of the joint family system is its tendency to hinder the development of individual personalities. Members are subject to the authority of the family head and are generally discouraged from questioning or disobeying decisions. This authoritarian structure limits opportunities for personal growth and individuality.

Low Status of Women: In the joint family system, women often experience a loss of identity and are excluded from decision-making processes. Despite significant contributions, their efforts are frequently unrecognized. The lack of privacy and constant supervision can result in conflict. However, recent years have seen positive changes aimed at improving women's status within joint families. Legal reforms, better access to education, and increased participation of women in the workforce have begun to challenge traditional roles and encourage greater involvement of women in family decisions. Government and social organizations' efforts to promote gender equality have also contributed to gradual improvements in women's status in many families.

Source of Conflict: The joint family system can lead to frequent quarrels because members live in proximity. Conflicts often originate in shared spaces, such as the kitchen, and may disrupt family harmony.

4.16 Joint Family vs Nuclear Family

In India, the family remains a foundational institution that has persisted across generations. Indian society places significant emphasis on family

integrity, loyalty, and unity. The family structure has played a central role in shaping the lives of individuals and communities. Two primary family types exist: the joint family and the nuclear family.

A joint family refers to an extended family structure that includes parents, their children, the children's spouses, and their offspring living together in a single household. In India, the joint family system has origins in Vedic times and remained prevalent during monarchical periods. In contrast, a nuclear family comprises a husband, wife, and their unmarried children. After marriage, children typically leave the parental home to establish independent households. As a result, the nuclear family operates as an autonomous unit with minimal interdependence between generations.

Feeling of Togetherness in Joint Family: A joint family fosters strong emotional bonds across generations and contributes to family unity in various circumstances. Traditions and cultural values are transmitted to future generations, ensuring their continuity. The proverb "United we stand, divided we fall" aptly characterizes the joint family system.

Possibility of conflicts: The presence of multiple family members in a joint family increases the likelihood of conflicts regarding values and decision-making. Even minor decisions often require approval from all members, particularly the family head. This process can compromise individual privacy.

A sense of freedom Nuclear Family: Nuclear families typically experience greater autonomy compared to joint families. Household members are less constrained by the opinions of others and enjoy increased personal freedom regarding daily activities. Decision-making processes in nuclear families are often more democratic.

Development of Personality: The nuclear family contributes significantly to individual personality development. Children often maintain closer relationships with their parents, facilitating open discussions about personal challenges and fostering psychological growth. Adults in nuclear families tend to develop independence and a sense of responsibility for family support. These qualities enable children to adapt more readily when relocating to new environments.

Less Quarrels: Nuclear families generally experience fewer conflicts than joint families. Disagreements are typically limited to those between spouses or between parents and children. Decision-making is often more straightforward due to the smaller number of individuals involved.

Problem Free Unit: Conflicts with in-laws are largely absent in nuclear families. Financial management is often more straightforward, allowing for savings to address future goals and potential crises. Family members enjoy greater independence and can participate in economic activities to supplement household income. The preferences and aspirations of children are more likely to be acknowledged and valued.

Loneliness: Loneliness represents a significant drawback of the nuclear family structure. After completing household tasks, individuals—often women—may find themselves alone at home. During family absences, those remaining may experience isolation, and in emergencies, support may be limited. Additionally, children may eventually leave their parents upon achieving financial independence, potentially resulting in loneliness among elderly parents.

Impact on children: When both parents are employed, managing childcare responsibilities becomes more challenging. Furthermore, children in nuclear families may be more susceptible to negative influences due to the absence of extended family support and guidance from grandparents, uncles, and aunts.

Advantages of Joint Family

In joint families, elderly parents receive support from their children, while young parents benefit from assistance in child-rearing provided by their own parents. Children receive considerable attention from parents, grandparents, and other extended family members. This arrangement offers mutual benefits for all members.

- People learn the importance of adjustment from childhood because living under one roof requires understanding to prevent conflicts.
- Members of a joint family can meet daily needs even after a sudden job loss because there is usually more than one earner.
- There will be no dearth of friends, because cousins and relatives live in the same home.
- Functions and festivals are celebrated with greater enthusiasm and participation in joint families.
- Children can have grandparents' guidance and support. When both parents are working, this support will be of great help.
- Rising incidents of child kidnapping and human trafficking are significant concerns for parents. In joint families, this risk may

be mitigated due to the presence of multiple caregivers who can supervise and protect children.

- Joint families are cost-effective units. They can avoid paying rent for individual houses. Shared financial responsibilities will reduce the burden on everyone.
- Members of joint families typically receive substantial support during periods of difficulty.
- Members of joint families are less likely to suffer from loneliness and depression.
- Individuals raised in joint families often develop strong social skills, which facilitate active participation in broader social networks.

Disadvantages of Joint Family

- The cohabitation of multiple families within a joint family can lead to conflicts regarding the distribution of household tasks and financial responsibilities, potentially straining interpersonal relationships.
- In general, gender division of work passes on from generation to generation in joint families. So, women in joint families may have to take care of the household chores, even if they are working women. In some families, older members don't even allow women in the house to pursue a career. These situations can make women in joint families depressed.
- Privacy is reduced for all members in a joint family setting.
- Decision-making processes become more complex due to the involvement of numerous family members.
- Earning members may perceive that non-contributing family members rely excessively on their support.

Advantages of the Nuclear family

- Greater privacy is afforded to members of nuclear families.
- There will be fewer conflicts with extended family because fewer people are involved.
- Reaching consensus during decision-making is generally easier in nuclear families due to the smaller number of individuals involved.
- Nuclear families tend to have more gender equality than joint families because they do not include elders who impose age-old beliefs on the whole family.

Adults in nuclear families learn to be independent and take responsibility for supporting their families. Kids will learn the same, and they can more easily sustain themselves when they migrate to a new area to live on their own. Parents in nuclear families can allocate more resources toward their children's future because household expenses are lower. Individuals in nuclear families may maintain more harmonious relationships with extended family members, as daily cohabitation and associated conflicts are minimized.

Disadvantages of the Nuclear family

- When both parents work, it can be difficult to raise kids.
- They may become isolated from extended family. Children in nuclear families may leave their parents upon achieving financial independence, potentially resulting in loneliness among elderly parents. However, some older adults may appreciate the increased autonomy and pursue new interests or revive previous hobbies.
- Children may be more easily attracted to bad habits and bad friends than children with strong support and guidance from grandparents, uncles, and aunts.

4.17 Let Us Sum up

Kinship and family constitute fundamental social institutions within Indian society. Kinship encompasses social relationships formed through blood, marriage, and adoption. The family functions as a primary social group responsible for reproduction, socialization, emotional support, and the transmission of cultural values. Indian family and kinship systems exhibit considerable diversity, varying by region, caste, religion, tribe, and social class. Family structures may include parents, children, and extended relatives, while kinship relationships significantly influence marriage, inheritance, residence, social obligations, and support systems.

The concepts of family and household are related yet distinct. A family is primarily defined by social and kinship relationships. In contrast, a household consists of individuals who reside together and share daily living arrangements, such as food and resources. Households may include both family members and individuals who are not related by kinship.

The debate between nuclear and joint family structures highlights ongoing changes in Indian family systems. A nuclear family typically comprises parents and their unmarried children, whereas a joint family

may include multiple generations and married relatives who either cohabit or maintain strong economic and social ties. While modernization, urbanization, migration, education, and employment have promoted nuclear living arrangements, joint family relationships and kinship networks continue to play a significant role in many regions of India.

4.18 Keywords

Kinship, Family, Household, Nuclear Family and Joint Family

4.19 Self-Assessment Questions

1. Define kinship and analyse its nature and significance in Indian society.
2. Examine the nature and functions of the family in the context of India.
3. Distinguish between the concepts of family and household, providing appropriate examples to illustrate the differences.
4. Analyse the characteristics and functions of both nuclear and joint families.
5. Evaluate the debate between nuclear and joint families within the context of a transforming Indian society.

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UNIT – V

Tribes and Society

Structure

- 5.1 Learning Objectives
- 5.2 Introduction
- 5.3 Meaning and Definition of Tribe
- 5.4 History of Tribal Communities
- 5.5 Demography and Distribution of Tribes in India
- 5.6 Main Characteristics of Tribe
- 5.7 Tribes and Caste
- 5.8 Problems faced by Tribal Communities in India
- 5.9 Tribes as Indigenous People of India
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- 5.11 Indigenous Tribes of India and their Culture
- 5.12 Transformation of Tribes
- 5.13 Let Us Sum up
- 5.14 Keywords
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5.1 Learning Objectives

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand the meaning and basic characteristics of tribal communities.
- Discuss the concept of tribes as indigenous populations in India.
- Assess the primary factors contributing to the transformation of tribal communities.

5.2 Introduction

Tribes in India have traditionally been conceptualised primarily based on their geographical and social isolation from mainstream Indian society, often without consideration of their degree of social transformation. Consequently, a diverse array of groups and

communities at varying stages of social change were classified as tribes. Generally, these groups maintained practical control over their lifestyles, land, and customs. The advent of colonial rule integrated both tribal and non-tribal populations under a unified political and administrative system, employing methods such as warfare, conquest, and capture. Subsequently, the imposition of uniform civil and criminal laws and the establishment of administrative structures that diverged from tribal traditions and values occurred. These developments led to large-scale transfers of land from tribal to non-tribal populations, frequently through fraudulent and illegal means such as deception and dishonesty. As a consequence, the socio-economic condition of tribal communities deteriorated significantly. Following independence, the nationalist leadership and the Government of India directed special attention toward the welfare of these tribal communities.

In independent India, tribal populations were granted civil, political, and social rights equivalent to those of other citizens. The Indian Constitution affirms these rights through specific provisions. However, before further analysis, it is essential to clarify the meaning, definition, and classification of tribes.

Historical evidence indicates that, since ancient times, diverse racial groups have migrated to India and assimilated into its multiethnic society. The subcontinent is also characterised by distinct geographical regions, each imparting unique influences on its inhabitants. India, therefore, comprises a variety of ethnic groups and geographical areas. Numerous communities reside in different regions and maintain traditional lifestyles, often living in forests, hilly, or plateau areas, and remaining isolated from mainstream society. These groups are frequently referred to as tribals, aboriginals, wild castes, tribes, or backward castes. The Indian Constitution designates such populations as 'scheduled tribes.' Sociologist G.S. Ghurye referred to these castes as 'Backwards Hindus.' Before examining the population, classification, and related aspects of these tribes or scheduled castes, it is necessary to define the term 'Tribe.'

5.3 Meaning and Definition of Tribe

As is clear from the above discussion, 'tribe' or 'wild tribe' means a group whose members live in the primitive stage of civilization. The group has definite geographical areas and has its own special type of language, region, customs and traditions.

Gillian and Gillin, while defining a tribe, have written, “Any collection of local primitive groups, who live in common areas, speak a common language and follow a common culture, known as tribe.”

Dr. Riverse, while not giving importance to the common place of residence, has described the tribe as a simple type of social group whose members use a common language and work together for common purposes like war etc. Dr. Riverse has probably not given importance to the general habitat because many tribes are nomadic. But in this regard, Dr. Mazumdar says that this does not mean that tribes do not have their own common area. Despite being nomadic in nature, they have a specific place of residence.

Majumdar has clarified almost all the characteristics of a tribe in his definition. According to him “A tribe is a collection of families or a group of families, having a common name, whose members live on a fixed territory, speak a common language and follow certain prohibition regarding marriage, business or industry. Generally, they speak the same language and follow certain prohibitions regarding marriage, business or industry and develop a definite and useful system of mutual exchange “.

According to Article 366 (25) of the Indian Constitution, “Scheduled Tribes means those tribes or tribal communities or parts or groups of such tribes or tribal communities which are notified by the President by general notice under Article 342 of the Constitution. “Scheduled Tribes have been mentioned.” Hence, it is clear that a tribe is a regional human group that is united by a common thread in matters like territory, language, social rules and economic activities etc.

5.4 History of Tribal Communities

Tribal communities in India mostly live in forested hills and remote regions. They are known by many names, such as Janjati (folk people), Adimjati (primitive people), Arusuchit Janjati (scheduled tribe), Vanyajati (forest castes), Vanvasi (forest occupants), Pahari (hill-dwellers), and Adivasi (first settlers). Of these, Adivasi is the most common term, while the official constitutional name is Anusuchit Janjati, or Scheduled Tribe.

Most tribal groups in India have long interacted with their neighbours, who work in various manual trades and farming. References to tribal clans called Jana appear in ancient texts like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, showing that these connections go back many centuries. For example,

when Rama reached the edge of Central India's forests during his exile, he was told the area belonged to the Janasthana tribe.

For centuries, tribes have interacted with farming and cattle-raising communities living in the open plains. Vedic literature mentions people with different customs and appearances, suggesting these groups often saw each other as different. These long-standing interactions likely led to both cooperation and conflict, bringing about important changes over time.

The tribal groups still follow their own traditions and laws. They usually marry within their local communities and often seek guidance from their own leaders or elders. This helps them maintain a social identity distinct from their neighbours. Although their way of life is similar to that of nearby rural residents, tribes are officially recognised as Scheduled Tribes because they have kept their unique social identities and are often seen as remote and economically underdeveloped. For these reasons, studying their history is important.

5.5 Demography and Distribution of Tribes in India

India is a diverse country with people from various cultural backgrounds. Many tribal communities reside in dense forests and remote mountain regions. These groups, often referred to as tribes or tribals, were officially recognised as Scheduled Tribes under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution, which initially identified 212 tribal groups across 14 states. Each state prepared its own list of Scheduled Tribes, which has since been updated through official notifications.

Following the 1947 partition and the Constitution Order of 1950, the tribal population declined from 2.47 crore in 1941 to 1.79 crore. The 1951 census recorded 1.91 crore tribals, or 5.36 per cent of the total population. This number rose to 2.99 crore (6.87 per cent) in 1961, 3.08 crore (6.94 per cent) in 1971, and 6.77 crore (8.08 per cent) in 1991. Of the 1991 total, 6.28 crore lived in rural areas and 50 lakh in urban areas. Madhya Pradesh had the largest tribal population at 1.54 crore, while Uttar Pradesh had 2.88 lakh. According to the 2011 census, India's population was 104.28 crore, with 5.24 crore males and 5.19 crore females. As complete 2011 census data are not yet available, 2001 census figures are often referenced. The 2011 census reported a 17.7 per cent population increase over the previous decade, and the tribal population is estimated at approximately 10.4 crore. The National Sample Survey Organisation and the Central Statistical Organisation regularly compile population data on Scheduled Tribes, including demographics, sex ratio, education, livelihood, and health.

The Scheduled Tribe population has grown steadily since 1961. From 1991 to 2001, it increased by 24.45 per cent. Between 1981 and 1991, the tribal growth rate was 31.65 per cent, higher than the total population growth rate of 23.51 per cent. From 1991 to 2001, the total population grew by 22.66 per cent. The 2001 census shows a sex ratio among Scheduled Tribes of 978 females per 1,000 males, which is higher than the national average of 933 females per 1,000 males. Between 1991 and 2001, the national literacy rate rose from 52.2 per cent to 65.38 per cent, while literacy among Scheduled Tribes increased from 29.62 per cent to 47.10 per cent. Despite this progress, tribal literacy remains below the national average of 64.8 per cent. Female literacy among tribes improved from 18.2 per cent to 34.8 per cent, though it remains about 2 per cent below the general female literacy rate. Overall, literacy rates, including for women, have increased among tribes. However, high dropout rates continue to affect higher education attainment.

Tribal communities are present across many Indian states, with significant populations in Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, and Jharkhand. Smaller tribal groups also reside in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh.

The distribution of tribal populations in India varies widely. Tribes have adapted to local environments, resulting in distinct cultural differences even within the same community. Bhils are the largest tribal group, followed by Gonds, Santhals, and Meenas. The highest concentrations of Scheduled Tribes are found in the eastern, central, and western regions, particularly across nine states.

- Madhya Pradesh (14.69%),
- Maharashtra (10.08%),
- Orissa (9.2%),
- Rajasthan (8.86%),
- Gujarat (8.55%)
- Jharkhand (8.29%),
- Chhattisgarh (7.5%)
- Andhra Pradesh (5.7%) and
- West Bengal.

About 12% live in the Northeastern region, 5% in the Southern region, and 3% in the Northern states. The state with the highest proportion of

Scheduled Tribes is Mizoram (94.5 per cent), and the union territory with the highest proportion of Scheduled Tribes is Lakshadweep (94.8 per cent). Except the states of Punjab, Haryana and Delhi, and the union territories of Chandigarh and Puducherry, tribals inhabit all parts of the country. In India, their number and other demographic features vary from one state to another. Odisha has the largest number of tribal communities (62) (Census 2011). Some of the major tribes of different states are given below:

Sl.No	States	Tribes
	Andhra Pradesh	Andh, Sadhu Andh, Bhagata, Bhil, Chenchus (Chenchawar), Gadabas, Gond, Goudu, Jatapus, Kammara, Kattunayakan, Kolawar, Kolam, Konda, Manna Dhora, Pardhan, Rona, Savaras, Dabba Yerukula, Nakkala, Dhulia, Thoti, Sugalis.
	Arunachal Pradesh:	Apatanis, Abor, Dafla, Galong, Momba, Sherdukpen, Singpho.
	Assam	Chakma, Chutiya, Dimasa, Hajong, Garos, Khasis, Gangte.
	Bihar	Asur, Baiga, Birhor, Birjia, Chero, Gond, Parhaiya, Santhals, Savar.
	Chhattisgarh	Agariya, Bhaina, Bhattra, Biar, Khond, Mawasi, Nagasia.
	Goa	Dhodia, Dubia, Naikda, Siddi, Varli
	Gujarat	Barda, Bamcha, Bhil, Charan, Dhodia, Gamta, Paradhi, Patelia.
	Himachal Pradesh	Gaddis, Gujjars, Khas, Lamba, Lahaulas, Pangwala, Swangla
	Jammu and Kashmir	Bakarwal, Balti, Beda, Gaddi, Garra, Mon, Purigpa, Sippi.
	Jharkhand	Birhors, Bhumij, Gonds, Kharia, Mundas, Santhals, Savar.
	Karnataka	Adiyan, Barda, Gond, Bhil, Iruliga, Koraga, Patelia, Yerava.
	Kerala	Adiyan, Arandan, Eravallan, Kurumbas, Malai arayan, Moplahs, Uralis.

	Madhya Pradesh	Baigas, Bhils, Bharia, Birhors, Gonds, Katkari, Kharia, Khond, Kol, Murias.
	Maharashtra	Bhaina, Bhunjia, Dhodia, Katkari, Khond, Rathawa, Warlis.
	Manipur	Aimol, Angami, Chiru, Kuki, Maram, Monsang, Paite, Purum, Thadou.
	Meghalaya	Chakma, Garos, Hajong, Jaintias Khasis, Lakher, Pawai, Raba.
	Mizoram	Chakma, Dimasa, Khasi, Kuki, Lakher, Pawai, Raba, Synteng
	Nagaland	Angami, Garo, Kachari, Kuki, Mikir, Nagas, Sema, Lotha.
	Odisha	Gadaba, Ghara, Kharia, Khond, Matya, Oraons, Rajuar, Santhals.
	Rajasthan	Bhils, Damaria, Dhanka, Meenas (Minas), Patelia, Sahariya.
	Sikkim	Bhutia, Khas, Lepchas
	Tamil Nadu	Adiyan, Aranadan, Eravallan, Irular, Kadar, Kanikar, Kotas, Todas.
	Telangana	Gond, Pardhan, Kolam, Koya, Chenchus
	Tripura	Bhil, Bhutia, Chaimal, Chakma, Halam, Khasia, Lushai, Mizel, Namte.
	Uttarakhand	Bhotias, Buksa, Jannasari, Khas, Raji, Tharu.
	Uttar Pradesh	Bhotia, Buksa, Jaunsari, Kol, Raji, Tharu
	West Bengal	Asur, Khond, Hajong, Ho, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santhals, Savar.
	Andaman and Nicobar	Oraons, Onges, Sentinelese, Shompens.
	Little Andaman:	Jarawa

Anthropologists and Sociologists study Indian tribes, considering their distinctive demographic, ecological, economic, political, historical and socio-cultural milieu. Most indigenous tribes in India live in geographically isolated locations in forests, plateaus, or hills, and very few live in the plains. Most still live by hunting, gathering, fishing, shifting cultivation, or settled cultivation, and are pastoralists, artisans, labourers, etc. They speak mostly Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, Sino-Tibetan and Mongoloid languages and marry within their restricted local groups. Their tribal leaders or chieftains guide them. They have socio-cultural institutions and try their best to retain their own beliefs and customs. Belief in supernatural power, magic, sorcery and witchcraft is an integral part of tribal socio-cultural life.

5.6 Main Characteristics of Tribe

The definitions above already indicate several characteristics of a tribe. The following section further elaborates on the characteristics of tribal communities, including those in India.

Common Territory: Tribal communities typically reside within a defined territory. Members of a particular tribe settle together in a specific geographic area. For example, in India, the Ao, Angami, Rengma, Sema, and other sub-groups of the Naga tribe inhabit Nagaland. The Bhils are located in Madhya Pradesh, the Garos and Khasis in Meghalaya, the Todas in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu, and Adivasis in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. The absence of a common, defined territory may result in the loss of other tribal characteristics, such as a shared language and community sentiment.

Common Name: Each tribe possesses a common name by which it is recognized by others. This name reflects the distinct culture, language, or way of life of the tribe, distinguishing it from other groups.

Collection of Families: According to the Imperial Gazetteer of India, a tribe is “a collection of families bearing a common name.” These families are typically connected by blood ties. The size of these family groups may vary, and they can be organized as either patriarchal or matriarchal units.

Common Language: Tribal communities typically share a common language, which fosters a sense of community. Different tribal groups possess distinct languages. However, the absence of a written script for many of these languages has hindered educational access. Frequently, the languages spoken by tribal communities are referred to as dialects rather

than recognized as full languages. There is an ongoing debate regarding the distinction between languages and dialects. While many accept that nationally recognized languages (such as those mentioned in the Constitution of India) are classified as languages and others as dialects, this distinction is not always accurate. In some regions, a language not nationally recognized and labeled as a dialect may be spoken by a significant portion of the population.

Common Ancestor: Members of tribal communities are bound by kinship and often claim descent from a common ancestor. This shared ancestry establishes blood ties and fosters a sense of unity within the group.

Common Religion: Tribal communities often venerate a common ancestor, particularly during auspicious occasions. Nature holds significant importance in their lives, leading to the worship of natural elements. Other religious practices include fetishism, animism, and totemism. The structure of political and social organizations is frequently influenced by religious beliefs. Participation in religious ceremonies strengthens community bonds. In recent times, widespread conversion to Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions has occurred due to proselytization.

Prevalence of Dormitories: Dormitories, or common sleeping chambers, are an important part of tribal life. The young girls and boys of a community maintain a dormitory where they engage in various activities like folk dance, songs, paintings and so on. They try to preserve these, along with their legends, and seek to educate others about them. They keep their matters secret, and members live together in one dormitory until they marry. They are expected to follow the dormitory's rules and regulations strictly.

Organisation of Clans: A clan is a kin group comprising all relatives descended from a common ancestor, including parents and children. These groups are bound by blood relationships and can trace their lineage to a single ancestor. Clans may be organized along matrilineal or patrilineal lines. Mutual assistance among clans is common, making clan organization a vital component of tribal society.

Simple and Self-Sufficient Life: Historically, tribal communities were self-sufficient and led simple lives. Their subsistence relied on hunting, fishing, and gathering resources such as honey, tubers, fruits, nuts, berries, milk, and other forest products. They neither depended on nor sought the comforts and facilities of the broader society. Interest in formal education and raising their standard of living was minimal. However, with

population growth, reliance on traditional subsistence methods became unsustainable. Tribal communities have increasingly been influenced by modernization and have sought greater government assistance. As a result, their economic interests have shifted, and many have abandoned traditional tribal lifestyles.

Endogamous Group: Tribal communities are predominantly endogamous, with members generally prohibited from marrying outside the tribe. This practice aims to maintain blood purity, preserve cultural distinctiveness, and retain property within the tribe. However, exposure to other societies has led to the adoption of exogamous marriages outside the tribe. Within clans, exogamy is also practiced; members of the same clan, who share a common ancestor and kinship bonds, are not permitted to marry each other and must marry individuals from other clans.

Scheduled Tribes

In India, 'tribes' refer to communities that have historically lived in distinct geographical areas and often maintain unique cultures, traditions, social structures, and ways of life separate from the mainstream population. The Indian Constitution uses the term 'Scheduled Tribes' to identify certain indigenous groups the government recognises as socially and economically disadvantaged. These communities are listed in a Schedule to the Constitution and are eligible for specific protections and benefits aimed at promoting their welfare and development.

For ages, the tribes had little more than casual contact with so-called civilised or advanced cultures and societies. When the British consolidated their position in India, their expansionist operations required opening the entire country through an effective communication system. The British consolidated the money economy, acquired lands, and introduced cash-cropping, land tenure, a new legal system, administration, etc. These measures opened tribal land to outside influences. Although these changes initially relieved the tribes, the systems gradually became exploitative.

Along with this, Christian missionaries in India exposed these communities to a faster tempo of modern life by providing formal education, raising health awareness, and so forth. The social, cultural, and economic exploitation of the tribals prompted them to go on wars and agitations. As their sense of deprivation grew, their agitations, struggles, and movements also increased. In the wake of tribal upheavals and for

other reasons, the British thought they could protect tribes by creating regulated areas where normal rules did not apply. Alongside these distinct arrangements for tribal areas, the concept of tribe emerged as a social category to differentiate them from Hindus, Muslims, and other religious groups. The Government of India Act 1933 incorporated provisions and a policy of reservation for tribes notified in the Schedule.

The Scheduled Tribe emerged henceforth and was included in the Constitution of independent India. The Constitution incorporated a list of tribes in the Eighth Schedule. In 1971, the list contained the names of 527 tribes. The reservation policy, or the policy of protecting notified or Scheduled Tribes against discrimination, has become a constitutional obligation. Now, the Scheduled Tribe list in the Constitution includes 705 tribal communities from various states and union territories.

De-notified Tribes

Some of the tribal communities in India were listed as ex-criminal tribes under the British government's Criminal Tribes Act (1871). The Criminal Tribes Act was a colonial law that classified certain communities as hereditary criminals, restricted their movements, required regular reporting to authorities, and subjected them to surveillance. This Act aimed to control and monitor these groups, but in practice it stigmatised entire communities and disrupted their traditional ways of life. Earlier, these were known as criminal tribes but were de-notified later. Tribes like Lodhas, Koravas, Yerkula, Yandi, Sugali, Mina, Bhedkut, and Lambadi are some of them. However, identifying these groups, or even a small group within them, remains a task for researchers and administrators.

The National Commission for the De-notified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (2008), also known as the Balakrishna Renke Commission, estimated about 100 communities constituting around 10 per cent of our country's population as de-notified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic. With the enactment of the 1871 Act, revised again in 1911, the entire effort was based on the theory that certain populations were criminal by birth, occupation, or caste, and had begun revolting against colonial rulers in India. District collectors were given the power to notify these communities periodically. Finally, following the Aiyanger Committee's recommendations, these communities were declared de-notified tribes (Siva Prasad R, 2015). However, these communities have various cultural practices and occupational incentives related to their ecosystems.

- According to P.K. Bhowmik, de-notified tribes can be classified into:
- Nomadic groups who have taken to criminal life;
- Fighting men and soldiers who have lost their jobs and have turned into criminals;
- Communities who used to work as village watchmen and police but have taken to criminal life;

Wild tribe in distress who took to criminal living as a way out of the plight they had fallen into. These communities practice a variety of occupations and are remarkably diverse within the group. Key occupations include hunting-gathering, pastoralism, metalworking, basket making, wrestling, snake charming, monkey training, astrology, bardic performance, artisanry, and herbalism (Millind Bokil, 2002). According to the Renke Commission, India has 1500 nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, along with 150-198 de-notified communities. The stigma suffered by this group could be lessened by the suggestions of the Backwards Classes Commission appointed by the Government of India. Welfare measures have notably improved the conditions of some de-notified and nomadic tribes. For example, educational initiatives and schemes such as the Dr Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship for DNT students have resulted in increased school enrollment and reduced dropout rates among these groups. In states like Maharashtra, the Pardhi community has benefited from skill development programs and access to health facilities, leading to better job prospects and improved living standards. These cases highlight how targeted reforms can bring tangible positive changes in the lives of de-notified and nomadic tribe members.

The significant suggestions were:

- Criminal tribes to be called De-notified Tribes (Vimukta Jatis).
- Based on distinct social features, these tribes should be included in Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, and Backwards Classes.
- Resettlement in batches and gradual integration into the larger society.
- Educational status should be appropriate to help their integration into the Indian Nation.
- Reform activities to help the community.
- Collective criminal activities and individual criminal activities should be distinguished.

- Ensure proper education and employment for children.
- Economic rehabilitation should be ensured.

Thus, the Acts and the subsequent commission recommendations helped the de-notified communities elevate their status in the social sphere. They also helped them secure necessary reforms and rehabilitation for national integration and socioeconomic incentives through educational facilities and employment avenues. Several examples of the successful mainstreaming of these groups are present. Nomadic groups are communities without permanent habitation.

They move from place to place for their livelihood as herders, hunters, pastoralists, and other specialised occupations such as smiths or snake charmers.

Although de-notified and nomadic tribes overlap considerably in culture and occupation, some distinctions remain. De-notified tribes are communities that were once listed under the Criminal Tribes Act and later “de-notified.” In contrast, nomadic tribes are defined primarily by their migratory lifestyles regardless of notification status. Many de-notified tribes are also nomadic, but not all nomadic groups were labelled as criminal tribes by the British. Scheduled Tribes, by contrast, are indigenous groups recognised in the Constitution and entitled to state protections. In contrast, de-notified and nomadic tribes may or may not be scheduled depending on each state’s criteria.

Despite these official distinctions, in daily life, members of de-notified, nomadic, and scheduled tribes often share similar occupations and cultural practices. For example, the Raika-Rabari is closer to the pastoral caste known as Bharwad in Gujarat. Similarly, other nomadic communities like Gadia Lohar and Banjara mix local characteristics with unique features of their own communities, which are common across their hamlets in other parts of the country (Religion of the Raika- Vinay Kumar Srivastava). We can refer to the National Commission’s reports to learn more about their culture, as noted by the National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes.

Scheduled Tribes are constitutionally recognised communities with specific legal protections, while de-notified tribes are those removed from the list of ‘criminal tribes,’ and nomadic tribes are defined by their itinerant way of life. These groups overlap considerably, but not all de-notified or nomadic tribes are classified as Scheduled Tribes, and vice versa.

Understanding these distinctions helps clarify their unique identities and the challenges each group faces.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

These tribal communities face serious problems and are in distress. The entire population is suffering and is on the verge of extinction. Previously known as primitive tribal groups, these groups are now classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Based on vulnerability, the criteria for identifying these groups, stated by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1979, are:

- Pre-agricultural level of technology and economy
- Declining population
- Low rate of literacy
- Subsistence level of economy

Among over 705 tribal groups, 75 are in 18 states and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. According to a statistical profile of Scheduled Tribes in India, published by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the PVTG population was 27.68 lakhs of seventy-one (71) communities. About nineteen communities have populations of less than 1,000, of which the Sentinelese (15) and Great Andamanese (44) have the smallest. Most PVTGs live in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. However, the Maria Gond of Maharashtra and Saora of Odisha have comparatively larger populations among all PVTGs. Given their livelihoods and ecological systems, these groups are relatively isolated and maintain distinct cultures. They practice hunting, food gathering, fishing, pastoralism, and shifting cultivation for subsistence. Some communities are classified as Scheduled Tribes in one state in India but not in others. Because of the constitutional attributes, the same tribes are grouped under backward classes. “Given the vulnerability and special needs of PVTGs, separate schemes for economic uplift and imparting education have been envisaged for them (Venkata Rao, 2015). Also, the committee report submitted by Virginius Xaxa and referred to by V.K. Srivastava states that one important issue is identifying criteria to define tribal communities (Srivastava, 2015). Odisha has 13 PVTGs, Andhra Pradesh has 12, Bihar and Jharkhand have 9, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have 7, Tamil Nadu has 6, Kerala has 5, Gujarat has 5, West Bengal has 3, Maharashtra has 3, and Karnataka and Uttarakhand each have 2. Rajasthan, Manipur, and Tripura each have one PVTG.

Despite various welfare measures, PVTGs still face multiple challenges. These include extreme socio-economic vulnerability, geographical isolation, lack of access to healthcare and educational opportunities, inadequate nutrition, and limited livelihood options. Many groups experience high rates of poverty, land alienation, displacement, and declining populations. Language barriers, cultural marginalisation, and difficulties accessing government schemes often further deepen their challenges. Addressing these key issues is critical for improving the well-being and survival of PVTGs across the country.

Tribe-Caste Interaction

Scholars have different views about tribes and castes. People often think caste began with the division of work, while tribes formed from a shared community in a certain area. Even though tribes and castes are seen as separate, they have interacted over time. Sometimes, tribes joined Hindu society by taking on caste names and identities. Some tribes lived on the edges of villages and took on lower-status jobs given by caste Hindus, which led them to become part of Hindu society. Tribal people have also used caste surnames or gotras and married into caste groups. Some wealthy tribal members have joined higher castes with help from caste priests. When tribes become part of the caste system, they often lose their original identity.

Sociologists study how tribes and castes interact by looking at what they have in common and how they differ. They have found that tribes and castes share many basic features.

- N. K. Bose said that tribes and castes have similar customs. Both groups marry within their own community but marry outside their own clan or gotra.
- Ghurye believes tribal groups are part of Hindu society, but they differ mainly in their social and cultural development.

Both tribes and castes either cremate or bury their dead. Still, some scholars disagree.

- Andre Beteille notes clear differences between tribes and castes. She says caste society has a strict hierarchy, but tribal society is more equal.
- Max Weber explains that a tribe is a local group mainly defined by its land. If a tribe loses its land, it turns into a caste. So, a caste is a type of social group.

- Bailey says that people in castes have fixed jobs chosen by society. In contrast, people in tribes can pick any job, so their work is not set.
- D.N. Majumdar says that Hindu rituals are unfamiliar to tribal people, but they are important in the caste system. Tribals and caste Hindus have interacted for many years, which has affected both groups. The level and type of contact have differed by region. Usually, tribals have been more influenced, and records show that many lower-caste Hindus today were once tribals. Most have fully joined the caste system. Tribes and castes are not completely separate, as they often overlap.

Regional variation in tribe-caste interaction

Tribe-caste interaction varies across regions. Many tribes adopted certain traits of regional Hindus into their traditional cultures to assimilate into the Hindu caste system. Despite this assimilation, they have failed to secure any rank in the hierarchy. However, some have integrated into the system and been accepted as members of the lower castes. In some cases, the tribes have also been accepted among the twice-born castes. For example, two Central Himalayan tribes, i.e., Tharu and Khasa, have been accepted as Kshatriyas. They have continued to follow the ways of life and culture of the Rajputs and Brahmins living in nearby areas. They have not only had long and continuous social connections with the regional Hindu castes of the plains, but have also adopted Hindu names. Thus, they have been gradually given the status of Rajput castes. Many tribes are also seen to enter into jajmani relationships. For example, the Oraons of Chhota Nagpur are the region's aboriginal tribe. They call themselves Kurukh and speak a Dravidian language similar to Gondi. Like Hindu castes, the Oraons also follow significant socio-economic relationships with other tribes. The Oraons need the servicing castes, or the kamins. Therefore, the Julahas and Turis supply them with clothes and earthenware pots and tiles for roofing; the Lohars supply and repair the iron implements, and the Ahirs tend their cattle. Many other tribes, such as the Mahlis, the Koras, the Banjaras, the Baigas, etc., serve the tribes and castes of Chhota Nagpur and have jajmani relations with them. Similar jajmani relations also existed among the tribals of the Nilgiri Hills.

Constitutional Provisions

During British rule, the administration was concerned only with revenue and land regulation in tribal areas. The tribals were otherwise left

to live in isolation. Only after Independence did the government initiate various welfare measures to develop these people. Since equality and justice are the ideals of the Indian Constitution, it has sought to protect the weaker sections of society, especially the backward classes like the Scheduled tribes, from any discrimination based on race, colour, place of birth or religion. Therefore, the Constitution provides certain special provisions intended to aid their development and welfare. The protective rights provided by the Indian Constitution can be classified under the following heads.

Educational and Cultural Rights [Articles 15 (4), 29, 46 and 350]

- Article 15(4): This allows the state to make special laws to relax minimum qualifying marks for admission of SCs/STs.
- Article 29: This article allows any group of citizens living anywhere in the country to maintain and practice their own language, culture, or script through educational institutions.
- Article 46: This article allows the state to support the education and economic interests of weaker sections, especially SCs and STs, with special attention. It also protects them from social injustice and exploitation.
- Article 350: This article gives everyone the right to send complaints to any Union or State officer or authority, using any language spoken in the Union or States.

Social Rights (Articles 23 and 24)

- Article 23: This prohibits bonded labour.
- Article 24: This article bans the employment of children under 14 years old in dangerous jobs or factories.
- Article 244: This article covers how Scheduled Areas or Tribal Areas are managed.
- Article 275: This article allows Parliament to give special grants to states to run development programs for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes or to improve administration in Scheduled Areas.

Political Rights [Articles 164 (1), 243, 330, 334 and 371]

- Article 164(1): This article allows states like Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa to set up a special ministry for Scheduled Tribes.

- Articles 243, 330, and 334: These articles are about reserving seats in the Lok Sabha and Panchayats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Article 371: This article covers special rules for the North-Eastern States. The Supreme Court held that someone from an SC or ST group with the same name in two states can receive rights and benefits only in their home state, unless they are also listed as SC/ST in the other state (Articles 341 and 342).

Employment Rights of the Tribals [Articles 15 (4), 16 (4, 4A)]

- Article 15(4): This article gives STs reserved seats in educational institutions.
- Article 16(4) and (4A): These articles provide STs with reservations in jobs and promotions.

Along with these articles, the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Indian Constitution also have rules for the welfare of SCs and STs. The Fifth Schedule covers how Scheduled Areas and Tribes are managed in all states except Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. The Sixth Schedule covers the management of tribal areas in Assam and allows the creation of autonomous districts and regions. Article 244(A) lets Parliament set up an autonomous region in Assam for tribal areas and creates local legislatures or a Council of Ministers for these areas. The 89th Amendment in 2003 added Article 338A, which set up a national Commission for STs. The President appoints the Commission's Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and three other members. The Commission checks if the safeguards for STs are working, investigates complaints, and reports to the President. It also suggests ways for the Centre or States to improve these safeguards and can recommend other steps to protect and develop STs. Article 339(1) says the President can appoint a Commission at any time, and must do so after ten years from the start of the Constitution, to report on how Scheduled Areas and Tribes are managed.

5.7 Tribes and Caste

In tribal societies, access to communal resources is generally equal. However, each family's income varies based on factors such as the number of non-disabled members. As a result, resource distribution within tribes is not entirely equal. Nevertheless, mechanisms exist to prevent wealth accumulation, promote redistribution, and support egalitarian

consumption. In contrast, the caste system is characterised by pronounced inequalities in social status, both within individual castes and between different castes. These disparities extend to access to knowledge, productive resources, and social status, as well as cultural practices and traditional notions of justice. For example, caste often determines punishments for legal transgressions. Thus, a clear contrast emerges: tribal systems emphasise equality, whereas caste systems institutionalise inequality. Both systems possess distinct hierarchical features, which will be examined further.

In eighteenth-century writings on India, the term 'caste' was often used interchangeably with 'tribe,' and later in the phrase 'caste and tribe,' as if these were similar social groups. With the rise of colonialism in Europe, 'tribe' came to denote a particular stage in the socio-political evolution of a community within a specific region and language area. Over time, terms such as clan, tribe, and nation became markers of different stages in the progression toward nationhood. The term 'tribe' traces back to the Middle English 'tribus,' referring to the three divisions of early Roman society, itself derived from Latin. For the Romans, a tribe was a political division, while the Greeks sometimes equated it with fraternities or geographical divisions. In Irish tradition, 'tribe' referred to families or communities sharing a surname, and in other Western contexts, it denoted a territorial division assigned to a family or community. For contemporary Western anthropologists and sociologists, 'tribe' typically refers to 'a race of people; now applied especially to a primary aggregate of people in primitive or barbarous conditions, under a headman or chief.' Most Western scholars studying India have adopted this definition, with minor variations. In the Indian context, it is important to assess whether this definition applies. In Indian languages, including Sanskrit and Prakrit, the term 'Jana' denoted a tribe. These Janas, or tribes, differed from other communities in that they remained outside the control of the Jati system of social organisation.

Relationship between the Tribes and Caste

Tribe	Caste
➤ The Hindi synonym is Janjati	➤ The Hindi synonym is Jati
➤ It is a territorial group	➤ It is a social group
➤ Originates from we-feeling	➤ Originates from the division of labour

➤ No restriction on the mobility of social state	➤ Upward and Downward mobility not accepted
➤ Isolated from other ethnic groups	➤ Not isolated from other ethnic groups
➤ Does not give social status	➤ Gives social status (ascribed status)
➤ No restriction on socialization and eating	➤ Restriction on social status and eating
➤ Occupation is decided by age and sex	➤ Occupation is decided by birth
➤ May be endogamous or exogamous	➤ Always endogamous
➤ Does not suffer from civil or religious disabilities	➤ Suffer from civil and religious disabilities (going to the temple regularly, drinking well water only)
➤ Has a well-defined political organization	➤ Has a political organization of inferior degree
➤ Religion is Animism	➤ Religion is Hinduism

In tribal societies, equality is common, while the caste system is marked by inequality. Tribes are independent social groups and tend to share more in language and territory than castes do. Sometimes, tribes also marry within their group, as castes do. The Indian caste system is a complex social structure. Louis Dumont notes that caste is a unique institution among Hindus. The main rule of caste is marrying within the group. Castes are based on birth status. While certain jobs are linked to castes, occupation is not the main feature. Castes often control their members by setting rules about marriage and social contact with other groups. In many places, caste councils help enforce these rules, and their influence varies from one caste to another. Each caste has a name, which may hint at its traditional job. Castes also have specific signs that help identify them. Overall, the caste system is a network of separate groups, organised by birth and interacting through strict marriage rules.

5.8 Problems faced by Tribal Communities in India

Land Alienation

Land constitutes the primary source of livelihood for tribal communities, with many families dependent on agriculture and forest resources. Land alienation involves the loss or transfer of tribal land to non-tribal individuals or external entities. Factors such as indebtedness, displacement, and inequitable transactions frequently result in the erosion of traditional landholdings. For example, the Kondh tribe in Odisha has experienced substantial land alienation due to mining operations and commercial interests, leading to the loss of ancestral territories. These developments contribute to unemployment, poverty, increased reliance on wage labour, and migration. Therefore, safeguarding tribal land rights is essential for ensuring tribal welfare.

Poverty

Poverty remains a persistent and significant challenge for many tribal communities in India. Recent data indicate that the poverty rate among Scheduled Tribes is considerably higher than the national average. While the national poverty rate is approximately 21.9%, over 40% of tribal individuals reportedly live below the poverty line. Tribal households often depend on agriculture, forest product collection, daily wage labour, fishing, and other traditional occupations, which typically provide irregular and inadequate income. Poverty restricts access to nutritious food, education, healthcare, housing, and other essential services, thereby contributing to the broader social and economic marginalisation of tribal communities.

Displacement

Displacement arises when tribal communities are compelled to relocate from their traditional settlements due to development initiatives such as dams, mining, industrial projects, roads, and other infrastructure. This process frequently results in the loss of land, housing, employment, forests, and community cohesion, and may disrupt traditional cultural practices and social networks. In response, the government has implemented laws and policies to protect the interests of affected populations, including the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. This legislation aims to ensure equitable compensation and adequate rehabilitation for individuals

displaced by development projects. Therefore, effective rehabilitation and livelihood restoration are essential when such projects affect tribal communities.

Educational Challenges

Education is fundamental to improving the social and economic status of tribal communities. However, tribal children often face barriers such as inadequate school infrastructure in remote areas, insufficient teachers, poverty, long travel distances, language barriers, and high dropout rates. Additionally, some children migrate with their families for seasonal employment. Addressing these challenges requires improving access to education, providing scholarships, establishing residential schools, and offering instruction in indigenous languages. The Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), established by the government, represent a successful initiative by providing quality education, boarding, and lodging to tribal children in remote regions, while emphasizing both academic achievement and cultural preservation. The success of EMRS in enhancing educational outcomes has led to the program's expansion to benefit additional communities.

Health Challenges

Access to healthcare remains a significant obstacle for many tribal communities living in remote, hilly, or forested regions. Hospitals are frequently located far from these communities, and both transportation and healthcare personnel are often limited. Poverty and limited awareness further restrict access to health services. Common health issues include malnutrition, inadequate maternal health, and a high prevalence of infectious diseases. Strengthening basic healthcare infrastructure, nutrition programs, transportation, and health education is essential to improve health outcomes among tribal populations.

Unemployment and Decline of Traditional Occupations

Traditionally, tribal communities have relied on occupations such as agriculture, hunting and gathering, fishing, shifting cultivation, animal husbandry, handicraft production, and forest product collection. However, economic transitions, environmental changes, alterations in forest regulations, and evolving market dynamics have reduced these employment opportunities. Consequently, many tribal individuals now depend on daily wage labour or migrate in search of work. Implementing

vocational training and promoting sustainable livelihood options are essential strategies to address this challenge.

Economic Exploitation by Moneylenders and Intermediaries

Economic exploitation continues to affect certain tribal communities. During periods of financial hardship or unemployment, tribal families may borrow from moneylenders at exorbitant interest rates, leading to prolonged indebtedness. Additionally, intermediaries often purchase forest products such as honey, bamboo, fruits, and medicinal plants at low prices and resell them at higher rates in larger markets. Improving access to affordable credit, promoting cooperatives, and ensuring fair pricing mechanisms are essential measures to mitigate such exploitation.

Challenges Related to Forest Resources

Forests are central to the economic and cultural well-being of many tribal communities, providing essential resources such as food, fuel, medicinal plants, fruits, bamboo, and honey. Restrictions on forest access, deforestation, and resource overexploitation negatively impact tribal livelihoods. The depletion of forest resources also endangers traditional knowledge systems and cultural practices. Therefore, sustainable forest management and the recognition of community rights are crucial for promoting tribal welfare.

Cultural Change

Tribal communities maintain distinct languages, customs, festivals, religious beliefs, music, dance, culinary traditions, and bodies of traditional knowledge. Processes such as modernisation, urbanisation, migration, formal education, mass media exposure, and market integration have significantly influenced tribal cultures. For example, the Santali language, spoken by the Santal tribe, is declining among younger generations, who increasingly adopt regional or national languages for education and employment. In some areas, traditional festivals and folk dances are being replaced by contemporary entertainment, hindering the transmission of customs and rituals. While certain changes provide new educational and employment opportunities, rapid cultural transformation may erode traditional languages, customs, and knowledge. Therefore, development initiatives must balance modernisation with the preservation of cultural identity.

Social Discrimination and Marginalisation

Some tribal communities experience social exclusion and marginalisation due to poverty, geographic isolation, and cultural differences. Marginalisation limits their access to social, economic, educational, and political opportunities. Discriminatory practices further restrict participation in society and impede access to public services. Promoting equality, increasing awareness, expanding educational opportunities, and fostering social inclusion are necessary to improve the social status of tribal populations.

Migration

Limited employment opportunities in tribal regions often lead individuals to migrate to urban centers, either temporarily or permanently. Tribal migrants typically work in informal sectors such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and domestic work. Although migration can provide supplementary income, migrants frequently face low wages, job insecurity, inadequate housing, exploitation, and family separation. Creating stable employment opportunities within tribal areas is essential to reduce migration driven by economic hardship.

Political Marginalisation

Despite legal protections and political representation, many tribal communities continue to face challenges in participating in decision-making regarding their land, forests, resources, and development. Barriers such as limited awareness, poverty, restricted access to institutions, and geographic isolation hinder effective political engagement. Promoting local participation and ensuring that tribal populations have meaningful influence over decisions affecting their interests are fundamental to achieving inclusive development.

Environmental Challenges

Tribal communities often depend on forests, agriculture, water, and other natural resources for their livelihoods. Environmental issues such as deforestation, mining, water pollution, soil degradation, and biodiversity loss directly threaten their way of life. Environmental degradation reduces agricultural productivity and limits the availability of forest products. Implementing sustainable development practices and involving tribal communities in environmental management are crucial for protecting both tribal livelihoods and natural resources.

Challenges Faced by Tribal Women

Tribal women play a vital role in agriculture, forest product collection, household management, animal husbandry, and wage labour. Despite these contributions, they frequently encounter poverty, limited access to education, health challenges, low wages, and heavy workloads. Tribal women may also face obstacles to land ownership, employment, credit, and participation in decision-making. Initiatives such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and the Mahila Samakhyas Programme seek to empower tribal women by providing access to microcredit, skill development, education, and collective decision-making. Therefore, tribal development programs should prioritise the education, health, economic empowerment, and social status of tribal women.

5.9 Tribes as Indigenous People of India

The term ‘indigenous people’ denotes communities with a longstanding historical association with specific geographical regions, which have developed unique social, cultural, economic, and political institutions. These communities typically maintain distinctive traditions, languages, customary practices, and knowledge systems. Their identities are closely linked to ancestral lands, natural resources, and communal life.

Tribes and Indigenous Identity in India

In India, tribal communities are frequently referred to as indigenous or Adivasi communities due to their enduring association with specific territories and distinctive cultural traditions. The term ‘Adivasi,’ meaning ‘original inhabitant,’ is widely adopted by various tribal groups and social movements. Nevertheless, debates persist regarding the use of ‘indigenous,’ ‘Adivasi,’ and ‘Scheduled Tribe.’ Some scholars employ ‘indigenous people’ in a global context, while others contend that the Indian context is unique and that the constitutional category of Scheduled Tribes is distinct. Scheduled Tribes are officially recognized communities under the Indian Constitution. These discussions underscore the complexity and politics of identity in India.

Historical and Cultural Roots

Tribal communities possess a longstanding history of settlement across various regions of India. They have developed distinct cultural traditions, customs, beliefs, rituals, languages, and social institutions.

Much of their history is preserved through oral traditions, including folk stories, songs, dances, and communal practices. These traditions illustrate their connections to ancestors, land, and the natural environment.

Relationship with Land and Nature

Land and natural resources occupy a central role in tribal life. Traditionally, many tribal communities have relied on forests, land, rivers, and other natural resources for sustenance, shelter, and livelihoods. Economic activities such as hunting, gathering, shifting cultivation, agriculture, fishing, and the collection of forest products are prevalent among various tribal groups. Traditional knowledge of flora, fauna, and environmental resources constitutes a significant aspect of their cultural heritage.

Distinctive Social Organisation

Tribal communities maintain distinct forms of social organization. Family, kinship, clan, lineage, and village institutions are central to regulating social relationships. In many tribal societies, customary rules and community institutions have historically contributed to maintaining social order and resolving disputes. These structures vary across different tribal groups.

Language and Cultural Traditions

Tribal communities exhibit linguistic and cultural diversity. Their cultural expressions encompass folk songs, dances, music, paintings, handicrafts, festivals, rituals, culinary practices, and traditional attire. For instance, art forms such as Warli painting highlight the significance of nature, community life, and daily activities in tribal culture. These practices contribute significantly to India's cultural diversity.

Tribal Communities in India

India is home to numerous tribal communities distributed across diverse geographical regions. Prominent groups include the Gonds, Santhals, Bhils, Mundas, Oraons, Todas, Khasis, Nagas, Mizos, and Warlis. Each community maintains distinct social organizations, languages, customs, and cultural practices. Tribal populations are especially concentrated in Central India, the North-Eastern region, the Himalayan areas, and parts of Southern India.

Impact of Colonialism

Colonial rule introduced profound changes to tribal societies. Policies regarding forests, land revenue, and restrictions on resource use disrupted traditional livelihoods. The commercial exploitation of forests and alterations in land ownership further exacerbated economic and social challenges. These developments prompted numerous tribal resistances and movements against colonial authorities. For example, the Santhal Rebellion of 1855-56 represented a significant uprising by the Santhal community against British officials and local landlords in present-day Jharkhand. Similarly, Birsa Munda led a late 19th-century movement to oppose colonial land policies and restore the traditional rights of the Munda people. These instances demonstrate the resilience of tribal communities in defending their rights and ways of life during the colonial era.

Displacement and Development

Following independence, development initiatives such as dams, mining, industrial projects, roads, and other infrastructure have at times displaced tribal communities from their ancestral territories. The loss of land and forests adversely impacts their livelihoods, social relationships, and cultural practices.

For instance, the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River in western India resulted in the displacement of thousands of tribal families. Numerous Adivasi communities lost ancestral homes, agricultural land, and access to forests as a consequence of the dam's reservoir. The resettlement and rehabilitation process has encountered multiple challenges, including the loss of traditional livelihoods and the disruption of community bonds. Consequently, issues related to land rights, rehabilitation, and the protection of traditional resources remains central to the study of tribal societies.

Constitutional Recognition

The Indian Constitution recognises specific tribal communities as Scheduled Tribes, with Article 342 providing for their official designation. Multiple constitutional and legal safeguards have been established to advance their educational, economic, social, and political development. Additionally, special provisions exist to administer and protect tribal areas throughout the country. Tribal communities are undergoing considerable transformation because of education, urbanisation,

migration, industrialisation, modernisation, government programmes and technological development. Some tribal people have entered modern occupations and educational institutions, while others still depend heavily on traditional livelihoods. In recent years, the government has introduced policies and initiatives to support tribal communities and address their specific needs. For example, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA) seeks to recognise and vest forest rights in tribal communities, while the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) aims to empower local self-governance in tribal areas. Other welfare schemes such as scholarships, special hostels, and livelihood programs have also been launched. These changes have created both new opportunities and challenges for tribal communities.

Challenges Faced by Tribal Communities

Many tribal communities continue to face challenges such as poverty, land alienation, displacement, unemployment, educational disadvantages, limited access to healthcare, and the loss of traditional resources. Simultaneously, these communities actively strive to safeguard their cultural identity, land rights, and traditional knowledge. Addressing these issues is essential for fostering inclusive and sustainable development.

5.10 Classification of Indian Tribes

The classification of Indian tribes is a complex and challenging task due to the country's extensive cultural and linguistic diversity. Such classification is essential for formulating effective government policies, facilitating academic research, and enhancing understanding of the unique identities and social dynamics within India's tribal communities. Various criteria have been employed to classify tribes, including language, ethnicity, geography, and social organisation. The following are some of the major classifications:

Linguistic Classification

- **Indo-Aryan Tribes:** These tribes speak languages belonging to the Indo-Aryan language family, which is the most widely spoken language group in India. Examples include the Bhil and Warli tribes.
- **Dravidian Tribes:** These tribes speak languages of the Dravidian language family, which is predominantly spoken in southern India. Examples include the Toda, Kota, and Gond tribes.

- **Tibeto-Burman Tribes:** These tribes speak languages from the Tibeto-Burman language family, which is primarily spoken in northeastern India. Examples include the Naga, Bodo, and Kuki tribes.
- **Austroasiatic Tribes:** These tribes speak languages of the Austroasiatic language family, which is spoken in parts of eastern and central India. Examples include the Munda, Santhal, and Ho tribes.

Ethnic Classification

- **Scheduled Tribes:** This term refers to tribes officially recognised and listed in the Constitution of India. Scheduled Tribes are entitled to certain constitutional safeguards and benefits, such as reservations in education and government jobs, political representation, protection of their traditional lands, and special development programs aimed at improving their social and economic status.
- **Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs):** These tribes are considered particularly vulnerable and isolated, with a distinct cultural heritage and way of life. All PTGs are included among the Scheduled Tribes and receive constitutional safeguards; however, the government further identifies PTGs based on criteria such as pre-agricultural technology, extremely low literacy rates, small population sizes, and significant isolation from mainstream society. Due to their heightened vulnerability, PTGs receive special attention and additional protection through targeted development programs.

Geographical Classification

- **Northern Tribes:** These tribes inhabit northern India, including Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. Examples include the Gujjar, Bakerwal, and Gaddi tribes.
- **Central Tribes:** These tribes live in central India, including Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand. Examples include the Gond, Bhil, and Oraon tribes.
- **Eastern Tribes:** These tribes live in eastern India, including West Bengal, Odisha, and Assam. Examples include the Santhal, Munda, and Bodo tribes.
- **Southern Tribes:** These tribes reside in the southern states of India, including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka. Examples include the Toda, Kota, and Irula tribes.

Social Organisation Classification

- **Patrilineal Tribes:** These tribes adhere to a patrilineal system, in which descent and inheritance are traced through the father's lineage. In these societies, property and family names are generally passed from father to son, and men frequently hold greater authority in familial and community affairs. Examples include the Naga, Bodo, and Kuki tribes.
- **Matrilineal Tribes:** These tribes follow a matrilineal system, in which descent and inheritance are traced through the mother's lineage. In such societies, property, family names, and clan membership are passed from mother to daughter, and women typically play a central role in household decision-making and organisation. Examples include the Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia tribes.

5.11 Indigenous Tribes of India and their Culture

We indeed live in a high-tech world where things are becoming easier and life a bit simpler. But we can't deny that this has also brought a lot of materialism and wastefulness into our lives. Even though we know about several such things, we still succumb to them. In contrast, another world exists where people still live in a primitive way. They are equally vibrant and culturally rich, with different traditions, cultures, lifestyles, beliefs, food, languages, rituals, and a totally different approach to life. They exemplify the anthropological wealth of India's heritage.

Major Tribes in India

India has more than 550 tribes that have been present in the country for a long time. Each community has its own individuality that sets it apart from other tribes. All of these communities share one thing in common: disconnection from the outside world. They are unaware of the technology and developments going around the globe, and somehow they are happy with this decision. Across the country, we profiled the 30 most interesting and comparatively popular indigenous tribes in India and their culture in this blog. Check out their names, where they live, and what makes them different from others.

Tribes from East India

Munda – Jharkhand: The Munda tribe's main habitat is Jharkhand, but you can also find them in nearby states such as West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha,

and Chhattisgarh. Mundas are also found in some parts of Bangladesh. This tribal community is among the oldest in South Asia. Several pieces of evidence show their presence in the pre-British era, but the tribe gained recognition between 1857 and 1928 largely because of Birsa Munda. Birsa was also believed to be a prophet and a freedom fighter who played a significant role in India's struggle for independence. In the early 1900s, several anthropologists discovered them and documented them on several occasions. Currently, roughly 2 million Mundas reside in India. On many occasions, Mundas have also been referred to as one of Jharkhand's strongest tribes.

Pahari Korwa – Jharkhand: Another tribe in Jharkhand that is also part of the Munda ethnic group is the Korwa. These people mainly live on the Chhattisgarh-Jharkhand border but can also be found in the Mirzapur district of UP. On various occasions, the Government of India has implemented schemes and provided many facilities and support for their development. The tribe has sub-divisions, and one of them, who mostly lived in the hills and plateaus, was called Pahari Korwa. They mostly practice a different form of agriculture known as Jhoonga Kheti. In this type of farming, the people trim the forest to grow lentil crops. The total population of the Pahari Korwa is estimated at around 1 million. Even with financial and infrastructural support from the government, these people still prefer to live in the hills, undulating, and forested areas. This tribe worships Satbahini Devi and lives in mud houses. They have their own language, which is also known as the Korwa language.

Baiga – Bihar: Baiga means sorcerers, and it is one of India's vulnerable tribes. Though they are present in parts of Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, UP, MP, and West Bengal, they belong to Bihar. Traditionally, Baiga people preferred living a semi-nomadic life and practised "slash-and-burn" cultivation. But now, they live in the forested parts of Bihar and mainly depend on forest produce for their livelihood. They use bamboo to build their houses and other household items, such as baskets. They have a sweet spot for fresh honey and use traditional techniques to collect it. The Baiga tribe is also skilled at developing folk medicines using their in-depth knowledge of medicinal plants and shrubs. With a rich cultural heritage, these people also have a unique dance form, music, and dramas. According to a unique tradition of this tribe, after death, the entire family has to leave their house and build a new one. Thank god, they don't use bricks and cement to build one. They also have a tattoo tradition where

everyone must get a body part tattooed at a certain age and on a specific occasion.

Santhal – Bihar: Spread across West Bengal, Assam, Jharkhand, and Odisha; the Santhal Tribe is densely populated in Bihar. The roots of this tribe date back to the pre-Aryan period, and they are also known to be great fighters. Santhals are believed to have fought the British for freedom. They are one of the bravest tribes in India. It is also believed that Sidhu, a heroic Santhal, gathered 10,000 of his kind and ran a parallel government against the British. In 1789, Baba Tilka Majhi fought the first battle for the Santhals. According to the latest census, approximately 49000 Santhals live across India, mainly in Bihar. This tribe has a joyous, culture-oriented way of life. They love music and dancing. Whether at a fair, festival, or occasion, Santhals always find a way to connect with music and dance. They have created a few instruments, including the Tirio, which adds to their love of music and dance.

Birhor – Bihar: The name Birhor is self-explanatory; Bir means forest, and hor means men. Therefore, the Birhor tribe includes forest men and women. These people traditionally lived as nomads and were entirely dependent on forests for their livelihood. The Birhor population is declining over time due to extensive deforestation. They are fond of monkey meat and other forest produce. They still use primitive traps to catch prey, but they are very skilful. They still use outdated products and are years behind the revolution happening in the outside world. These people move from place to place in the forest often and set up their worship place first. These people follow a mix of Hinduism and animism. Their birth rate is declining over time, and death rates are rising as forests are depleted. Malnutrition among children and adults is common in this tribe.

Toto Tribe – West Bengal: The Toto are one of India's endangered tribes, found in the Totopur region of West Bengal. Their numbers are depleting over time, and you won't find them anywhere outside this region. This tribe prefers to keep themselves in a shell, disconnected from the outside world. According to the last survey, the total number of people in this tribe is no more than 1500 which is why they are also tagged as an endogamous group. These people have very low literacy and employment rates. Mostly, these people collect sandstone from riverbeds, raise pigs, and herd cows. In a lot of case studies by anthropologists, this tribe is referred to as 'a vanishing tribe' due to their small numbers. The Toto tribe practices endogamous marriages, and almost 80% of people in the tribe are infected

with thalassemia, which is a form of anaemia. This infection has also reduced the life expectancy of these people and limited it to just 35 years, which is much lower than the national average.

Great Andamanese Tribes – Andaman: The Great Andamanese Tribes are from the Andaman Islands and are a part of the Negrito tribal family. With a population of just about 30,000, this tribe is also on the verge of extinction. The tribe's current population status is unclear at the moment, but they are known for their physical stature, culture, and occupation. The Great Andamanese Tribes originally had a few sub-groups and communities, but all of them disappeared over time. The tribe's staple foods include rice, wheat, dal, and chapati. The community speaks Jeru, Khora, and Andamanese Hindi. Cultural diversity is one of the tribe's unique features. All the men in this tribe wear narrow belts made out of hibiscus fibre that suit their heavy bodies. They tuck their weapons into these belts when they leave home to hunt. The women showcase their tribal sense of dressing with a unique way of designing and wearing clothes.

Tribes from West India

Kokna – Gujarat: The Kokna Tribe is found in a few districts of Maharashtra, but they also have a strong presence in Gujarat. From Dadra and Nagar Haveli, they reside in the Valsad, Ahwa-Dang, and Navsari districts of Gujarat. This tribe is believed to have originated from Konkan Patti situated in the Thane district. Many stories surround this tribe, and it is recognised as one of the country's scheduled tribes. These people speak an Indo-Aryan language but can also speak and read Marathi, Devanagari, and Hindi. Their staple foods include wheat, rice, vegetables, goat meat, and pork. The Kokna tribe works as farmers, growing vegetables and fruits in their fields. With government policies and rules, a few people from this tribe have now started working as government labourers.

Madia – Maharashtra: The Madia tribe, also known as Madia Gond, is another tribal community that lives in the Gadchiroli and Chandrapur districts of Maharashtra. The government of India has given them the status of "Primitive tribal group." This tribe also resides in the Dandakaranya forest. This is one of India's oldest tribes, having lived for centuries. Until recently, this tribe was completely cut off from the outside world, with no access to clothing, language, health care, education, or other essentials. Lok Biradari Prakalp's establishment helped these people learn about some of their rights and other essentials, including education

and medication. This tribe's people are skilled craftsmen and hunters who speak Madia. Although they don't follow or believe in India's major religions, they continue to worship the forces of nature and their local deities. These people have been cut off from the outside world for a long time until recently, but now they have started understanding the customs and ways of people living in developed areas.

Ka Thakar – Maharashtra: Ka Thakar, Thakar, and Ma Thakar are different tribal groups within the same community. They are primarily found in the Thane, Pune, Raigad, Nashik, and Ahmednagar districts of Maharashtra. Initially, this tribe lived in the Sahyadri Range, but over time they moved out and are now found in several places across the state. Wherever they stay, the place is called Thakarwadi. The Ka Thakars are skilful bamboo artisans, small cultivators, fishermen, daily-wage labourers, and are often seen gathering minor forest produce for their living. This tribe of Maharashtra has survived and expanded its territory amid modern development. Like many other tribes, these are also popular for their folk songs and dance forms. Many people have also accounted for their unique but enjoyable celebration of Diwali. On this occasion, the Ka Thakras light lamps made from Chibra fruit, re placed oa dung standWarli – Maharashtra

Warli is one of India's tribes with a presence across different regions of Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Gujarat. They are spread across Nashik, Thane, and Dhule in Maharashtra; Valsad in Gujarat; parts of Karnataka; Dadra & Nagar Haveli; Goa; and Daman & Diu. They are known as small-scale cultivators of vegetables, pulses, and rice. They also sell fuelwood, mahua, toddy, and a few other products to neighbouring communities for their livelihood. People of the Warli Tribe don't worship any god other than nature. Warli art is based on a belief system established by their ancestors centuries ago, and they have followed it ever since. The people of this tribe never had a "written word" until recently, and their art transmitted their belief system for generations. While all the sculptures and drawings have always depicted their community traditions, the tools have been a part of nature.

Tribes from South India

Siddi Tribe – Goa and Karnataka: Often referred to as India's forgotten African Tribe, Siddis are found in 3 states and 1 union territory of India. Prominently found in Goa and Karnataka, the people of this tribe are believed to be descendants of those released from bondage in Karnataka,

Goa, and other neighbouring states. In many villages around these states, Siddis are known to have been the original settlers. This tribe is known for being brave, and stories say they weren't even scared of beasts, tigers, or snakes. Initially, they were hunters, but over time they started living a settled life and working as cultivators in the forest land. The Siddi are one of the tribes in India that have finally received recognition and are now part of the "Scheduled Tribes of the country." Over time, the tribe's living conditions have improved, but many groups still live in dense forests where help has yet to reach.

Koli Dhor – Karnataka: The Koli Dhor tribe mainly resides in the Sahyadri mountain range, part of the Western Ghats. Koli's traces can be found in Thane, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Nashik, Rajasthan, Greater Bombay, Gujarat, and several places in Karnataka. Karnataka is known to be the origin land of this tribe. They got their name from a tradition of tanning cattle hides, but over time they became interested in agriculture for good reasons. The Koli Dhor, also known as Wadi, have a unique way of building houses. All their houses are rectangular or square, and they build them without pedestals. They use materials such as mud, rice, bamboo, sticks, wooden poles, cow dung plaster, and rice hay to make their houses. Many tribe members are landless and poor, so they migrate to nearby cities and towns to work. They work as daily wagers on agricultural lands and also as labourers.

Kodava Tribes – Karnataka: Kodava is probably known as one of the earliest inhabitants of Karnataka, especially Coorg. The origin and existence of this tribe are less known, and information about their history is a bit hazy. From what's known, Kodavas are an indigenous community of tribes that have been hunters and warriors since the very beginning. They are also known as land-owning tribes with a strong bond to their marital traditions and land. This is one of the tribes of Karnataka that has been present in Coorg for a long time. Still, interestingly, since the first census in 1871, their total population has never exceeded 20% of Coorg's total population. This tribe has a unique traditional way of dressing, along with unique cultural practices, social structure, language, and much more.

Gond – Andhra Pradesh: Gonds are among the largest tribes in South Asia. With a population of over 9 million, they are among the world's largest tribes. Their traces can be found in various parts of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, and West Bengal. Gonds are further

subdivided into 4 categories: Madia Gonds, Raj Gonds, Khatulwar Gonds, and Dhurve Gonds. The tribe's staple foods are kodo and kutki, two types of millets. For them, rice is a luxury, and they eat it mainly during festivals and other occasions. These people believe that nature and its elements are the only gods of this world. They pray to earth, air, and water.

Chenchu Tribes – Andhra Pradesh: The Chenchu tribes are found mainly in the central hilly areas of Andhra Pradesh. These Hindu aboriginals have a strong presence in the Prakasam, Mahboobnagar, Kurnool, Nalgonda, and Guntur districts. The Chenchus still find hunting more comfortable than farming. They hunt animals and sell their flesh after filling their stocks. They exchange the meat for other items. Some groups in this community collect forest products such as beedi leaves, roots, tubers, fruits, honey, gum, tamarind, mahua flowers, and other items. After collecting these items, they sell them to the government officials and traders for a small income. They also weave plates and cups from tobacco leaves and sell mahua flowers and honey in the local market. According to the 1991 census, Chenchu tribes make up about 8% of India's population, nearly 68 million. This tribe has a strong presence across southern India, including Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. These people worship Hanuman, Lord Shiva, and the Goddess of Fire. Some groups also worship Garelamai Sama, known as the Goddess of the forest, who protects them from every danger.

Toda Tribe – Tamil Nadu: Of all the tribes in India, the Toda are the most ancient. They are known as an unusual tribe that resides in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu. The tribe has its own language and secretive rules, regulations, and customs. Their rituals include worshipping the hill gods, the realm of the dead (Lord Amodr), and Goddess Teikirizi. These people are also known for their finesse in garment embroidery. The women of this tribe mostly use black and red threads on a white background, creating a rich effect. The Toda people mainly rely on cattle for milk products. Still, some have also become experts in silversmithing. In the past, Todas believed they were descendants of the Pandavas. Because of this belief, they had a tradition in which one woman had to marry all the males in a family, and they all became her husbands. Many stories tell of these people, and some also believe the Todas are descendants of Alexander's Macedonian army, which invaded India in 327 B.C.

Irula Tribe – Kerala: Have you ever heard about the daredevil snake catchers of India? The dark-skinned people, as they call them, are members

of the Irula Tribe. One of the most popular and ancient tribes of India, the Irula live on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border. These people play a vital role in developing anti-venoms because they are known for catching snakes not just in India, but worldwide. Their popularity has an interesting story. Romulus Whitaker, a famous wildlife conservationist and herpetologist, set up a cooperative on the outskirts of Tamil Nadu in 1978. He used the knowledge and skills of the Irula Tribe to catch snakes to produce anti-venoms. Since then, people from this tribe have even visited other countries to help people cope with snake invasions.

Kurumba Tribe – Tamil Nadu: Four tribal communities or groups have large populations in Southern India. One of them is the Kurumba Tribe, which lives around the Nilgiri Hills. This tribe is also considered one of the oldest in the area. Although there is much debate about their origin, the most widely accepted view is that Nilgiri residents crossed into TN from Kerala and Karnataka. The current group of Kurumba living in the subdivisions of Kothagiri, Gudalur, Kundha, Coonoor, and Pandalur in Nilgiri district is now included in India's Scheduled Tribe group. The Kurumba people were known as healers because of their extensive knowledge of medicinal plants. Honey is the most important element for this tribe. They collect and preserve it because they use it in many of the medicines they make. These people practice shifting cultivation, trapping, and foraging for small animals and birds. Over time, they have encroached on forest boundaries and started working as day labourers.

North-East India

Bodo Tribe – Assam: Almost all the North-Eastern states are home to several tribes of India. One of them, living in Assam, is the Bodo Tribe. Because of their rich culture and large population, the Bodo are often considered the true ethnic tribal community of the Seven Sisters. Most Bodo people live near the Brahmaputra Valley, and they are known as Assam's first settlers. The Bodo Tribe is also the first to cultivate rice and rear silkworms. Bodo people love dancing and singing at festivals and other occasions. Though everyone in this tribe now speaks Bodo, a beautiful language, people initially used the Roman script to communicate. Their sense of style and dresses are exquisite, making the women look beautiful and glamorous.

Nyishi Tribe – Arunachal Pradesh: Nyishi are one of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and are also known as Dafla and Bangni. They are mostly found

in Eastern Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. They are proficient in speaking the Tibeto-Burman language. These people support their livelihood through farming. They practice slash-and-burn agriculture, and some members hunt and fish. They prefer living at high altitudes, so they are usually found at elevations of 3000 to 6000 feet above sea level. They live in houses built on stilts. These people worship the spirits of nature. Members of this tribe follow a clan-based system of relations. There are three major clans, namely, Dollu, Dopum, and Dodum. These people are warm-hearted and believe in giving women equal rights and status within the clan. They also believe that women are symbols of strength, prosperity, and peace. That's why men in the family always take suggestions from their female counterparts before making any decision, big or small.

Bhutia Tribes – Sikkim: You might have heard about the Bhutia Tribe of Sikkim. You can find some groups of this tribe in West Bengal as well, but they have a dominant presence in Sikkim. A survey showed that 14% of Sikkim's population is of the Bhutia Tribe. This gives a fair idea of how dominant the tribe is. This tribe originated from Tibet but migrated to Sikkim in the 16th Century. You can find the Bhutia Tribe in the hilly areas of West Bengal such as Kalimpong and Darjeeling. You will mostly find them in the dry valleys of North Sikkim. Bhutias are simple and warm-hearted people who prefer living in joint families. The tribe's main occupation is agriculture.

Angami Nagas Tribes – Nagaland: Angami Nagas are one of India's tribes and belong to Nagaland. Nagaland has 20 different tribes, and Angami Nagas are one of them. With a total population of around 12 million, this tribe is one of the most prominent in the state. Most Angami Nagas live in Kohima, which is divided into 4 regions. In the North region, Nagas live in villages in North Kohima and Dimapur districts; in the south, they live in the foothills of Mt. Japf; and the rest live in the west and portions of Kohima. Angami Nagas are known for their expertise in art and woodcraft not just in the North-Eastern States but across the country. This tribe has such finesse in their work that they are known for producing cane furniture, beds, bamboo work, powerful machetes, beautiful shawls, and much more. They also love music and use flutes and drums to create tunes and rhymes. They also follow a culture where the love of music is passed from one generation to the next. They are also popular for their traditional dance where they form a circle around a bonfire and dance to music.

Garó Tribes- Assam: India is well known for its diversity, whether in languages, cuisines, landscapes, or anything else. The Garó Tribe in the North-Eastern States of India keeps this expression alive. This tribe is known for its culture and colourful lifestyle. In Assam, they are considered immigrants to this land. They originated from the Garó Hills of Meghalaya and then settled in various places. This tribe migrated from the Garó Hills to the other states of the Seven Sisters in the first half of the 19th century. The Wangala Festival is one of the main festivals of the Garó Tribe, and they celebrate it with great zeal. It is a colourful festival celebrated when the first crop is harvested. People wear colourful dresses and dance to their traditional music.

Khasi Tribes – Assam: The Khasi Tribe is known as the earliest immigrants to settle in East Assam from Myanmar. After settling down in most parts of the state, they established their own kingdom until the British invasion. Small groups of these people can be found in parts of Uttar Pradesh, Meghalaya, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, and West Bengal. In different areas, they are called by different names such as Kassi, Khasa, and Khasi Pahris. After Assam, their population is also large in Meghalaya. The Khasi Tribe follows many customs, rituals, and traditions. According to one of their traditions, every child in the tribe is recognised by the mother's name and not the father's. They believe the mother, not the father, inherits the child and the property. The law of this tribe states that marriages are a completely civil contract, and the marriage age of men is 18-35 and women 13-18. Though arranged marriages are in trend here, young people have the liberty to choose their partners.

Central India

Korku – Madhya Pradesh: Korku is one of the tribes of India with a strong presence in central India. They are mostly found in Khandwa, Betul, Burhanpur, and Chhindwara districts of MP, Chhattisgarh, and some adjoining parts of Maharashtra as well. They build their huts from grass and wood and prefer living in small groups. In front of every house, people keep a small storage place for cattle feed and farm produce. From the beginning, the Korku have been cultivators and have shared their love for the forests with the Gonds. They are excellent agriculturists, having pioneered coffee and potato cultivation. Although UNESCO lists the Korku language as one of 196 endangered languages, some groups, like the Potharia Korku, have preserved it. The Potharia Korku group lives somewhere in the Vindhya Mountains. The community has a distinct

cultural heritage, and its people still practise traditional healing methods. The Korku people install a Munda, a memorial pillar, every time a member of their group dies.

Abhuj Maria – Chhattisgarh: Abhuj Maria is one of those tribes of Chhattisgarh that have been living in hiding. This group has lived an isolated life and has never tried to establish a connection with the outside world. The Abhuj Maria are a Gond sub-tribe found in the secluded regions of Narayanpur Tehsil in Bastar, Chhattisgarh. Abhuj Maria is one of the tribes that has successfully kept its quintessential culture alive and intact to date. Following tradition, members of this tribe adorn themselves with iron rings around their necks. This group is not nomadic, but they mainly practice “slash-and-burn” cultivation. Over time, they have also started using other forms of settled cultivation. Their main crops include two types of millets, namely Kolha & Korsu, and rice. The main festival celebrated by this group is named Kaksar, which falls in June.

Bison Horn Maria – Chhattisgarh: Bison Horn Maria is a fairly popular tribe that gets its name from its distinctive headdress, made from wild bison. The wild bison is now extinct, but these people use existing skulls to wear during wedding ceremonies. This tribe is mainly found in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh. They are also present in some parts of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The tribe’s new-age headdress is made from cattle horns. The Bison Horn Maria are an introverted tribe that has chosen to stay in the dense forests. These people practice shifting cultivation and depend on the forest produce for their survival. Different groups amongst this tribe follow and pray to different gods.

Kamar – Chhattisgarh: One of the tribes of Chhattisgarh that prefers living in hills, forests, and valleys, away from urban civilisations. They are present in different parts of central India, mainly in the Rewa and Raipur districts of Chhattisgarh. There are few places in Madhya Pradesh where you can find these people. Mostly, people of the Kamar tribe earn a living from bamboo handicrafts by selling them for tea, rice, and liquor. Their second occupation is farming, followed by gathering forest produce and then fishing and hunting. Groups living deep in the forest are still hunters, and they prefer not to contact the outside world at all. The larger Kamar villages are still located either near the foothills or deep inside the forests, but you can find a few smaller groups living along the roadsides. Every hut in the settlement is made of mud, and each has a family god. The family god is made of iron chains, and they decorate it with peacock feathers.

Bhil – Madhya Pradesh: The Bhil are probably one of the largest tribal groups living across India. This group can be found anywhere in Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh. They get this name from the word ‘billu’, which signifies a bow. The Bhil people have been hunters for centuries, and their expertise with the bow and arrow contributes to their name. Over time, they became farmers and grew staple foods such as maize, fruits, and rice. These archers also had deep knowledge of their surroundings and geography, which helped them adapt. Early on, this group was also known as experts in guerrilla warfare, but as mentioned above, they have since become more inclined toward agriculture. They are also medical specialists and skilled sculptors.

The indigenous tribes bring India closer to an unremarkable and uninteresting picture. They maintain their identities as Adivasis with their language, religion, festivals, cuisine, dance, and music, which set them apart from modern trends and economic progress.

5.12 Transformation of Tribes

Caste and tribe are two fundamental social categories in Indian society, each with distinct characteristics. Caste refers to a hereditary system of social stratification found mainly among Hindus, organised into hierarchical groups based on occupation, social status, and ritual purity. Caste membership is determined by birth, and social mobility between castes is generally limited. In contrast, a tribe is a social group, often with a distinct language, culture, and territory, characterised by relative social and economic equality, kinship bonds, and traditional customs usually outside the mainstream Hindu caste system. The concept of caste-tribe settlement in sociology examines the gradual, complex transformation of tribal groups into castes as they integrate into the larger Hindu social order. This integration is marked by sociocultural, economic, and political factors that influence tribal communities to adopt certain characteristics of the caste system, resulting in new social identities and hierarchies.

Historical Context

Tribal groups, or ‘Adivasis’ indigenous people, were traditionally distinct from the mainstream caste-based society. They lived in isolation, primarily in forests and remote areas, with their own customs, kinship structures, and economic systems. Through subsistence, integration, administrative policies, and cultural exchange, these tribal groups came

into contact with caste-based Hindu society, initiating the process of caste-tribe transformation.

Sanskritization and Tribal Assimilation

One of the major processes through which tribes have historically been integrated into the caste system is Sanskritization. As coined by M.N. Srinivas, Sanskritization is the process where lower castes or tribal groups adopt the customs, rituals, and beliefs of higher castes, particularly the Brahmins, to elevate their social status. A real-life example is the Bhil tribe in central and western India, where some sections gradually adopted the customs, language, and religious practices of nearby higher castes to improve their social position. Similarly, the Gond community in Madhya Pradesh has also assimilated many Hindu practices and rituals through Sanskritization, resulting in notable cultural and social transformation over time.

- Adopting higher caste norms: Many tribal communities began adopting the practices and lifestyle of higher castes to gain social mobility. This included changes in dress, dietary habits, religious rituals and language.
- Integration in the caste system: Over time, these tribes were absorbed into the caste hierarchy, often being assigned a place as a distinct Jati (sub-caste) within the varna framework. While some tribes gained higher status, most were incorporated at lower levels in the caste hierarchy, often as shudras or other service-providing castes.

Economic and social Transformation

The process of caste-tribe settlement is closely linked to economic changes, especially during periods of colonial and post-colonial development.

- Shift in livelihood: Tribal communities, traditionally dependent on hunting and gathering, subsistence agriculture, artisanal crafts, and labour-intensive work, shifted to meet the demands of expanding markets.
- Occupational specialisation: As they settled near caste-based societies, many tribal groups took on specialised roles in the local economy, leading to the formation of new castes. This occupational differentiation was key in their assimilation into the caste system.

- Land and property: As land ownership changed and private property emerged, tribal groups adopted new modes of economic production, including wage labour and land cultivation, further bringing them into the fold of caste-based village economies.

Ethnocentrism and the Role of Hinduism

The dominant cultural framework of Hinduism has played a crucial role in the assimilation of tribal groups. Through ethnocentrism, the belief in the superiority of Hindu customs and values, many tribes were encouraged or pressured to adopt Hindu religious practices.

- Religious conversion: Some tribes embraced Hindu deities, participated in Hindu festivals, and accepted Hindu priests to oversee their rituals, marking a shift from their traditional animistic and nature-worshipping practices.
- Hinduisation: As a result, these tribes underwent a process of Hinduisation, in which they became culturally assimilated into the broader Hindu world and were assigned a place within the caste system.

Caste-Tribe continuum

The caste-tribe continuum is a theoretical model that explains the gradual transition from tribe to caste. Scholars like F.G. Bailey and Surajit Sinha have extensively studied this concept, showing that caste and tribe are not mutually exclusive categories but are interconnected through a continuum. However, some scholars have critiqued this model, arguing that distinctions between tribe and caste can remain significant and that not all tribal societies inevitably move toward caste-based systems. Alternative perspectives, such as the segmentary model or those emphasising tribal resilience and distinctiveness, highlight that some tribes retain unique identities and social structures even when exposed to caste society, challenging the idea of a single, linear continuum.

- Equality to inequality: Tribes are characterised by relatively egalitarian social structures, whereas caste societies are highly stratified. As tribes move along the continuum, they adopt hierarchical caste features, shifting from social equality to inequality.
- From collective to individual ownership: the transition from communal land ownership (common among tribes) to private

property reflects this transformation. This change parallels the emergence of a class-based society.

- Changing social institutions: New social institutions such as private property, the state, and patriarchal structures replace the tribal system, establishing new forms of hierarchy, class, and social stratification.

Caste-Tribe Transformation as a Gradual Process

The transformation of tribal groups into caste-based communities is not immediate; it occurs over a long period and involves multiple changes in social, political, and economic structures.

- Changes in social institutions: The tribal way of life, often based on kinship and a clan system, evolves as tribes come into contact with state structures, land laws, and the patriarchal order. This reorganises their social institutions and roles.
- Formation of new hierarchies: Instead of dissolving, tribes are transformed into distinct castes with new roles in the social and economic order—this results in new hierarchies and divisions of labour.
- Emergence of new classes: tribes become part of a class-based society, with the division of labour giving rise to class distinctions within the community itself, further reinforcing the hierarchical nature of the caste system.

Role of colonial and post-colonial policies

During the British colonial era, the classification of tribes as distinct from castes became institutionalised through legal and administrative measures, such as listing tribes under the Scheduled Tribes category. Post-colonial India continued this classification, implementing certain protections and affirmative action policies to safeguard tribal rights. However, these policies have often led to the reinforcement of tribal identity as a separate category, which complicates their relationship with the caste system. Today, reservation policies in education, employment, and political representation continue to shape the dynamics between caste and tribe. A current debate focus on the effectiveness of these policies, with some arguing that the reservation system both empower tribal groups and solidifies their separate status. Additionally, ongoing tribal rights movements advocate protecting land, culture, and autonomy while

challenging encroachment and assimilation pressures. These policies and debates significantly affect the identity, integration, and aspirations of tribal communities within the broader framework of Indian society.

Current implication

In contemporary India, many tribal groups still retain their distinct identity, while others have become fully integrated into the caste system. The integration of tribes into mainstream society is a complex issue, influenced by:

- **Development policies:** Governmental policies aimed at development and modernisation continues to affect tribal communities, often leading to displacement and further integration into caste-based economics.
- **Identity policies:** Tribal identity is sometimes asserted as distinct from the caste system, leading to political movements that seek to protect tribal autonomy and rights against forced assimilation.

The concept of caste-tribe settlement is a dynamic, multifaceted process that reflects the interaction between tribal and caste-based societies in India. Through Sanskritization, economic integration, and Hindu influence, tribes have gradually been absorbed into the caste system, creating new social hierarchies and class distinctions. This transformation is a long-term, evolving process that illustrates the fluidity of social categories in India. The caste-tribe continuum remains a key theoretical framework for understanding this phenomenon, highlighting the transition from tribal egalitarianism to caste-based hierarchy and inequality.

Tribes and castes represent distinct yet interconnected social categories within India. Tribal groups have frequently transitioned into castes through processes such as Sanskritization and economic transformation. The incorporation of tribes has created new identities, hierarchies, and social classes. Government policies and social movements continue to influence the dynamics between tribes and castes. These observations show that the transformation from tribe to caste is a gradual, complex process shaped by historical, economic, and cultural factors.

5.13 Let Us Sum up

The term “tribe” comes from the Latin word “tribus” and currently refers to a group of individuals who form a community and share a common ancestry. Tribes are present across most regions of India, except in a few

states and union territories. In the Indian context, tribal communities are referred to by various names, including ‘adivasi’ (original settlers), ‘scheduled tribes’ (anusuchit janajati), and ‘tribes’. According to the 2011 Census, 10,42,81,034 individuals are classified as scheduled tribes, constituting 8.6 per cent of India’s population. Tribal populations are unevenly distributed across the country. These communities have adapted to their specific environments, resulting in considerable cultural diversity, even within the same group. The Bhils represent the largest tribal group in India, followed by the Gonds, Santhals, and Meenas.

The definition of ‘tribe’ remains a subject of debate in India, as evidenced by the varying perspectives of scholars. S.C. Dube defines a tribe as “a unit possessing a distinct culture, language and territory and having a sense of unity.” Ghurey (1963), a prominent Indian sociologist, characterises tribes as a “social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous, with no specialisation of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognising social distance with others and following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs.” Elwin (1943), an anthropologist, emphasises the significance of shared territory, language, and unity in defining tribes. These definitions underscore the complexity and diversity of tribal societies in India. A single, comprehensive definition of ‘tribe’ is challenging because of the wide range of social and economic backgrounds and the dynamic nature of tribes as they interact with broader social groups.

5.14 Keywords

Tribal Community, Kinship, Family, Tradition Culture, Indigenous People, Transformation of tribe and Identity

5.15 Self-Assessment Questions

1. What is meant by a tribe? Describe the main features of tribal communities.
2. Describe what it means for tribes to be considered indigenous people in India.
3. Explain how tribal communities are connected to land and natural resources.
4. What are the main reasons for changes in tribal communities?
5. How have modernisation, education, migration, and urbanisation affected tribal communities?

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