



ਜਗਤ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ  
ਪੰਜਾਬ ਸਟੇਟ ਓਪਨ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ  
ਪਟਿਆਲਾ

The Motto of Our University

**(SEWA)**

**S**KILL ENHANCEMENT

**E**MPLOYABILITY

**W**ISDOM

**A**CCESSIBILITY

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS (LIBERAL ARTS)**

**CORE COURSE: SOCIOLOGY**

**SEMESTER-V**

**BLAB33509T: INDIAN SOCIETY**

**JAGAT GURU NANAK DEV**

**PUNJAB STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY, PATIALA**

(Established by Act No. 19 of 2019 of the Legislature of State of Punjab)

Head Quarter: C/28, The Lower Mall, Patiala-147001

Website: [www.psou.ac.in](http://www.psou.ac.in)

The Study Material has been prepared exclusively under the guidance of Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University, Patiala, as per the syllabi prepared by Committee of Experts and approved by the Academic Council. The University reserves all the copyrights of the study material. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form.

**COURSE COORDINATOR AND EDITOR:**

**Dr. Shefali Bedi**

**Astt Prof.(Sociology)**

**School of Social Sciences and Liberal Arts**

**Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University, Patiala**



**JAGAT GURU NANAK DEV PUNJAB STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY,PATIALA**

**(Established by Act No. 19 of 2019 of the Legislature of State of Punjab)**

## **PREFACE**

Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University, Patiala was established in December 2019 by Act 19 of the Legislature of State of Punjab. It is the first and only Open University of the State, entrusted with the responsibility of making higher education accessible to all, especially to those sections of society who do not have the means, time or opportunity to pursue regular education.

In keeping with the nature of an Open University, this University provides a flexible education system to suit every need. The time given to complete a programme is double the duration of a regular mode programme. Well-designed study material has been prepared in consultation with experts in their respective fields.

The University offers programmes which have been designed to provide relevant, skill-based and employability-enhancing education. The study material provided in this booklet is self-instructional, with self-assessment exercises, and recommendations for further readings. The syllabus has been divided in sections, and provided as units for simplification.

The University has a network of 10 Learner Support Centres/Study Centres, to enable students to make use of reading facilities, and for curriculum-based counselling and practicals. We, at the University, welcome you to be a part of this institution of knowledge.

Prof. G. S. Batra

Dean  
Academic Affairs

**SEMESTER-II**

**(BLAB33509T)**

**INDIAN SOCIETY**

**Objectives:** This paper will introduce the students to the basic framework of Indian society with its complex structure. This complexity of Indian society also provides the framework through which a student will learn to appreciate the intricacies of Indian society and develop a holistic understanding of the society.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PAPER SETTER/EXAMINER:**

1. The syllabus prescribed should be strictly adhered to.
2. The question paper will consist of three sections: A, B, and C. Sections A and B will have four questions each from the respective sections of the syllabus and will carry 10 marks each. The candidates will attempt two questions from each section.
3. Section C will have fifteen short answer questions covering the entire syllabus. Each question will carry 3 marks. Candidates will attempt any 10 questions from this section.
4. The examiner shall give a clear instruction to the candidates to attempt questions only at one place and only once. Second or subsequent attempts, unless the earlier ones have been crossed out, shall not be evaluated.
5. The duration of each paper will be three hours.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES:**

Candidates are required to attempt any two questions each from the sections A, and B of the question paper, and any ten short answer questions from Section C. They have to attempt questions only at one place and only once. Second or subsequent attempts, unless the earlier ones have been crossed out, shall not be evaluated.

**Section-A**

Unit 1- Unity and diversity in Indian society: Linguistic and Regional diversity.

Unit 2 - Demographic profile of Indian society: Urban, Rural, Gender, Sex ratio, literacy rate.

Unit 3- Scheduled Caste, OBC and Scheduled Tribes of India.

Unit 4- Religious Composition of Indian society.

Unit 5- Population growth in India since independence.

## **Section-B**

Unit 6 - Rural society in India: features and changing patterns

Unit 7- Urban society in India: features and changing patterns

Unit 8- Tribal Society in India: features and changing patterns

Unit 9--Caste in India: origin, features and changing patterns

Unit 10- Status of Women in Indian society: Historical overview, gender discrimination.

### **Suggested Readings:**

Bhatnagar, G.S. and Baldev Singh Rehal 2014 *Bharti Samaj*. Patiala: Punjabi University  
Bose, N.K. 1967, *Culture and Society in India*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.  
Chitambar, J.B. 2015 *Introductory Rural Sociology*. New Delhi: New Age International Publisher

Desai, A.R. 1978 *Rural Sociology in India*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan  
Doshi, S.L. and P.C. Jain 2001 *Rural Sociology*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications  
Dube, S.C. 1990 : *Society in India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust)

Dube, S.C. 1995 : *Indian Village* (London: Routledge)

Gupta, D. (ed.) 1992 : *Social Stratification* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press)

Ganguly, S and N Devtta (ed.) 2003 *Understanding Contemporary India* (New Delhi : Viva Books)

Mandelbaum, D.G. 1970 : *Society in India* (Bombay : Popular

Prakashan) Singh, Sukhdev 2017 *Punjabi Samaj Atey Badlaav*,

Patiala: Gracious Books Singh, Sukhdev 2006 *Pendu Samaj Vigyan*.

Patiala: Punjabi University

Srinivas, M.N. 1980 *India: Social Structure* (New Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corp)

Srinivas, M.N. 1963 *Social Change in Modern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press)  
Singh, Yogendra, 1973 *Modernization of Indian Tradition* (Delhi :

Thomson Press)



**JAGAT GURU NANAK DEV PUNJAB STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY, PATIALA**

**(Established by Act No. 19 of 2019 of the Legislature of State of Punjab)**

**BACHELOR OF ARTS (LIBERAL ARTS) CORE**

**COURSE (CC): SOCIOLOGY SEMESTER-II**

**SECTION A**

<b>UNIT NO:</b>	<b>UNIT NAME</b>
Unit 1	Unity and diversity in Indian society: Linguistic and Regional diversity
Unit 2	Demographic profile of Indian society: Urban, Rural, Gender, Sex ratio, literacy rate.
Unit 3	Scheduled Caste, OBC and Scheduled Tribes of India.
Unit 4	Religious Composition of Indian society.
Unit 5	Population growth in India since independence.

**SECTION B**

<b>UNIT NO:</b>	<b>UNIT NAME</b>
Unit 6	Rural society in India: features and changing patterns
Unit 7	Urban society in India: features and changing patterns
Unit 8	Tribal Society in India: features and changing patterns
Unit 9	Caste in India: origin, features and changing patterns
Unit 10	Status of Women in Indian society: Historical overview, gender discrimination

**BACHELOR OF ARTS LIBERAL ARTS**

**SEMESTER II**

**COURSE: COURSE: INDIAN SOCIETY**

---

**UNIT 1: UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN INDIAN SOCIETY: LINGUISTIC AND  
REGIONAL DIVERSITY**

---

**STRUCTURE**

**4.0. Learning Objectives**

**4.1. Introduction**

**4.2. Unity and Diversity in India**

**4.2.1. Defining the Concept of Diversity**

**4.2.2. Defining the Concept of Unity**

**4.2.3. Unity in Diversity in India**

**4.2.4. Implications of Unity in Diversity**

**4.3. Linguistic Diversity in India**

**4.4. Regional Diversity in India**

**4.5. Summary**

**4.6. Suggested Readings**

**4.7. Questions for Practice**

**4.0. LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After the completion of this Unit, you should be able to:

- Define the concept of unity, diversity and unity in diversity in India
- Explain the social, cultural, regional differences existing in Indian society

- Describe, how the unity exist in the diversity of Indian Society
- Elaborate regional and linguistic diversity

## **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

India is a diverse society and its beauty lies in its multicultural characteristic and further the existence of unity among people belongs to diverse cultural setups. In Indian Society, people of different religions, races, regions, castes, sects etc. have been living together for many centuries (Gore, 2015). Hence, the Indian society is the best example ever, which perfectly demonstrates unity in diversity. Although, India has faced several invasions by Mughals, Britishers etc. however the national unity and its integrity have been maintained (Desai, 1991). Despite having differences in terms of caste, religion, culture, ideologies, India fought against the British Raj as one unified entity (Tharoor, 2006).

The existences of diverse languages, regions, religions etc., migration of people and communities from other nations have made India's culture more tolerant. This has made India a unique example in the world (Jayaram, 2011). Further, this characteristic has attracted many visitors and tourists from different parts of world. Herbert Risley was right when he observed: "Beneath the manifold diversity of physical and social type, language, custom and religion which strike the observer in India there can still be discerned, a certain underlying uniformity of life from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin" (Risley, 1969). There are bonds of unity underlying all this diversity. These bonds of unity may be located in a certain underlying uniformity of life as well as in certain mechanisms of integration. In the present unit, we will discuss and emphasis on the meaning of diversity and unity, the concept of unity in diversity and its implications, types of diversities and particularly regional and linguistic diversity.

## **4.2. UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN INDIA**

### **4.2.1. DEFINING DIVERSITY**

As per the Merriam-Webster dictionary, diversity is the condition of having or being composed of differing elements and ideologies. Other terms used in context of diversity are heterogeneity, heterogeneousness and differentiation etc. Diversity is a natural as well as social phenomenon that helps to bring different views, experiences and acceptance among people (Effendi, 1938). Overall diversity refers to collective differences. Different social sciences looked at diversity in a different way. In sociology, we largely emphasis of social diversities. In other words sociologists are more interested in sociological analysis of social diversities. They define social diversity broadly as differences in different categories such as religion, race, region, ethnicity, gender, caste, citizenship, language, culture etc. On the basis of these categories there is existence of different types of



diversities such as religious diversity, racial diversity, ethnic diversity, caste diversity, linguistic diversity and cultural diversity etc.

The term diversity is opposite of term uniformity. Uniformity primarily stands for similarity of some sort that characterises a people. It consist two words. 'Uni' refers to 'one' and 'form' refers to the 'common ways'. When there is something common in different societies, we say there is some uniformity existing in these societies. Similarly, when students of a school, members of the army wear the same type of dresses, we normally say they are 'uniform'. However, when we have groups of people belongs to different races, religions and cultures, they represent diversity. D.N. Majumdar in his book *Races and Cultures of India* elaborated the concept of diversity in terms of races, cultures and their amalgamation (Majumdar, 1965). Thus, social diversity means variety and differences in different social categories. In India, we have such a variety in abundance. We have here a variety of races, religions, languages, castes and cultures etc. For the same reason India is a country known for its socio-cultural diversity.

#### **4.2.2. DEFINING UNITY**

There is a sense of togetherness and integration in the concept of unity. It is the spirit that holds people together, despite multiple ideological and other differences. It connotes a sense of oneness, a sense of we-ness (Nyiri and Preece, 1977). Unity stands for relations between different groups that bind them into a single entity. It can also be defined as the absence of differences among people belongs to different regions, religions, castes, classes, races, ethnicity etc. In India, there are number of castes, clans, races, regions, religions exist with varying ideologies, however at the same time they have sense of togetherness as they all belongs to one nation. Unity is a state of being togetherness, while diversity is a state of being separate or different. For instance, in Indian family, there may have people with different views, interests or preferences who show their diversity in many aspects, but as a member of family, they demonstrate a sense of unity among them. There is a difference between the term unity and uniformity. As far as uniformity is concerned it presupposes similarity and whereas unity does not (Pandey, 2015). Hence, unity may or sometimes may not be based on uniformity. Unity can emerge out of uniformity. Emile Durkheim, one of the modern founding father of sociology, in his book *Division of Labour in society*, calls this type of unity a 'mechanical solidarity'. We find this type of unity mostly in tribal, village and traditional societies. However, unity can also be based on differences. It is such unity, which is described by Durkheim as organic solidarity (Jayaram, 2011). This type of unity characterises the contemporary modern societies where high interdependence exist among members of a larger society.

#### **4.2.3. UNITY IN DIVERSITY IN INDIA**

After discussing the meaning of term unity and diversity, it is very clear and also an accepted fact that India is a land of diversity. The nature of Indian culture is made of multi-

layers of our existence. In India, we cannot think of or relish single system in anything pertaining to our social life. In fact, India's unity is based on our diversity, on our multi-lingual, racial, regional, religious and traditional co-existence (Gore, 2015). For instance, Indian nationalism is not based on language, geography, ethnicity but on an collective ideology to which we belong. The first prime minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru expressed the concept of unity in diversity in his writings. He stated, 'Though outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness, which had held all of us together for ages past, whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen us. The unity of India was no longer merely an intellectual conception but emotional experience' (Tharoor, 2006)

We had and have a tradition of interdependence, which has held us together throughout centuries. The one such example of interdependence and unity in diversity, which was existing in the earlier times in India, is *Jajmani system*. It is a system of functional interdependence of castes. The term “*jajman*” refers generally to the parson who is patron or recipient of specialised services. The other side, there were *Kammis*, whose primary duty was to provide services to *Jajmans*. The relations were traditionally between a food producing family and the families that supported them with goods and services. These came to be called the *jajmani* relations (Jayaram, 2011). *Jajmani* relations were conspicuous in village life, as they entailed ritual matters, social support as well as economic exchange. A patron had *jajmani* relations with members of a high caste. He also required the services of specialists from other *jati* to perform those necessary tasks like cutting of hair, cleaning the room, delivery of the child, work in farms, cultivation, etc. Those associated in these interdependent relations were expected to be and were broadly supportive of each other with qualities of ready help that generally close kinsmen were expected to show. There was also some negative outcome attached with this system because of which it does no longer exist in contemporary society. In such system, a particular task was attached with one caste people. The lower *jati* people were largely exploited in this system by the upper *jati* people of that time. In contemporary society we still have system of interdependence but it is different from the earlier one. For instance, in today’s society, some crops are largely produced in one area and distributed in different parts of India. Punjab largely produce wheat and paddy and distribute to different parts. Similarly, coconut is largely produced in Kerala, Goa etc and distributed in others parts of India.

Thus, our unity is the unity of heart and mind which will inspire to work together. This experience is the real foundation of Indian culture. This foundation has ever remained intact here and over that foundation new additions and alterations have been made and still being made. This unity is also found other forms of diversities such as living patters, festivals, dance, food, eating pattern, language and other cultural components. This kind of unified outlook in diversity has given an image to Indian culture as the composite culture.

#### **4.2.4. IMPLICATIONS OF UNITY IN DIVERSITY IN INDIA**

Unity in diversity has certain outcomes and implications. They can vary from minor to major. The most primary implication is that it plays an important role in the development of the country because the country which is integrated despite having numbers of differences will always move on the path of development. The chances to face internal issues go lesser than a country that is socially unstable and divided on different terms (Avasthi, 1997). A country that carries multiple differences, but still united at national platform, not only adds value to the nation but is also respected by other nations on global platforms. In India, we have different religions, regions, languages, castes etc. therefore there is an existence of different ideologies. But when it comes to national security, development of society, we see all religions, regions, castes, races stand together (Desai, 1973). Sociologically speaking, the idea of unity in diversity challenges ethnocentrism; thinking one's own customs superior to others and strengthen cultural relativism; no one has the right to judge and interfere in another community's customs. At individual level, the existence of unity in diversity also helps in expanding cordial relationship among people therefore increases the chances of improving performance, quality of work and ultimately organized the society. It sets an example by displaying the values and morals of the members of a society who respect and support each other despite being from different religions, regions, social groups and cultures etc.

Diversity on the other hand is a major reason of internal conflicts however, unity in diversity plays a very important role in maintaining peaceful co-existence with people with diverse culture and backgrounds (Mukerji, 1958). It helps them to stay united despite their disagreements on different ideologies and keep people far from social ills and manage conflicts more easily. Unity in diversity also helps people to protect their rights. Further, it provides a source of tourism for India. People from all walks of life, cultures, religions, and clothing are attracted to many visitors and tourists from all over the world. It strengthens and enhances the rich heritage of the country and moreover as a cultural heritage of India.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS I**

1. Write a short note on diversity? Also explain some examples of diversities in India.

.....  
.....  
.....

2. How unity in diversity enhances the feeling of togetherness among people?

.....  
.....  
.....

3. Do you think India is best example of unity in diversity in the whole world? Discuss in brief.

.....  
.....  
.....

### **4.3. LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN INDIA**

Indian society is a multilingual society, whose parts are having particular dialect (Avasthi, 1997). The famous linguist Grierson noted that there are 179 languages and 544 dialects in India. The 1971 census on the other hand, reported 1652 languages in India which are spoken as mother tongue. Among these, 18 languages are listed in Schedule VIII of the Indian Constitution. These are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Out of these 18 languages, Hindi is spoken as largely speaking language in India.

According to A. R. Desai, "India presents a spectacle of Museum of tongues" (Desai, 1973). Similarly, the tribal groups or ones which are more isolated from the world are likely to speak a different language. Linguistic diversity encompasses different types of qualities which comprise mainly language, grammar, and vocabulary of a person. Linguistic diversity helps in measuring the density or concentration of a certain language in different areas (Jayaram, 2011). When the linguistic traits and patterns of certain groups or communities are shared amongst one another, it results in the development of a language. Language is also a basis for other types of diversities in India. India is divided into different states and union territories. These all sub divisions consists multiple languages, grammar, dialects. Punjabi is the state language of Punjab and is also the 10th most widely spoken native language in the world. Telugu is the official language of Andhra Pradesh. However, there are many local dialects that are also spoken in different parts of the state. Some of these dialects include *Waddar, Chenchu, Savara, Golari, Kamanthi* etc. Telugu has a strong reflection of Sanskrit influence as it has absorbed *tatsamas* from Sanskrit. Arunachal Pradesh is believed to be one for the linguistically richest states in the country as it home to possibly at least 30 distinct languages and innumerable dialects thereof. Some of the common languages spoken in the state are *Tani, Bodic, Idu, Miju* etc. Hindi and English are the official languages used in Arunachal Pradesh. Hindi is the official language of Himachal Pradesh. However, in some parts of the state people still speak the *Pahari* language, which has many dialects and sub-dialects too.

The language commonly spoken in Haryana is Haryanvi. The language is an Indo-Aryan language and is quite similar to *Braj Bhasha*. It is also considered to be a dialect of Hindi. Gujarati is the official language of the state. Gujarati is an Indo-Aryan language and according to studies it is the 26th most spoken native language in the world. The language owes its origin to old Gujarati which gave birth to the modern day Gujarati and Rajasthani languages. Language of Bihar includes, Some of the common dialects spoken in Bihar include Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Angika etc. Hindi is the official language and also the medium of instruction in many schools in Bihar. The official language of Goa and the Konkan region is Konkani. Portuguese is still spoken in these parts by the elderly population of Goa. Kannada is the official language of Karnataka. Other languages such as Tulu, Konkani, Kodava and Urdu are also spoken in the state. Bengali is the most common and widely spoken language in West Bengal. Other languages spoken are Hindi, Santali, Nepali, Urdu and Oriya. Thus, by looking at such language differences, we may say that language is one of the important bases for existence of diversity in India.

## **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS II**

1. How language is a basis for diversity in India?

.....  
.....

2. Write down the languages and dialects spoken in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.

.....  
.....  
.....

### **4.4. REGIONAL DIVERSITY IN INDIA**

Indian society has great regional diversity. In terms of geographical boundaries, India is divided into 28 states and 8 union territories. These all states and union territories are different from one another in terms of language, food, dress and other cultural aspects. Further, these all are also divided into sub regions. For instance, Punjab is divided into three sub regions namely *Malwa*, *Doaaba* and *Majha*. These all three regions have their own culture, language, communication patterns, crops, food, living and eating habits etc. Further, the similar nature of division can also be seen in form of rural and urban region. While diversity is the acceptance of all folks regardless of their ethnicity, age, sex, education etc., regional diversity constricts this acceptance to a group of people from a particular region or area. Being one of the important type of diversity, regional diversity is an indication of each community's and their member's uniqueness from a certain area and their members (Avasthi, 1997). For instance, as discussed above India has great regional diversity. The nation has plants, mountains, sea coasts, deserts, cultivation and plain areas etc. This is why it makes India a very regionally diverse country. While existence of multiple differences, these all regions are somehow connected and share their cultural capital and resources with one another. We call it unity in Diversity.

The basis for regional diversity in India is language, food, dance, dress, eating and living habits, communication, crops, vegetation, animals, plant life, dresses, climate conditions, culture, customs etc. Amongst, some of the basis and related examples are discussed as follows. Food is one of the important bases for regional diversity. Food culture is most influenced by the locality of its origin. As far as food is concerned, in Punjab, the most preferred dish in winters particularly in rural Punjab is *Makki Ki Roti* and *Sarso ka Saag*. Punjabi cuisine is one of the most delicious cuisines in the country. Other than this particular famous dish, the food in Punjab is characterised by strong flavours and aroma. Although the dishes include both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, the meat dishes are quite popular not just in Punjab but all throughout the country. The cuisine of Himachal Pradesh is quite similar to the rest of North India. However, some of the popular dishes of Himachal Pradesh such as *Madira*, *Pateer*, *Til Chutney*, *Ghuchi Ka Saag*, *sepu badi* etc. makes it different from rest of the country. The food of Haryana is true to its soil. The diet of the people of Haryana mostly consists of rotis and dairy products. Some of the popular items of the Haryanvi which makes them different from others are *Pethe ki subjhi*, *teet ka achar*, *churma*, *kheer*, *malpuas* etc. *Goan* cuisine is well known for its tangy and unique taste.

Coconut milk, rice and seafood form the main parts of a *Goan* meal. Food cooked in goa is mostly sweet in taste as they mostly use coconut oil in preparation. Whereas Punjab Harayana, Himachal Pradesh etc. are concerned they cook the food in mustard oil to keep the taste of the food little sour or *chatpata*. Kokum is widely used in cooking *Goan* food. The Goan fish curry is also one of the popular dishes in the state.

The food in West Bengal has the finest blends of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes. This state is famous for the variety of *Maach* (fishes), served with various flavours. *Hilsa* and *Chingri* fishes are the most loved fishes in the state. West Bengal is also known as the 'land of *Maach & Bhaat*'. West Bengal is also famous for the variety of sweets. '*Rasgulla*', is the most famous sweet of this state. Gujarati cuisine is predominantly vegetarian due to the influence of Jainism and traditional Hindu values. There are four main regions in Gujarat- North Gujarat, *Surti* Gujarat, Kutch and Kathiawar- which have their own distinctive styles of cooking. *Thepla*, *Fafda*, *dokhla* etc. are some of the famous dishes of Gurjarat. Most of the dishes are a beautiful blend of sweetness, saltiness and hotness. Karnataka cuisine mainly includes *Bisi bele bhath*, *Holige*, *Vangi Bath*, *Uppittu* etc. Some of the traditional dishes of Andhra Pradesh include *pesarattu*, *pulusu*, *karapoosa*, *ariselu*, *pappucharu*, *rasam*, *vepudu*, *Pootha Rekulu* etc.

With the passage of time, the food habits belongs to one area are spreading to different parts of India and also abroad. We feel happy to observe that silently but very noticeably, Indian cuisine are cutting across the regions day by day. *Chaat* in different forms such as *gol gappas*, *aloo tikkies*, *samosas* and *chholey bhaturey*, a mainly north Indian phenomenon, is spreading to all parts and being devoured even in the deep south. And *dosas* and *idlis* with *sambar* and coconut chutney belong to south are now being enjoyed in the north at large. The northeast is also contributing to this phenomenon, as we can found that *Nepalis* from Sikkim and Darjeeling doing brisk sale of noodles and *momos*, vegetarian and chicken with chilli sauce, from small kiosks that have sprung up in every nook and corner of Delhi and other states. Although there is a bewildering variety of Indian sweets eaten from north to south, like milk cakes and *gulab jamuns* in Punjab and Haryana, *jalebis*, *laddoos*, *pedas* and *rabri* in Uttar Pradesh, *kulfis* all over the north, *rasogullas*, *sandesh*, *chamcham* and *rasomalais* in West Bengal; *mysorepak* in the south, *sooji ka halwa* and *kheer* (made of milk and rice) is the common dessert denominator being called *kesaribhath* and *payasam* in the South. Now these all deserts are available in all regions and also spreading in rural areas day by day. Other than variation in food, the pattern of food preparation and eating also vary region to region.

Although, now a day's most of the dishes are commonly prepared in all most all regions however the variation still exist in their preparation and names. For instance, the good old *kadhi* made with *besan* and *dahi*, and *khichdi* (rice and lentils), is popular from the Himalayan Mountains to the plains of Punjab and Haryana. The cow belt of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar all savour *kadhi*. And migrants from the Sindh province of undivided Punjab, now settled mainly in and around Mumbai, love their Sindhi *kadhi*. The *kadhi* is also made in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Another example is *Khichdi*. *Khichdi* in the north is eaten with *papad*, *dahi*, *ghee*, *chutney* and *achar*, and also in the south. In Tamil Nadu it is called *pongal* and in Karnataka, *besi beli bhath*. It is given

religiously to the young and the old who have upset tummies. There are two other items that constitute our staple daily diet. The glass or *kulhar* of sweet *lassi* with *malai* (cream)/butter in Punjab, Haryana, the cow belt, is one. Then there is the good old butter milk, called *mathha/chhach* in Gujarat and Maharashtra, and *rai* (black mustard) seeds, *curry patta* and chillies *tadka* in the deep south taken as an appetiser or digestive before and after lunch. *Dahi* is generally not consumed in the northeast.

Another important basis for regional diversity is the dress and dressing pattern in different parts of India. Dressing pattern in India is dependent upon the different ethnicity, geography, climate, and cultural traditions of the people of each region of India. The traditional dresses for Punjabi men is *kurta* along with *pajama*, or even a dhoti styled with different types of *pagri* or turban. Most to the women wear salwar kameez suit. Patiala suit with *paranda*, *fulkari*, *punjabi jutti* as traditional dress belongs to one sub region of Punjab. Most popular traditional dresses of Haryana are *Dhoti-Kurta* paired with *Juttis and Paghari* (turban) for men and women prefer to wear *Ghagra-Choli* along with *Odni* (a headcover). The traditional dresses of Himachal Pradesh, Men wear *dhoti-kurta* or *pajama-kurta* with *Pagri* (turban), whereas women wear *Ghagra*, *Lehenga-choli*, and Kurtis. Most popular Gujarati traditional dresses for women is *Chaniya choli*, *salwar kameez*, and *sarees* whereas men prefer wearing dhotis, *kurtas*, or *bandis and Kedia* along with a turban. In Karnataka Women prefer to wear *Ilakal*, *silk sarees*, and *dhavani*, whereas men prefer to wear shirt and *Panche* (a dhoti). The traditional dresses of Goa, women wear *Saree*, also called *Nav Vari* and men wear Dhoti and Shirt. The most traditional dresses among Bengali women is *Saree* in Bengali style, whereas men wear *Dhoti-Kurta*.

Dance is another basis for understanding regional diversity. The common folk dances of Punjab include –*Bhangra and gidda*. *Bhangra* and *gidda* is one of the most popular traditional dances in Punjab. It is usually performed during the harvest season and is noted for the colourful costumes and peppy music. The common folk dance of Haryana include –*Saang Dance, Chhathi Dance etc.* *Saang* dance is performed in groups. Usually comprising of a group of 12, men dress up as women in this dance to play the roles of female characters. The dance is based on folk tales or religious stories. The dance forms of Andhra Pradesh reflect the cultural heritage of the state. They differ in costumes, types and the musical instruments used. *Kuchipudi* is one of the most famous traditional dance forms of Andhra Pradesh. It gets its name from the name of the village where resident Brahmins practiced this art form. The dancers sway to the music and tune of a singer who is accompanied by musicians playing *mridangam*, violin, flute and *tambura*. The common folk dance of Himachal Pradesh includes *Kinnauri Nati*, A beautiful folk dance which is usually a mime and depicts the sowing of crops and the ensuing festivities. Another dance is *Namagen*. This is usually performed to welcome the autumn season. The costumes of the dances of this folk dance are particularly interesting because of the variety of colours and women dancers were extremely beautiful silver jewellery.

Dance of Gujarat includes *Garba, Dandiya Raas etc.* *Garba* is a popular form of dance that is performed during the nine-day festival of *Navratri*. A picture or idol of Goddess

*Shakti* or a lamp is placed in the centre and dancers stand in concentric circles for the performance. *Dandiya Raas* on the other hand was traditionally performed by men to the tune of traditional instruments. However, these days the dance form has evolved and men and women are seen dancing to foot-tapping numbers during the *Navratri* festival. The common folk dances of Bihar include *Jhijian Dance*, *Jat Jatin Dance*, *Kajari Dance*. Dance of Goa includes *Dekni*, *Kunbi*, *Gofftoo* etc. Dances of Karnataka include *Kunitha*, *Komb-aat* etc.

Other than these important bases, there are many other cultural components on the basis of which the diversity existing among different regions can be described. These are songs, language, stories, living patterns, housing, cultivation, festivals, crops, domestication of different animals etc.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS III**

1. Explain dance as a basis of regional diversity in India.

.....  
 .....  
 .....

2. Write down the meaning of diversity.

.....  
 .....  
 .....

**4.5. SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have studied the meaning of diversity, unity and unity in diversity. We have also discussed how unity in diversity is important element of Indian society. There are number of implication of unity in diversity in India that vary form minor to major. In this unit, we have elaborated the important implications of unity and diversity. Further, we have also elaborated and studied that there are major forms of diversity in India such as racial diversity, religious diversity, cultural diversity, linguistic diversity and regional diversity etc. All these diversities are important to understand the concept of unity in diversity, however we have emphasised only on linguistic and regional diversity. Further, we have also discussed the difference between earlier form of unity in diversity and the contemporary one. Overall, we have noted that India has opted for a composite culture model of unity in diversity.

**4.6. SUGGESTED READINGS**

- Avasthi, A. 1997. *Social and Cultural Diversities*, New Delhi: Rawat Publications
- Desai, A.R. 1973. *Recent trends in Indian Nationalism*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- Desai, A.R. 1991. *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- Effendi, S. 1938. *Unity in Diversity"*. Wilmette: Illinois Publishing House.
- Gore, M.S. 2015. *Unity in Diversity: The Indian Experience in Nation-Building*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications.



- Jayaram, N. 2011. *Diversities in the Indian Diaspora: Nature, Implications, Responses*. New Delhi: Oxford.
- Majumdar, D.N. 1965. *Races and Cultures of India*. New Delhi: Asia Publishing House.
- Mukerji, D.P. 1958. *Diversities*, Delhi: Peoples Publishing House.
- Nagla, B.K. 2008. *Indian Sociological Thought*, Jaipur: Rawat Publication.
- Nyiri, N. A. and Preece, R. 1977. *Unity in Diversity*. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University.
- Pandey, V. 2015. *Indian Society and Culture*, New Delhi: Rawat Publications Press.
- Risley, H. 1969. *The People of India*. Oriental book Reprint.
- Tharoor, S. 2006. *India: From Midnight to the Millennium and Beyond*. New Delhi: Arcade Publishing.
- Desai, A.R. 1991. *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- Jayaram, N. 2011. *Diversities in the Indian Diaspora: Nature, Implications, Responses*. New Delhi: Oxford.
- Mukerji, D.P. 1958. *Diversities*, Delhi: Peoples Publishing House.
- Nagla, B.K. 2008. *Indian Sociological Thought*, Jaipur: Rawat Publication

## **4.7. QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE**

### **4.7.1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

1. Elaborate the concept of regional diversity in India. Also discuss how sociologists look at diversity in India.
2. Elaborate the meaning and definitions of unity, diversity and unity in diversity in India.

### **4.7.2. SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

1. Write down the difference between unity and uniformity.
2. Explain any two examples of linguistic diversity in India.
3. Describe any three implications of unity in diversity in India.

**BACHELOR OF ARTS (LIBERAL ARTS)**  
**SEMESTER II**  
**COURSE: INDIAN SOCIETY**

---

**UNIT 2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF INDIAN SOCIETY: URBAN, RURAL,  
GENDER, SEX RATIO, LITERACY RATE**

---

**STRUCTURE**

- 1.0 Learning Objectives**
- 1.1 Introduction**
- 1.2 Demographic Details of India**
- 1.3. Growth Rate**
- 1.4 Rural and Urban Population**
- 1.5 Sex Ratio**
- 1.6 Child Sex Ratio**
- 1.7 Literacy Rate**
- 1.8 Summary**
- 1.9 Questions for Practice**

**1.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After completion of this unit, we will be able:

- To understand and define key terms used in demographic profile of any population.
- To answer the total number of population of India.
- To acquaint the rural and urban population of India in numbers and in percentage.
- To know the male and female population of India in numbers and in percentage.
- To grasp the sex ratio of the country in general and rural and urban sex ratio in particular.
- To mark the literacy rate of India with the number and percentage of literates in rural and urban population.

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

India is a multicultural society with the essence of unity in diversity. If we will begin to explore the plurality and the unifying factors of our country, we will come across various factors and features like territorial boundaries, geographical terrains, varying climate conditions, diversity of flora and fauna etc. In addition to them, we will be also interested to know the history, type of polity and governance, and the diversity of culture. However, the study of our country will not be complete until and unless we will understand the people of India, in terms of their numbers and other categorisations. The preamble of the Constitution of India also uses the term and adopts the constitution with the words “we the people of India ...” Let us explore in this direction further and try to understand the major features of the people of India.

As soon as we attempt to make the profile of the people of any country, we are actually dealing with the demographic profile of the country. To understand more, we shall attempt to define demography. According to the Oxford Bibliography the study of human populations is called as demography. In such studies we focus on the size and composition of the population, and on the factors which bring change to the size and composition of the population under the study. The key causes which are responsible for changes in any population include fertility (births), migration, aging, and mortality (deaths). In addition to the above, the demographic studies also take account of the economic, social, environmental, and biological causes and consequences of population change. In this way, a demographic study becomes interdisciplinary in nature as it takes help from the other disciplines including biology, economics, epidemiology, geography, and sociology. However, we shall keep in mind that demographic study of any population uses the empirical methods to collect the information. Further, the information is mainly in the forms of data. Within the data collection the emphasis is always on the quality of data.

After understanding the nature and scope of demographic studies, let us now proceed to explore the demographic profile of our country. As soon as we will venture into such objective, the first question which arises in front of us is that where to seek the authentic and qualitative data of our country. The answer to this query is, we shall look into the official data of government of India in the form of Census of India. After every ten years the Census is conducted by the government of India which enumerates not only the population but also the socio-economic, demographic and cultural profile of the country. These valuable set of indicators relating to the human capital of India, becomes the empirical basis to evaluate the past, assess the present and take informed decisions for the future.

## **1.2. DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF INDIA**

Before we explore into the detailed demographic data of our country, let us glance through the administrative divisions and set up of India. To get the authentic answers for our queries we will use Census of India data which is published by the Government of India. According to Census of India 2011, we have 35 states and union territories (which is now 36 with 28 states and 8 union territories). The total number of districts in India is 640. The

number of sub-districts is 5,924. Towns in India are of two types which includes 4041 Statutory Towns and 3892 Census Towns. The total number of villages are 6,40,930. If we compare the data with 2001 Census we will find that there is an increase of 47 districts, 461 Sub-districts, 2772 Towns and 2342 villages in the 2011 Census.

After understanding the major administrative divisions and units, let us now explore the demographic details of our country. Before we go into the details let us understand first the meaning of demography. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary demography means the statistical study of any human population. This includes the details regarding the size, density, distribution, and other vital statistical data of the concerned population. Let us now see these demographic details of India. To start with, the total population of India is 1210.6 million. The exact absolute number is 1,21,05,69,573. In the Indian number system, it means we have 1 Arab 21 Crores 5 lakhs 69 thousands 573. This huge number of population can also be understood conceptually as more than 120 Crores. It is interesting fact to know here that we are the second largest country in the world with regard to the population of the different countries in the world. The only country which has more population than us is China. As per the latest data of 2021 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) the population of China is 1444.2 million and India ranks second with 1393.4 million.

### **1.2.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- What is the total number of states and Union Territories in India?
- The total number of districts in India is .....
- The total number of sub-districts in India is .....
- Towns in India are of two types, which includes ..... Towns and .....Towns.
- There are ..... Statutory Towns and ..... Census Towns in India.
- The total number of villages in India is .....

### **ACTIVITY**

- Prepare a list of the states, which have the highest and lowest number of districts.
- Try to find out your village/town/districts total population.

### **1.3 GROWTH RATE**

Growth rate in terms of census is usually recorded in the decadal period. That means what has been the rate of growth of the population in the past 10 years. India recorded the growth rate of 17.7 percent between 2001 and 2011. In terms of rural urban divide of the growth rate, the decadal growth rate for rural population in India was 12.3 percent and 31.8 percent in case of urban population. Meghalaya has recorded the highest growth rate of 27.2 percent in terms of rural population. Daman & Diu recorded the highest decadal growth rate in urban population with 218.8 percent.

### **1.3.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- Growth rate in terms of census is usually recorded after every ..... years.
- India recorded the growth rate of .....percent between the years 2001 and 2011.
- Between the years 2001 and 2011, the growth rate for rural population in India was .....percent.
- Between the years 2001 and 2011, the growth rate for urban population in India was .....percent.
- The state of ..... has recorded the highest growth rate of 27.2 percent in terms of rural population between the years 2001 and 2011.
- The state of .....has recorded the highest growth rate of 27.2 percent in terms of rural population between the years 2001 and 2011.
- The Union Territory .....has recorded the highest growth rate of 218.8 percent in terms of urban population between the years 2001 and 2011.

#### **1.4 RURAL AND URBAN POPULATION**

Let us define the concepts of rural and urban before looking into the numbers of rural and urban population in India. The Census of India defines any area as urban when it fulfils the following criteria:

1. All places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee, etc.
2. All other places which satisfied the following criteria:
  - i) A minimum population of 5,000;
  - ii) At least 75 per cent of the male main working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits; and
  - iii) A density of population of at least 400 persons per sq. km.

The urban areas which are categorised according to the first criteria are called as Statutory Towns. These towns are notified under law by the concerned State/UT Government and have local bodies like municipal corporations, municipalities, municipal committees, etc., irrespective of their demographic characteristics as reckoned on 31st December 2009. For example: Vadodara (Municipal Corporation), Shimla (Municipal Corporation) etc. The urban areas categorised on the basis of second criteria (including the sub-criteria) are termed as Census Town. Here it is important to note that the Census Towns enumerated in the 2011 Census were categorised on the basis of the data of Census 2001.

If we enquire into the proportion of rural and urban population, we will find that yet 68.8 percent of India's population reside in rural areas. The urban population proportion is 31.2 percent. In general and broader terms, it means that still out of every 100 citizen of India, 69 persons live in rural and 31 persons live in urban areas. In terms of state level population, Uttar Pradesh accounts for the largest rural population of 155.3 million which is 18.6 percent of the total rural population of India. On the other hand, Maharashtra accounts for the majority of urban population i.e. 13.5 percent of the total urban population of the

country. The urban population of Maharashtra is 50.8 million. It will be important to mark the status of State level population in terms of their population residing in the rural and urban areas. Among the States and Union Territories, 90 percent population of Himachal Pradesh lives in rural areas. It means that within Himachal Pradesh, only 10 percent of the residents are living in urban areas. On the other hand, the 97.5 percent of population of Delhi resides in urban areas and rest 2.5 percent only live in rural areas of Delhi.

#### **1.4.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- List criteria for determining Statutory Towns and Census Towns.
- According to the Census of India 2011.....percent of India's population reside in rural areas.
- Based on the previous question, calculate the percentage of urban population in India.
- In terms of number of people, which state accounts for the largest rural population in India?
- In terms of number of people, which state accounts for the largest urban population in India?
- Identify the State, where 90 percent of its population lives in rural areas.
- In Delhi .....percent of population resides in urban areas.

#### **1.5 SEX RATIO**

In any given population, we will naturally find the division of males and females. Now the next question which arises in front of us is that what we mean by sex ratio. According to the Census of India, the number of females per 1000 of males is defined as sex ratio. After understanding the definition of sex ratio, the second important question which arises in front of us is that why is it important to know and analyze sex ratio? It can be substantially argued that sex ratio is a scale among the other basic demographic parameters. But it is important, as it measures the relative status of birth and survival of males and females along with their future breeding potential. In view of the modern pattern establishing in the diverse social groups, there is a need for marital alliances between one male and one female. So, it is obvious that we cannot afford a sharp difference between the numbers of males and females in any particular social group in particular and society in general.

Let us now try to find out that, what is the status of India in terms of sex ratio? According to the Census of India 2001, the sex ratio in the country was 933. It increased to 943 in the 2011 census. The total number of male and female population in our country is 62, 31, 21,843 (males) and 58, 74, 47,730 (females). The composition of sex or, we can say, simple count of male and females reflects the socio-economic and cultural pattern of the society.

On a general note, it is believed that the number of males and females are almost equal. However, the above data reveals some significant facts pertaining to this issue. If we

compare the sex ratios in urban and rural areas we will find that, there are 40, 58, 30,805 females in comparison to 42, 76, 32,643 males in rural India. In the urban category there are 18, 16, 16,925 females as compared to 19, 54, 89,200 males. If we look at the decadal change in the rural area with respect to sex ratio, we will find that in 2001 the sex ratio was 946. It increased to 949 in the year 2011. On the other hand, in the urban areas the sex ratio increased by 29 points between the ten years of 2001 to 2011. The sex ratio for urban India was 900 in the year 2001 and it rose to 929 in the year 2011. What we can notice here is that, the sex ratio is highlighting more gaps in the urban areas as compared to rural areas. Moreover, in general it also reflects the socio-cultural patterns of preference of male child over female.

After examining the details of sex ratio at the national and rural and urban level, let us now look into the state wise situation. If we look among the different states of India, we will find the highest sex ratio in Kerala. Based upon Census of India 2011, Kerala has recorded 1084 females per 1000 males for total population. Kerala's urban population has 1091 females per thousand males and rural area has 1078 females per thousand males. On the contrary of it, rural areas of Chandigarh have recorded the lowest sex ratio with 690 females per thousand males. In the urban areas Daman and Diu has recorded the lowest urban sex ratio with 551 females per thousand males. According to the Census of India 2011, seven States of India namely Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and one Union Territory Lakshadweep show fall in the sex ratio in their rural regions. The similar trend has been recorded in the urban areas of two Union Territories, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli.

We can state here, that a lesser gap in the sex ratio reflects the equity in the social conditions of a particular society. On the other hand, if the sex ratio is very low it may lead to the 'surplus males' which can cause different social problems including violence against both men and women. In India, there are some regions where the skewed sex ratio has led people to bring and marry the brides from other states. This also involves many a times the illegal purchase of brides and their subsequent exploitation by the male and their family members.

Let us now also attempt to know the causal reasons behind such gaps in the sex ratio. Here, we can utilize another concept termed as 'gender' to understand the difference and inequality between males and females. The categorization of male and female is based on the biological features. That is an individual is born as a male or a female. However, our society relates and also ascribes many other characteristics to males and females. These ascribed qualities are called as feminine and masculine. For example, the females and males both are continuously guided and socialized by the society to sit in particular ways, to talk in particular ways, to play with particular toys (gun for boy and doll for girl) etc. The basis behind such ascription of qualities and construction of in-equal status of males and females is a result of many direct and in-direct reasons. Some of the important reasons listed by a sociologist T.K. Oommen (2014) are as below:

1. The domination of patriarchy and hence the privilege to male child.

2. Physiological differences and differing roles in sexual reproduction including period of dependence of child on mother as compared to father.
3. Sexual division of labour and sex-typing of occupations.
4. Ascription of higher values to the works of males in comparison to the works of females, like not higher value is given to domestic works like cleaning, sweeping, sewing etc.
5. Acceptance and perpetuation of inequality between males and females in the areas of education, healthcare and employment.
6. Inequality in the realms of property ownership and political power.

The above given factors lead people to follow in-equal social conditions for maintaining their fictitious dignity. One of the prime reasons for the gap in sex ratio is due to the preference to male child by the patriarchal society. This many a times lead towards illegal prenatal sex determination and consequentially to female feticide. Even after the female birth they continue to face the neglect and in-equal treatment. The activities such as female infanticide, the abandonment of newborn girls, and the neglect of daughters is so common in the daily news items. But, it is an alarming fact which requires urgent multidimensional appropriate actions.

### **1.5.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- Define sex ratio.
- Differentiate between sex and gender.
- Why sex ratio is an important parameter for any population?
- According to the Census of India 2001, the sex ratio in the country was .....and it increased to .....according to the 2011 census.
- The sex ratio for urban India was 900 in the year 2001 and it rose to .....in the year 2011.
- The state of .....has recorded 1084 females per 1000 males for total population as per the Census of India 2011.

### **ACTIVITY**

- Count the total number of males and females in your class. Write a short note based upon your observation and findings.
- Try to find out, the total number of males and females in your college/university. Try to elaborate your findings.

### **1.6 CHILD SEX RATIO**

Census of India 2011 has enumerated the child population in the age group of 0-6 years as 164.5 million. Out of this population 121.3 million are in rural areas and 43.2 million are in urban areas. There are total 16, 44, 78,150 children under the age of 6 years, among them there are 8, 57, 32,470 male children and 7, 87, 45,680 female children in India. The



child sex ratio has witnessed a considerable fall between 2001 and 2011. According to the Census of India 2001, there were 927 female children per 1000 male children which reduced to 919 in the 2011 census. It is the lowest child sex ratio since 1961. Let us now see the child sex ratio in rural and urban context. For the urban areas it was 906 in 2001 and 905 in 2011. The rural regions in India have recorded a drastic fall in the child sex ratio. It was 934 in the year 2001 and it fell down to 923 in 2011.

If we will analyze the state level rural data we will find that, Delhi scored the lowest child sex ratio with 814 and Chhattisgarh recorded the highest with 977. In the urban regions, Haryana has recorded the lowest with 832 and Puducherry with 975 child sex ratio.

### **1.6.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- According to the Census of India 2001, there were .....female children per 1000 male children which reduced to .....in the 2011 census.
- For the urban areas of India, the sex ratio was .....in 2011.
- For the rural areas of India, the sex ratio was .....in 2011.

### **ACTIVITIES**

1. Despite of legal restrictions, sex determination is still prevalent. In your opinion, what are the major reasons behind these illegal activities?
2. List the names of Chief Ministers of your state since independence. Identify the representation in the list in terms of male and female candidates.
3. According to you, why the females are under-represented in the structures of social control and authority.

### **1.7 LITERACY RATE**

After the above details and discussion, let us now explore the literacy profile of our country. Before going into the details, let us define the term literacy. According to the dictionary meaning literacy means the ability to read and write coherently in order to comprehend the information and communicate effectively. Census of India also defines literate as a person aged seven and above who can both read and write with understanding in any language. A person, who can only read but cannot write, is not literate.

According to the census of India 2011, 763.5 million (76.35 Crores) people are literate in India. Out of this total number of literates, 482.7 million are in rural areas and 280.8 million are in urban areas. In terms of absolute numbers the total number of the literates in India is 76, 34, 98, 517. If we look in terms of percentage, this means that 73 percent of the population of India is literate. Out of this 48, 26, 53,540 (more than 48 Crores) literates belong to rural population. The percentage of rural population in terms of literacy is

67.8 percent. The other half includes 28, 08, 44,977 (more than 28 Crores) literate people in the urban areas. This makes the percentage of 84.1 percent literates in the urban India. If we will compare the Census of India 2001 and Census of India 2011 data, we will find that there is an increase of 202.8 million (20.28 Crores) literates in this decade. Out of which the rural areas comprise of 120.8 million (12.08 Crores) additions of literates and literates in urban population increased by 82 million (8.2 Crores). It is relevant to note here that, the highest number of rural literates is in Uttar Pradesh with 8.53 Crores. Maharashtra has recorded highest number of urban literates with 4.01 Crores.

In the case of males, 80.9 percent population is literate. In numbers the total count of male literates is 43, 46, 83,779. If we look in terms of number, we will find that Uttar Pradesh has recorded the highest number of rural male literates with 5.18 Crores and Lakshadweep has registered the lowest with 5,949 rural male literates. In urban areas, Maharashtra got the highest number of male literates i.e. 2.19 Crores persons and Lakshadweep got the lowest number of urban male literates with only 22,074 persons. After looking at the numbers of literates, let us analyze literacy rate of different states. That is how much percentage of population of a particular state is literate. Census of India 2011 shows that, Kerala secured the highest male literacy rate in rural areas with 95.4 percent. In rural areas the lowest male literacy rate was registered in Arunachal Pradesh with 67.4 percent. In the case of urban male literacy rate; Mizoram ranked first with 98 percent and Uttar Pradesh registered the lowest with 80.4 percent.

The female category has 64.6 percent of literates. Out of this total, the rural female literate population accounts for 57.9 percent and urban consist of 79.1 percent. The total number of literate females in India is 32,88,14,738. Among them the highest number of rural female literate population has recorded in Uttar Pradesh with 3.35 Crores. On the other hand, Maharashtra has recorded the highest urban female literates with 1.82 Crores. In the category of least number of literate females Lakshadweep has recorded lowest with 5,339 and 19,191 female literates in both rural and urban areas respectively. In terms of literacy rate, Kerala recorded the highest female literacy rate with 90.8 percent in rural areas while lowest is positioned by Rajasthan with 45.8 percent only. In the case of urban female literacy rate Mizoram has recorded the highest literacy rate with 97.3 percent and Jammu & Kashmir recorded lowest with 69 percent.

Here it is important to know the method through which the literacy rate is calculated. The effective literacy rate is calculated by dividing the number of literate persons of a given age range with the corresponding age group population and then multiplying the result by 100. For example, to calculate the effective literacy rate of the population above the age 7, the formula is following:

$$(\text{Number of literate people aged 7 and above} \times 100) \div \text{Population aged 7 and above}$$

The literacy rate reflects many aspects of a particular group or population including the level of development, social change, equity in terms of opportunities to the members etc. For example, the female literacy rate has significantly increased by 10.9 percent between the

years 2001 to 2011. Further, this increment has been 11.8 percent in rural female literacy rate and 6.2 percent in urban female literacy rate. In correlation to the increased female literacy rate, there is also a significant change in the gap between male and female literacy rate. In 2001, the literacy gap was 21.6 percent which has reduced to 16.3 in the year 2011. The rural literacy rate gap among males and females was 24.6 in 2001 which has reduced to 19.3 in 2011. The urban literacy rate gap has also reduced from 13.4 percent in 2001 to 9.7 percent in 2011.

These above mentioned changes indicate the transformation in educational opportunities for every member of the country in general and for females in particular. This transformation is witnessed due to the policy level inclusive measures adopted by the government of India. The implementation of Right to Education Act which provisioned for free and compulsory education for every child between the age group of 6 to 14 years has resulted into significant improvements at the national and state levels. Due to such measures, the states like Kerala, Goa, Mizoram, Tripura, and Lakshadweep have recorded more than 80 percent of literacy rate. On the other hand, serious efforts have to be made in the case of Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Andhra Pradesh which have recorded less than 70 percent literacy rate.

### **1.7.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

- What is the definition of literate?
- According to the Census of India 2011.....percentage of the India's population is literate.
- The percentage of rural population in terms of literacy in the year 2011 is .....percent.
- In 2011 .....percentage of urban population of India is literate.
- The highest number of rural literates in 2011 is in Uttar Pradesh which is .... Crores.
- Maharashtra has recorded highest number of urban literates in 2011 with ..... Crores.

### **ACTIVITY**

1. Talk to your parents and grandparents and ask them about the composition of their classmates and the difficulties they faced during their schooling/education.
2. Try to find out the kids in your surrounding who dropped out of the school. Discuss with them and prepare a note on the key factors which led to their drop out.

### **1.8 SUMMARY**

In this unit we have learned the demographic details of India. We have attempted to explore the size and composition of the population of India. To maintain the quality of the data, we have used primarily the Census of India data which is collected and published by the Government of India. To summarise this unit we may state that, we have 28 States and 8 Union Territories. The total number of districts in India is 640. The number of sub-districts is 5,924. There are 4041 Statutory Towns and 3892 Census Towns. The total number of villages

are 6, 40,930. The total population of India is 1210.6 million. In simpler form, it means we have more than 121 Crore population as per the Census of India 2011. India is the second largest country in the world with regard to the population of the different countries in the world. The only country which has more population than us is China.

India recorded the growth rate of 17.7 percent between 2001 and 2011. In terms of rural urban divide of the growth rate, the decadal growth rate for rural population in India was 12.3 percent and 31.8 percent in case of urban population. 68.8 percent of India's population reside in rural areas and 31.2 percent in the urban areas. According to the Census of India 2011, the sex ratio in the country is 943. The sex ratio for rural areas is 949 and for urban areas it is 929. The total number of male and female population in our country is 62, 31, 21,843 (males) and 58, 74, 47,730 (females). One of the prime reasons for the gap in sex ratio is due to the preference to male child by the patriarchal society. This many a times lead towards illegal prenatal sex determination and consequentially to female feticide also. The child population of India in the age group of 0-6 years is 164.5 million. Out of this population 121.3 million live in rural areas and 43.2 million reside in urban areas. According to the Census of India 2001, there were 927 female children per 1000 male children which reduced to 919 in the 2011 census.

The total number of literates in India is 763.5 million (76.35 Crores). Out of this 482.7 million reside in the rural areas and 280.8 million live in the urban areas. 73 percent of the population of India is literate. In percentage 67.8 percent of rural population and 84.1 percent of urban population of India is literate. In the case of males, 80.9 percent population is literate while the female category has 64.6 percent of literates. India has witnessed a transformation in educational opportunities for all in general and for females in particular. This transformation is observed due to the policy level inclusive measures adopted by the Government of India at different time and intervals.

### **1.9 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE**

- What do you understand by the term demography? List the key factors used in the preparing the demographic profile of any particular population.
- Any demographic study is interdisciplinary in nature. Analyse the statement.
- Based upon your readings and experiences, write a short note on the importance of recording of quality data in demographic studies.
- Give a detail of administrative set up of India.
- With the use of suitable examples, differentiate between 'sex' and 'gender'.
- The status of sex ratio in India is a social problem. Discuss in detail.
- In your opinion, what policy level changes shall be implemented in educational sphere of our country?

**BACHELOR OF LIBERAL ARTS-**

**SEMESTER II**

**COURSE: INDIAN SOCIETY**

---

**UNIT 3 SCHEDULED CASTES, OBCs and SCHEDULED TRIBES OF INDIA**

---

**STRUCTURE**

**2.0 Learning Objectives**

**2.1. Introduction**

**2.2 Castes in India**

**2.3 The Scheduled Castes**

**2.4 The OBCs**

**2.5 The Scheduled Tribes**

**2.6 Summary**

**2.7 Questions for Practice**

**2.8 Suggested Readings**

**2.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This Unit would enable you to understand:

- The social categories of caste and tribe in India

- The concept of Scheduled Castes.
- The concept of Scheduled Tribes.
- The concept of Other Backward Castes.

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

India is a land of diversity. To map this diversity, the Anthropological Survey of India conducted one of the most comprehensive mappings of the communities in India. The project was named 'People of India' and the study spanned over almost seven years starting from 2 Oct 1985 to 31 March 1992. The project was able to identify 4635 communities in India and provide their details (<https://ansi.gov.in/people-of-india/>). India is one of the countries which has been successfully conducting census for its population every ten years. However, the Census of India does not provide rich ethnographic details of the population as has been achieved through the People of India project. The People of India project, which is rich in qualitative information about the land its people coupled with the Census of India data, provide rich information about India and its population.

## **2.2 CASTES IN INDIA**

One of the features of Indian society that differentiates it from the rest of the societies is its caste based social organization. Caste system in Indian society is a product of Hindu social organization with a highly segregated elaborate scheme of hierarchy of individuals based on their caste identity which in turn is based on their birth. The whole system of caste as a system of classification and stratification of people is completely out of sync with the modern ethos of egalitarianism and achievement. One does not achieve one's caste, it is merely ascribed at the time of birth and one lives with it throughout one's life. The centrality of caste category for many people can be understood from the fact that many important events of one's life, from birth to marriage and even to one's death, the caste distinctions determine various ceremonies associated with these events.

How prevalent is it in Indian society? Given the fact that Hindus, with a population of 96.6 crores, constitute 79.8% of India's total population, it can be conveniently claimed that caste is a widely observed system throughout the country. Muslims, the next most populous religious community in India with a population of almost 17 crores forms 14.2% of India's total population followed by Christians and Sikhs consisting of 2.3% and 1.7% of the total population. Together these four religious communities form 98% of India's population.

The Indian experience has shown that even outside the domain of Hinduism, the caste as a system of social stratification has travelled to other religions too in the subcontinent. Since theoretically Islam, Christianity and Sikhism do not recognize any caste based hierarchy, its prevalence in these religious communities is seen as more of an aberration than a rule.

However, the fact of caste based distinctions and inequalities even in these religions have become more visible and open over a period of time. Given the fact that majority of the Muslim, Christian and Sikh population of India consists of people who at some stage in history converted to these religions and co-existed with mainstream Hindu society, the metaphor of caste seem to provide a template of social distancing and segregation to these religious communities as well. The Indian experience, however, shows that converted caste Hindus distinguished themselves from converted Dalits and maintained their position of dominance by carrying caste prejudices into their new religion. Two instances of mass conversion of Dalits out of the fold of Hinduism in the last century are notable from the perspective of Dalit struggle. Conversion to Adi-Dharma in 1920s resulted in more than 4 lakhs people registering themselves under a new religion in the Census Reports of 1931. An even more significant conversion by Dalits was engineered by Dr Ambedkar in 1956 at Nagpur when more than 55000 Dalits under the leadership of Ambedkar converted to Buddhism. The effect of this conversion can be gauged from the fact that number of Buddhists in Maharashtra in 1951 Census were reported to be merely 2,500 but in 1961 census reports the figure catapulted to 2.5 million (Jafferlot: 2005). (Kumar: 2017)

However, there is one important distinction between Hinduism and other religions vis-à-vis caste system. While Hinduism provide a very elaborate system of multiple caste distinctions with each jati or caste having its own social status and corresponding obligations and restrictions, the non-Hindu communities tend to be more conscious of the top and bottom hierarchy of caste. Invariably, the converts from the privileged caste categories tend to highlight their caste status in order to distance themselves from the low caste converts to these religions. The intermediate caste distinctions are not much pronounced in non-Hindu religions. Although non-Hindu religions have always officially distanced themselves from caste based categories and offered hope for a more egalitarian reformed social system, the reality of caste based format in these communities remain a point of consternation within these communities.

Despite caste identity being a crucial part of a major portion of Indian society, the Census of India does not enumerate caste based details from the respondents. The logic of caste is so much incongruent to modern societies that after independence it was consciously decided not to ask caste identity of Indians so that we may gradually move towards a caste less society.

The main problem of caste system has been its ascriptive basis and highly hierarchized rigid social order. However, the most repugnant aspect of the caste system had been the practice of untouchability which was formally and legally abolished from Indian society by the constitutional provision under Article 17.

During the process of freedom struggle when the Indian leaders were constantly struggling against the Britishers for an independent nation, they were simultaneously negotiating with them the means to address the issues of social inequality in society. The Government of India Act 1935 for the first times made special provisions for those who were never represented before in the corridors of power. It was agreed upon that the untouchable or the Depressed Classes as well as the tribal communities of India, were the most under-

privileged segments of Indian society. The social organization of Indian society during that phase of history was totally inimical to the progress of these communities.

### **2.3 THE SCHEDULED CASTES**

The Scheduled Castes is a cluster of castes identified by the Government of India that were the victims of the practice of untouchability in the traditional caste system. Due to this practice they were devoid of the basic human rights in the past and thus over the years they were marred by extreme social deprivation in all spheres of life. These castes were listed and formed into a schedule so that the Government of India could initiate special measures to support these groups to come out of their state of deprivation.

Soon after Independence, the framers of Indian Constitution envisaged a society based on principles of freedom, equality and justice. In order to achieve this aim, the framers of the constitution felt the need to address the most underprivileged segments victimized by the deep rooted inequalities perpetuated by the caste system over the ages. It was felt that unless the most marginalized segments of the society are not given an extra protection and support by the state, they will fall back into the recesses of darkness.

“In 1931 Census reports the Untouchables were covered under the term ‘Depressed Classes’. “In 1928 the depressed Classes Association was formed which functioned up to 1942” (Louis: 2003). The term however was contested by Dr Ambedkar in 1932 on account of the fact that the term created an impression of these communities as helpless and lowly. In 1935, the term “...Scheduled Caste was coined by the Simon Commission and embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935. In 1936, for the first time Government of British India published a list of Scheduled Castes” (Louis: 2003). The social category of Scheduled Castes is today a common denominator for those whose earlier generations were once considered Untouchables by traditional caste order. Since 1970s, the preferred term used for the erstwhile Untouchables is ‘*Dalits*’ which gained currency in literature and social sciences. The term *Dalit* in Hindi implies ‘the oppressed’ and its adoption by the Scheduled Castes reflects the political aspirations and activist mode of the community. The term implies a conscious recognition by the oppressed community of its unnatural condition of deprivation and marginality created by the social, historical and political forces of dominant Hindu Social Order.” (Kumar: 2017)

One does wonder how could such an egregious social practice exist and survive in India. The reason one finds is the legitimacy drawn by the caste system from eth religious texts. At least one can say that those who benefitted from the practice always interpreted religious texts to support social segregation and social discrimination on the basis of caste.

The *Purush Sukta* hymn of Rig Veda explain how from the primeval being were created the four *Varnas*, namely, Brahmins from the mouth, *Kshatriyas* from the arms and shoulders, *Vaishyas* from the things and *Shudras* from the Feet. This scheme of origin of mankind laid the foundation of caste system in India where these four *Varnas* were not merely mentioned to have been born from different part of the primeval being but also segmented into



hierarchical order on the basis of their mythical origin. The Brahmins having born from the mouth were regarded as the superior most and were delegated the task of reading, writing and other intellectual activities. The *shatriyas* having born out of arms and shoulders represented strength and therefore were believed to have been born to be warriors. Being just below the mouth in their location of origin, they were considered second in hierarchy after Brahmins. The third *varna* consisted of *Vaishyas* who were born out of the thighs of the primeval being and thus they were meant to engage in trade and production in society. Born just below the shoulders they automatically followed *Khatriyas* in hierarchy. Born from the bottom most part of the primeval being, the feet, *Shudras* were accordingly considered the lowest in Varna hierarchy and were ordained to do nothing except serve the upper three *Varnas*. According to the *Purush Sukta* hymn, it was the will of God that particular group of people be engaged in particular occupations. Being this the word of God for the Hindus, it was difficult for them to distance themselves from the discriminatory character of caste system where people born as *Shudras* were for once and all relegated to a subservient category and assigned servile position vis-à-vis other caste groups. The hymn only talks about the four *Varnas* which indicates that the fifth Varna became part of Hindu social order at some later stage. As mentioned earlier, it is believed to have emerged around second century AD out of the existing set of *Varnas*. (Kumar: 2017) Creation of an additional category of people outside the traditional fold of caste system where one's caste identity was one's passport to all privileges and duties, the fifth category so created was devoid of sharing any resources with anybody in a village. (Kumar: 2017)

The institution of caste system which formed the foundation and justificatory principle for untouchability was initially jolted by Buddhism and Jainism during 5<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Untouchability, which developed around 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD after the revival of Brahminism during the Gupta period was somewhat discouraged by Vaishnavism and Shaivism which encouraged dropping off the caste distinctions (Dahiwale: 2006). Bhakti movement starting around 6<sup>th</sup> century AD had a major role in developing the discourse of equality. It also challenged the hegemony of Brahmins and wielded people away from Brahmanic rites and rituals. The movement brought forth some famous saints from the backward as well as Dalit communities also, something that was otherwise not feasible in caste based Hindu social order. Saints like Namdev (14<sup>th</sup> century AD), Kabir (1440-1518 AD), Meerabai (15<sup>th</sup> century AD), Ravidas, Dhana Jat, Tukaram and Chokhamela etc., to name a few emerged as new symbols of spiritual enlightenment among the untouchables. Emergence of Sikhism as a movement in 16<sup>th</sup> century AD directly challenged caste system and started a new religion which advocated equality of all and dignity for all. The concept of free community meals (langar) served to people sitting together in a line (pankat) irrespective of the caste or creed of the follower was a revolutionary step towards weakening the effect of untouchability in North West India.(Kumar: 2017)

Historically the community was not permitted to own any resources at all, neither a house, a piece of land, nor cattle etc. To make things worse they were not permitted to enter the village limits without making an announcement. Their touch and even their presence in certain areas was considered to be impure. The idea of purity and pollution was so deep rooted in caste system that even their shadow was considered to be something that was to be

avoided. They used to live on the borders of the village, outside the settlement region. Their dependence on other caste groups was complete. They were required to do all the impure tasks. Access to public places, wells, temples, market, festivals etc was completely prohibited to these people except when called especially to clean up these places for the use of others. Due to utter deprivation of cultural and material capital, these communities were in no position to achieve a respectable living and equality even if it has been so enunciated by the constitution. Hence, after independence, it was decided that due to the historical wrongs committed against these communities over the ages, the larger society has to show magnanimity and extend special privileges to these members in order to bring them at par with other members of society.

**Table: 2.3.1**

**STATE/UT-WISE SCs POPULATION, 2011**

S No.	State/UT	Total Population	SC Population	% of SC Population
1	Andhra Pradesh	84580777	13878078	16.41
2	Arunachal Pradesh	1383727	0	0.00
3	Assam	31205576	2231321	7.15
4	Bihar	104099452	16567325	15.91
5	Chhattisgarh	25545198	3274269	12.82
6	Goa	1458545	25449	1.74
7	Gujarat	60439692	4074447	6.74
8	Haryana	25351462	5113615	20.17
9	Himachal Pradesh	6864602	1729252	25.19
10	Jammu & Kashmir	12541302	924991	7.38
11	Jharkhand	32988134	3985644	12.08
12	Karnataka	61095297	10474992	17.15
13	Kerala	33406061	3039573	9.10
14	Madhya Pradesh	72626809	11342320	15.62
15	Maharashtra	112374333	13275898	11.81
16	Manipur	2570390	97042	3.78
17	Meghalaya	2966889	17355	0.58
18	Mizoram	1097206	1218	0.11
19	Nagaland	1978502	0	0.00
20	Odisha	41974218	7188463	17.13
21	Punjab	27743338	8860179	31.94
22	Rajasthan	68548437	12221593	17.83
23	Sikkim	610577	28275	4.63
24	Tamil Nadu	72147030	14438445	20.01
25	Tripura	3673917	654918	17.83

26	Uttar Pradesh	199812341	41357608	20.70
27	Uttarakhand	10086292	1892516	18.76
28	West Bengal	91276115	21463270	23.51
29	A & N Islands	380581	0	0.00
30	Chandigarh	1055450	199086	18.86
31	D & N Haveli	343709	6186	1.80
32	Daman & Diu	243247	6124	2.52
33	NCT of Delhi	16787941	2812309	16.75
34	Lakshadweep	64473	0	0.00
35	Puducherry	1247953	196325	15.73
<b>INDIA</b>		<b>1210569573</b>	<b>201378086</b>	<b>16.63</b>

Source: <https://socialjustice.nic.in/UserView/index?mid=76663>

Hence, under Article 14, 15 (4) and 16 (4), along with Article 46 makes way for special provision of reservations for the Scheduled Castes in public jobs. Part XVI of the constitution provides for Part 16 of the Indian Constitution makes special provisions relating to certain classes. Article 330 provides reservation of seats for Schedule Castes in the House of the People. Article 332 provides for reservation of seats for schedule caste and schedule Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the states. Article 338 provides for the setting up of the national commission for schedule caste and schedule Tribes which shall work for the protection, welfare and development and advancement of the scheduled caste and scheduled Tribes in the country. Article 341 provides for the procedure for inclusion or exclusion of any caste from the scheduled list of caste.

## **2.4 THE OBCS**

The OBC is an acronym for the Other Backward Classes. As mentioned earlier the Indian constitution provides for special measures in the form of reservations by the state for the promotion and welfare of the socially and educationally backward communities in the country. While the case of Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes had been a settled matter since independence, the idea of expanding the scope of reservation in employment to other communities besides the historically marginalized communities has been a debatable theme.

Article 340 of the constitution provides for setting up such a commission which has a mandate to investigate the conditions of backward classes and suggest ameliorative measures. The need to identify socially and educationally backward communities for the purposes of additional support by the government in the form of reservations was initially assigned to the First Backward Class Commission headed by Kaka Kalelkar in January 1953. The report was submitted in March 1955. Based on the criteria of

- (i) low status in traditional caste hierarchy

- (ii) lack of educational advancement
- (iii) inadequate or no representation in govt services
- (iv) inadequate representation in the field of trade, commerce and industry

The Commission identified 2399 backward castes or communities in India. The committee recommended among other things extensive land reforms, reorganization of village economy, development of rural and cottage industry, universal education and representation in government jobs. Backwardness was found to be linked with low caste status in Indian population. All women were treated as backward and caste based enumeration was recommended for 1961 census. In 1961 the Govt of India decided not to go by the recommendations to provide reservation to backward classes along the lines of reservation for SCs and STs. The individual states were, however, given discretion to address the issue of backward classes at their own end.

The history of implementing special programmes for the advancement of backward communities goes back to Provincial Governments in India before independence in the first quarter of twentieth century. Madras government was the first one to extend some financial aid to educational institutions providing special facilities for the students of Depressed Classes. In 1921 the representation of non-Brahmins in government jobs was enhanced. Govt. of Mysore also issues special orders in 1921 providing special facilities to backward communities in education and state services. Bombay also set up a committee to determine the backwardness among its people and found Depressed Classes, Aboriginal Hill Tribes and OBCs as three categories of backward classes. First serious attempt at the welfare of Depressed Classes was made at national level through Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 when a separate representation in public bodies was made for these communities. It was only after independence that the govt tried to define OBCs, the Other Backward Classes besides the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Depending on the population of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, the quantum of reservation for these communities has been fixed proportionate to their population size. Hence at all India level, the reservation of SCs is 15% and that of STs is 7.5%. While the SCs and STs have been regularly enumerated as separate categories since independence, the case of OBCs is very tricky as there is no caste based enumeration in the Census of India after 1931 except for the Scheduled Castes.

After the submission of Kaka Kalelkar Report, the attempt was made by various states to reach out to the backward communities in their respective states by setting up state level backward class committees in the decades of 1960s and 70s. However, the backward commission set up in 1979 headed by B P Mandal was the one that paved way for a national policy on OBCs. The Commission is popularly known as 'Mandal Commission'. Its mandate was once again to determine the criteria of backwardness and recommend steps for the advancement of backward classes. The commission submitted its report by the end of 1980 and found once again the backwardness of people associated with their caste status, especially among Hindus. It recommended special reservation for the other backward classes based on the provisions of Article 15 (4) and Article 16 (4).

Ten years later, Mr. V P Singh announced the decision to implement the recommendations of the Commission and implement reservation for OBCs in govt jobs. The decision was contested fiercely by many and led to nationwide strikes and protests, especially by the upper castes of northern and western India. Due to massive opposition the case was reservation for OBCs was taken to the Supreme Court of India in 1992. The case is popularly known as 'Indira Sawhney Judgment' case. The judgment upheld 27% reservation for the OBCs but also invoked the idea of 'creamy layer' by bringing in the criterion of economic status. The constitution, however, only speaks of social and educational backwardness as criteria for special provisions.

As of March 2018 there are 2479 communities listed as backward classes with the maximum (256) being listed for the state of Maharashtra followed by Karnataka (199), Orissa (197), Tamil Nadu (182), Jharkhand (134) and Bihar (132). However, on the other hand there is no list of backward classes for the state of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland. The OBCs are a cluster of castes which have been at the lower end of caste system but were not the victims of untouchability. They were primarily the Sudras who who could not improve their conditions of existence even after independence. The problem of other backward classes once again highlights the ills of caste society as these caste groups failed to make much progress on their own due to the prevailing caste discrimination in the system. Though they were much better placed in caste hierarchy than the untouchables, their social and educational condition has also been deplorable. One can understand the damage suffered by the victims of caste system when one analyses the special efforts which are still being made to bring different communities at par. The backward class commissions found the criteria of backwardness directly linked to the caste status of the communities and their findings were validated by the Supreme Court of India when it endorsed Mandal Commission report.

## **2.5 THE SCHEDULED TRIBES**

The case of tribes in India has been somewhat peculiar. The term tribe in its conventional sense carries the traits of primitiveness, remoteness and isolation from modern civilizations. In case of India the tribes have been found to have a long history of cultural contact and intermingling with other communities without losing their tribal identity. In fact, it is more appropriate to look at tribes in India as having their own ethnic consciousness and a unique social organization which is in contrast to the peasant communities of India which are highly stratified and hierarchized. The widely prevalent caste based social organization in fact provides a good contrast to the tribal social organization. Unlike caste societies divided deeply and vertically, the tribal societies show immense degree of sharing and egalitarianism. The tribal communities have traditionally developed an organic relation with their natural environment and the idea of private wealth and ownership of land is somewhat alien to them. Land is considered a common resource and maintenance of harmonious and balanced relation with land its resources are central to their existence. The social organization is comparatively simple and lacks strong lines of division as witnessed in case of caste system. The tribes also

claim to be the original inhabitants of the land who were driven into the forests and hilly regions when the peasant communities raided and plundered the fertile plains for extending their agrarian conquests. According to Andre Beteille, in context of India, tribes may be defined as “an ideal state, a self-contained unit. It constitutes a society in itself.” (Ahmad: 1999)

The advent of modernity problematized the status of tribal communities which were increasingly looked at as primitive, backward and devoid of knowledge. In addition to being devoid of their natural resources for their survival and growth, a negative attitude towards these communities worked against their progress and advancement.

After independence, in order to reach out to the hitherto marginalized communities of the newly formed nation, the makers of the constitution felt the need to identify the tribes of India along with the erstwhile untouchables in the caste system in order to make special arrangements for their progress. The social and historical injustice meted out to these communities demanded a more sensitive approach towards their upliftment. The government thus notified a list of tribes from various parts of the country and all the tribes included in that list are officially called the Scheduled Tribes of India. The Constitution of India makes special provisions for the Scheduled Tribes under Article 330, 332, 335, 338, 339 and 342. The provision has been made not only for their reservation in House of the People, Legislative Assemblies and govt jobs but also extends to special protection of Scheduled Areas which provide a certain degree of autonomy in managing the administrative affairs of the tribal community.

As per the Census of India 2011, the Scheduled Tribes with a population of 10.4 crores form 8.93% of the total population of the country. The table below provides an overview of the Scheduled tribes of India.

**Table: 2.5.1**

**STATE / UT WISE OVERALL POPULATION, ST POPULATION, PERCENTAGE OF STS IN INDIA / STATE TO TOTAL POPULATION OF INDIA / STATE AND PERCENTAGE OF STS IN THE STATE TO TOTAL ST POPULATION (2011)**

Sr. No	India / State	Total Population	ST Population	% STs in India/ State to total population of India/ State
		(in lakh)		
	<b>India</b>	<b>12108.55</b>	<b>1045.46</b>	<b>8.6</b>
1	Andhra Pradesh	493.87	26.31	5.3
2	Arunachal Pradesh	13.84	9.52	68.8
3	Assam	312.06	38.84	12.4

4	Bihar	1040.99	13.37	1.3
5	Chhattisgarh	255.45	78.23	30.6
6	Goa	14.59	1.49	10.2
7	Gujarat	604.40	89.17	14.8
8	Haryana	253.51	NST	NA
9	Himachal Pradesh	68.65	3.92	5.7
10	J&K	125.41	14.93	11.9
11	Jharkhand	329.88	86.45	26.2
12	Karnataka	610.95	42.49	7.0
13	Kerala	334.06	4.85	1.5
14	Madhya Pradesh	726.27	153.17	21.1
15	Maharashtra	1123.74	105.1	9.4
16	Manipur	28.56	11.67	40.9
17	Meghalaya	29.67	25.56	86.1
18	Mizoram	10.97	10.36	94.4
19	Nagaland	19.79	17.11	86.5
20	Orissa	419.74	95.91	22.8
21	Punjab	277.43	NST	NA
22	Rajasthan	685.48	92.39	13.5
23	Sikkim	6.11	2.06	33.8
24	Tamil Nadu	721.47	7.95	1.1
25	Telangana	351.94	32.87	9.3
26	Tripura	36.74	11.67	31.8
27	Uttarakhand	100.86	2.92	2.9
28	Uttar Pradesh	1998.12	11.34	0.6
29	West Bengal	912.76	52.97	5.8

30	A & N Islands	3.81	0.29	7.5
31	Chandigarh	10.55	NST	NA
32	D & N Haveli	3.44	1.79	52.0
33	Daman & Diu.	2.43	0.15	6.3
34	Delhi	167.88	NST	NA
35	Lakshadweep	0.64	0.61	94.8
36	Puducherry	12.48	NST	NA

(Source: <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/statistics/Statistics8518.pdf>)

Census 2011, Office of the Registrar General, India  
 NST: No notified Scheduled Tribes (as in 2011), NA: Not Applicable

As in case of SCs and OBCs, the list of STs also varies considerably across various states. Among all the states, the highest number of tribes enlisted under Scheduled Tribe category come from Orissa (62) followed by Karnataka (50) Maharashtra (47) and Madhya Pradesh (46). In terms of percentage share of STs in the state population, the states with highest percentage share are Lakshadweep (94.8%), Mizoram (94.4%), Nagaland (86.48%) and Meghalaya (86.15%). While North eastern states have very high percentage of ST population, the six states from central India namely, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh itself account for two third of the total Scheduled Tribe population of the country.

To name a few sizeable tribes from different parts of the country, the Gonds, Bhils and Santhals are the most numerous tribal groups of mid-India region while the Garos, Khasis, Nagas and Mizos are from the North-east India.

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes along with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs periodically reviews the status of tribal communities in India and work towards their progress and development. The provision of reservation in government jobs has helped in increasing the participation of tribal communities in public sector.

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

The chapter attempts to introduce students to the widely used social categories in Indian population. All the three social categories, the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the OBCs have been discussed with special reference to the need for enumerating them and the historical context within which the exercise of creating these categories is to be understood. Soon after independence the framers of the constitution envisioned a society which will be modern in its import and egalitarian in spirit. The diversity of Indian society



demanded a more nuanced approach towards building a new India where the most marginalized and deprived sections would also be supported with full vigour. The framers of the constitution realized that given the age old prejudices and practices of discrimination and inequality in Indian society, it is essential that special provisions are made for the betterment of socially and educationally backward communities of the country. The choice to include the most exploited society fell upon the erstwhile untouchables and the tribunals to begin with. However, the efforts of the state in improving the conditions of these communities through reservation or affirmative policy were widely recognized. The need to expand its scope to include other communities which had not yet been covered under the umbrella of such provisions has been a burning theme in Indian socio-political arena. The Indian Constitution has been remarkably flexible and receptive to the changing needs of the changing society. The three social categories mentioned above also indicate the problems posed by the prejudices of caste and tribe in society. The challenges of modern society have made it imperative to address the deep rooted inequalities prevalent in society to bring about the desired change at societal level.

## **2.7 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE**

1. Who are the Scheduled castes?
2. What is the difference between the Scheduled Castes and the OBCs?
3. Who are the Scheduled Tribes?
4. What kind of special privileges are extended to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the OBCs?
5. Name five states that have the highest percentage of Scheduled Caste population.
6. Which five states have the highest population of the Scheduled Tribes?

## **2.8 SUGGESTED READINGS**

1. Ahmad, Aijazuddin (1999) *Social Geography*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications
2. Ambedkar, B. R. (1990) [1948] "The Untouchables", in Vasant Moon (ed.) *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 7*, Bombay: Education Department, Govt of Maharashtra.
3. Anand, Mulk Raj (1981) [1935] *Untouchable*, New Delhi: Arnold Publishers.
4. Bhat, Janaki Nath (1954) 'Untouchability in India', *Civilisations*, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp 565-570. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41377660>. Accessed on 13-05-2016)
5. Charsley, Simon (1996) "'Untouchable': What is in a Name?" *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 2, No. 1, March, pp 1-23.
6. Dahiwale, S.M. (Ed.) (2006) *Understanding Indian Society: The Non-Brahmanic Perspective*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

7. Deshpande, Ashwini (2012) *The Grammar of Caste: Economic Discrimination in Contemporary India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
8. Galanter, Marc (1969) 'Untouchability and the Law', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 4, No. 1/2, Jan, pp 131-133, 135-137, 139-141, 143-157, 159-170. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40736850> Accessed on 13-05-2016)
9. Gupta, Dipankar (1999) 'From Varna to Jati' in K. L. Sharma (ed.) *Social Inequality in India: Profiles of Caste, Class and Social Mobility*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
10. Guru, Gopal (2009) 'Archaeology of Untouchability', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 37, Sep 12-18, pp 49-56.
11. Jafferlot, Christophe (2005) *Dr Ambedkar and Untouchability: Analysing and Fighting Caste*, Delhi: Permanent Black.
12. Jodhka, Surinder S (2002) 'Caste and Untouchability in Rural Punjab', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 19, May 11-17, pp 1813-1823.
13. Kumar, Deepak (2017) 'Emancipation of Untouchables', in *B.R. Ambedkar: Society and Culture*, Delhi: IGNOU.
14. Kumar, Vivek (2001) 'Untouchability in Uttaranchal', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 49, Dec 8-14, pp 4536-4537.
15. Louis, Prakash (2003) *Political Sociology of Dalit Assertion*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
16. Mendelsohn, Oliver & M Vicziany (2000) *The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.
17. Oommen, T.K. (1968) 'Strategy for Social Change: A Case Study of Untouchability', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 3, No. 25, Jun. 22, pp 933-936.
18. Prashad, Vijay (1996) 'The Untouchable Question', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, No. 9, Mar 2, pp 551-559.
19. Shah, Ghanshyam et al. (2006) *Untouchability in Rural India*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

**BACHELOR IN LIBERAL ARTS**

**SEMESTER II**

**COURSE: INDIAN SOCIETY**

---

**UNIT 4: RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION OF INDIAN SOCIETY**

---

**STRUCTURE**

**3.0 Learning Objectives**

**3.1 Introduction**

**3.2 Understanding Religions of India**

**3.3 Theoretical Debates on Diverse Religions**

**3.4 Sects and Indian Religions**

**3.5 Summary**

**3.6 Questions for Practice**

**3.7 Suggested Readings**

**3.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After completing this Unit, you will be able to:

- Defining Religion
- To know the Religions of India.
- To Explain Theoretical Debates on Diverse Religions
- To Discuss Sects and Indian Religions;

**3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this Unit you will read about concept of religion and how it is changing in the world. It also discusses how different religions have different interpretation and meaning of faith, socio-cultural context etc. It also discusses theoretical debates related to the growth and sustenance of different religions. One of the central aspects of this unit is the modes of religions and sects.

### **3.2 UNDERSTANDING RELIGIONS OF INDIA**

Religions are changing across the globe. There are different religions in India. According to T N Madan, coexistence of religion is very much part of the Indian society. Indic religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are rooted in the Indian social-cultural landscape. At the same time, Indic religions coexist with religions like Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Bahai faith. Non-Hindu communities are also integral to Indian social-cultural landscapes (Madan). Hinduism is one of the important religious traditions based on the sacred texts such as Vedas and Darshanas /schools of thought (Blackburn, 2004:173). Jainism, for Blackburn, is one among three heterodox branches of Hinduism. It “traces its origins to Vardhamana, a successor to twenty-three previous ‘ford makers’ or teachers who enabled the faithful to cross the stream leading to the release from the cycle of existence. Its practice demands a monastic life of extreme austerity; for example, one sect is like Digambara or sky-clad” (Blackburn, 2004:201).

Religions, for Madan, determine the culture and ethos of country. Secular and religious facets determine social-cultural realms of India. Religion is central in determining the moral environment of a country. Emile Durkheim described about the manner in which sacred things are distanced from the forbidden in the context of religion. Dharma is one of central categories in Indian religious sphere. Dharma stands for maintenance. It refers to sustenance and moral virtue. Islam is grounded in the submission to the will of God. Tribes have also distinct religious understandings and practices. It is called as animism. According to Madan, religious diversity is central facet of the Indian life worlds. Conflicts based on religion have also fragmented the diverse sections. It has unleashed politicized and communal forms of different religion. India is also known for its great traditions. It has also the genealogy of little traditions. Great traditions are the legitimate part of the hegemonic/dominant culture. Little traditions are categories as the dialects, rituals and traditions. It is further analyzed that there are forms of pluralism that exist above the vicious ideology of caste. However, it is challenged by caste and communal forms of interpretations and practices. Interestingly, India has been experiencing the *mélange* of Hinduism, Buddhism, Slams and other forms of religious practices. Nation-state also promotes pluralism in India in particular and across the globe in general. Religious fractions are also articulated in the backdrop of the anti-immigrant politics across the world. (Madan)

Buddhism, for Blackburn, emerged in India in the 5th century BC. It was founded by Siddhartha Gautama. The term ‘Buddha’ refers to the enlightened one. Buddhism is grounded in the salvation through the discarding of the *samsara*’s, the continuous chain of birth and rebirth. It emphasizes on four noble truth and eight-fold path. *Nibbhana* is considered as the

liberation from the perils and pressures of the mundane lives. There are two important streams within Buddhism. One is Theravada Buddhism. It is practiced in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. Theravada Buddhism is analysed as orthodox in nature. Mahayana Buddhism is found in Nepal and China. Mahayana Buddhism believes in rituals, picturesque representation of saints. Buddhism has string ethical core. There are diverse traditions within Buddhism (Blackburn, 2004:50-51).

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: I**

1. Define religion?

.....  
.....

2. Write your understanding about diverse religions.

.....  
.....

### **3.3 THEORETICAL DEBATES ON DIVERSE RELIGIONS**

Every religion has its own conceptual world. Philosophy of religion, for Blackburn, needs to be understood via the concepts related to religion such as existence, fate, necessity, creation, justice, sin, redemption. God etc. Pagan, Jewish and Christian traditions created major impact in the western philosophy. It is further noted that the differences between religious and philosophical questions are not that much in Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Blackburn analyzed that the “classic problem of conceiving of an appropriate object of religious belief is that of understanding whether any term can be predicated of it; does make it make sense to talk of it creating things, willing events, knowing things, or being good or caring or being one thing or many”.

Language and metaphors are central to the religion. Some of the dominant questions that perplexed the religion were the existence of God and related debates. It is further noted that there are popular manifestations of religions such as “theosophy (using transcendental conceptions that confuse reason), demonology (indulging an anthromorphic mode of representing the supreme being), the urgy (a fanatical delusion that a feeling can be communicated to us from such a being or that one can make acceptable to the supreme being by other means than that of having the moral law at heart”. Blackburn considers these debates as part of modern theology. Scholars have analyzed the anthropological dimensions of religion like religious belief and its expression in music, language game etc. Scholars have also analyzed religion as part of psychological urges. Religious experiences are considered as purely subjective in nature (Blackburn, 2004:327-328). Religious experience, for Blackburn, is also studied in multiple ways. Religious experience considers the divine and

transcends elements related to religion. It is related to the dialogue between human being, God and religious institutions. It is considered as 'timeless' and 'divine' in a true. It is also part of the 'wishful thinking' of the religious people. It is also analyzed that experiences are not just spontaneous. But it is theory-laden in nature. There are also debates whether theoretical understanding of religion can be tested or beyond the parameters of objectivity or not (Blackburn, 2004:328).

Emile Durkheim's perspectives are distinct due to its theoretical insights. It is analyzed that "For long time, it has been known that the first representation with which men have pictured to themselves the world and themselves were of religious origin. There is no religion that is not cosmology at the same time that is a speculation upon divine things. If philosophy and science were born of religion, it is because of religion by taking the place of sciences and philosophy. But it has been frequently noticed that religion has not confined itself to enriching the human intellect, formed before hand, with a certain number of ideas; it has contributed to forming the intellect itself" (Durkheim,85:2004)

### **3.4 SECTS IN INDIA**

One needs to understand some of the basic definitional and etymological debates that emerged over the term 'sect' before delving into the nuances of sects in Indian context. According to Lawrence Babb, there are European connotations related to the term, sect. Sect, for Ernest Troeltsch, sect is defined as 'dissident movement that has split off from the church' (Troeltsch, Cited in Babb). Church is understood as a compel institution. It is also institutionalized in nature. It operates as a way to arrive at the sacred realms of the membership. Affiliation is grounded in the birth. Sect therefore is interpreted as "an off shoot". Sects are also analysed as groups affiliated with religions in the contemporary societies. Embedded nature in the sacred texts is considered as a fundamental feature of a sect. Worshipping deities are also central to sects. Every sect has its own field of philosophy. Sects depart from the larger frameworks and spaces of organised religions. At the same time, sects do believe in certain orders of asceticism. Ideological grounds in Hinduism are considered as the peculiar feature of the sects in India. It is important to understand the Durkhemian perspectives related to sects. Emile Durkheim observed that Hinduism possess religious rituals grounded in caste relations and its values and goals are that of people who denounce the world and material interests. Fundamental identity thus is determined by the membership. The membership is determined by sense of individuality and one who excludes oneself from the material world and caste. Sects thus are complex in nature. In the context of the sects, it is analyzed that the members in the sects dissociate themselves with the brahmanic, priestly outlook/practices.

It is observed that there are sects that are connected to Buddhism and Jainism Renouncers as central to these sects. It is also noted that sects are affiliated with caste. Sects also consider disciple descent or *Guru Parampara*. Broadly, they believe in the dominant-Indian religious culture and its aspects such as transmigration based on karma, destiny based on karma, question of liberation etc. Clans also determine the sects in India. Sants are very much part of such groups. Saivites, for instance, are integral to the complex, religious

structures in India. It is observed that Lingayats, Nath yogis and Dasnamis are part of the Saivites. It is analysed that Vaishnavas are comparatively unorthodox and they are part of religious realms of northern India. There are Vaisnava ascetics. They are also called as Bairagis. They depart from the Shavites by not detaching themselves from the household. They detach themselves from total renunciation like that of Saivites. It is also relevant to understand the category of Santh while discussing the sect. The term 'Sant' stands for the one who has understood the truth. Santh is the one who realizes the truth. The culture of Nirgun bhakti is the core of the Sant tradition in northern India. Vaishnavism attracted the diverse Sants in India. Ravidas and Kabir discarded the premises and practices of organised religion. Ordinary people are the focus of these spiritual forms. Contribution of Nanak, Ravidas and Dadu enriched the rich, plural spiritual traditions in India. Radha soami movement has also influenced the people in northern regions of India. Paradoxically, sects have also appropriated the ideology and practices of the caste. Sects also differ according to the diverse culture and regional variations. Question of caste becomes a problem while determining the leadership of the sect. Sect has gradually turned into caste. It is analyzed the sects like Lingayat have replaced brahmanism and transformed into a 'reference group' in Karnataka. Politicizations of the hegemonic/dominant religions have also affected the nature and practices of the sects.

### **3.5 SUMMARY**

It is observed that there are sects that are connected to Buddhism and Jainism Renouncers as central to these sects. It is also noted that sects are affiliated with caste. Sects also consider disciple descent or *Guru Parampara*. Broadly, they believe in the dominant-Indian religious culture and its aspects such as transmigration based on karma, destiny based on karma, question of liberation etc. Question of caste becomes a problem while determining the leadership of the sect.

### **3.6 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE**

1. Write a note of religious composition of Indian Society.
2. **What do you understand by the different sects?**
3. What is meant by Saivites?

### **3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS**

1. Rao C N Shankar, 2019, *Sociology: Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought*. S Chand and Company Limited, New Delhi
2. Sharma K Rajendra, 2020, *Demography and Population Problems*. Atlantic Publishers.
3. Srinivasan Krishnamurthy, 2017, *Population Concerns in India: Shifting trends, policies and programmes*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.
4. Blackburn, Simon (2004) *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp.50-51

5. Durkheim, Emile (1915) *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Translated by J. W. Swain, London: Allen and Unwin
6. Thompson, Kenneth (2004) *Readings from Emile Durkheim*, London and New York, Routledge

**BACHELORS IN ARTS (LIBERAL ARTS)**

**SEMESTER: II**

**COURSE: INDIAN SOCIETY**

---

**UNIT 5: POPULATION GROWTH IN INDIA SINCE INDEPENDENCE**

---

**STRUCTURE**

- 5.0 Learning Objectives**
- 5.1 Introduction**
- 5.2 Population Growth**
- 5.3 Causes of Over Population**
- 5.4 Effects of Population Explosion**
- 5.5 Theoretical Perspective of Population Growth and Control**
- 5.6 National Population Policy (NPP 2000)**
- 5.7 Family Planning**
- 5.8 Programmes/ Measures Suggested to Control Population**
- 5.9 Summary**
- 5.10 Questions for Practice**
- 5.11 Suggested Readings**



## **5.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This unit will enable the students to understand:

- The concept of population
- Population growth in India
- Population explosion and reasons
- Family planning and policies
- Measures to control population

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Population explosion is causing great concern not only in India, but all over the world, to all the countries. The world is having a period of population explosion. India's population has already crossed the alarming number of one billion. Before 1921, the population growth in India was insignificant between 1921-1951, it was rapid and after 1951, it has become explosive. Population of manageable size is strength of a nation but unmanageable population give rise to many problems. It becomes a hindrance to economic system as well as creates challenges to the social system. Unfortunately, India is facing such conditions. Such a serious problem requires skilful and efficient immediate solutions. A strong political will and general social awareness can provide a long last solution. This chapter highlights the demographic situation in India.

## **5.2 POPULATION GROWTH**

The size and growth of population are two important components of the demographic phenomena in a developing country like India. These have severe implications on the social and economic spheres of our life. India's population has more than doubled since Independence. India is the second most populous country in the world, ranking only, after China and is expected to overtake China by 2024. It is high time that India should start working to improve its economy. The population of India will be on top for the entire 21st century if the current trends continue. Over the years after independence in 1947, India has experienced growth 4x times, reaching 1.34 billion today. The population of India is increasing at the rate of 15 million per year and is the highest growth rate in the world.

The history of growth in India's population can be divided into four distinct phases – the points of division being 1921, 1951 and 1981. Prior to 1921, India's population was characterized by a chequered growth. Decades of substantial growth regularly alternated with decades of small increase or even negative growth. The Census Commissioner for the 1951 census, therefore, rightly called 1921 as the year of Great Divide, which differentiated the earlier period of fluctuating growth rates from a period of moderately increasing growth rates. The second point of division was 1951, which differentiated the period of earlier moderate

growth from a period of rapid growth in the post-independence period. This phase of rapid growth in population continued up to 1981. Thereafter, though population continues to grow, the rate of growth shows a definite deceleration. The first twenty years of the twentieth century, thus, witnessed a growth rate of only 5.42 per cent in India's population. It may be recalled here that the decade 1901-11 was struck by several local famines.

India's population is increasing at a mind-blowing scale. In 1941 it was 31.86 crores, it increased to 36.10 crore in 1951, 43.92 crore in 1961, 54.81 crore in 1971, 68.33 crore in 1981, 84.64 crore in 1991, 102 crore in 2001 and 121 crore in 2011.

If the population growth is sub-divided into three distinct periods, (a) from 1901-1931, (b) 1931-1961, (c) 1961-1999, it is found that the first period of 30 years witnessed an addition of 17 per cent, the next thirty years observed an increase of 57.4 per cent and in the following 38 years (about four decades), the country experienced an explosive growth of 127.4 per cent.

According to the National Population Policy draft prepared in 1997 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the goal of total fertility rate (TFR) of 2.1 will be achieved by the year 2010. But according to the projections made by the Registrar General, the TFR of 2.1 would not be reached by the year 2026, if the existing demographic trends continued. The current fertility rate of India is 2.3 births per woman and has remained constant for the past two decades. At this rate, the population of India is expected to grow up to 1.8 billion by 2050. Despite the attempts to reduce the fertility rate to 2.1, the expected population growth is expected to reach 1.9 billion by the end of the century. In any case, there is no stopping for India to become the most populous nation in the world. Even if the fertility rate is decreased in the coming years India is expected to reach 2 billion by 2100.

The disastrous population growth in India can be recognized from the following facts:

- A little more than one out of every six persons in the world is from India.
- India adds 46,500 persons to its population every day.
- India accounts for a meagre of 2.4 per cent of the world's surface area of 135.79 million square kms, whereas it supports and sustains 17.5 per cent of the world's population.
- It is estimated that by 2035, India would overtake China as the world's most populous nation.
- Around 49 per cent of the increase in population in one decade is in five states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh known as (*BIMARU* states).
- More than three times as many couples enter the reproductive span than those leaving it, with the fertility rate of the younger group becoming three times higher than that of those passing out of the reproductive age.

- At the present rate of growth, life for most Indians would be unbearable, medical facilities would be difficult to provide, expenses on education, housing would be excessive, technical and professional education would become the exclusive privilege of the elite and the scarcity of food once again stab more than half of the nation below the poverty line.

Thus, there is immediate need to focus on population explosion in the country. A steep population growth not only reverses the development process but also put tremendous pressure on already overloaded system.

### **5.3 CAUSES OF OVER POPULATION**

After 1951, the growth of population is explained by a decline in mortality due to availability of curative and preventive medicines, control of famines and epidemics, reduction of wars and a large base population. Following are important causes for population explosion:

- **Child marriage/ Low age at marriage-** Child marriages are very common in our country. Seventy two per cent marriages in India were performed before 15 years of age and 34 per cent before ten years of age. Since then, there has been a continuous increase in the mean age of marriage among both the males and females. The infant mortality rate is directly related to the age of women at the time of marriage, as the age group increase, the fertility rate decreases. If population growth is to be controlled, marriage of girls (in rural and urban areas) is to be preferred in 21-23 or 23-25 age group rather than in 15-18 or 18-21 age groups.
- **High illiteracy-** Family planning has a direct link with female education, and female education is directly related with age at marriage, general status of women, their fertility and infant mortality rate and so forth. According to census 2011, literacy rate is 74 percent in India as compared to 64.83 per cent ten years ago. Male literacy rate is 84 percent while female literacy percentage is 65. If both men and women are educated, they will understand the logic of family planning, but if either of them or both of them are illiterate, they would be more rigid and orthodox. This is evident from the fact that Kerala (overall literacy rate 92% and female literacy rate 91 %) that has lowest birth rate (14.70 per thousand), while the low female literacy rate gives rise to high birth rate in the states of Rajasthan (34.6 per thousand), Uttar Pradesh (36 per thousand), Madhya Pradesh (34.7 per one thousand).
- **Religious attitude towards family planning-** Religiously orthodox and conservative people are against the use of family planning measures. There are women who believed that they cannot go against the wishes of God, they argue that the purpose of a women's life is to bear children. Indian Muslims have a higher birth and fertility

rate. Muslim women having fertility rate of 4.4 as compared to 3.3 among Hindu women and they are more conservative towards family planning than the Hindus.

- **Peaceful conditions-** For nearly a century (1860-1960) India enjoyed comparative peace without involving in major conflicts or wars especially after the establishment of British rule. Peaceful conditions stimulate population growth in the country.
- **Excessive birth rate over death-** Population growth depends on the excess birth over deaths. Death rate has been declining rapidly and birth rate is still high. The statistic shows the death rate was 16.99 in 1971 which decrease to 7.30 in 2020 per 1,000 inhabitants in India. Number of births of India increased from 22,106.22 thousands in 1971 to 24,067.83 thousands in 2020, growing at an average annual rate of 0.18%. Widening gap between birth and death rate lead to population explosion.
- **Medical advancement-** Medical knowledge and its application has considerably reduced the death rate. It has helped to control the diseases like Malaria, TB, Cholera, Plague, Influenza, Smallpox etc, and protected the lives from these deadly diseases. Positively, contributed to more population, because saved persons from death also produced children and add to the existing number.
- **Improved transport facility-** It has helped people to avail medical and health facilities without much difficulty. These have saved lives and added to the size of population.
- **Improvement in agriculture and industry-** Uncertainties in agriculture have largely been removed with the help of science and technology. During green revolution food production has considerably increased. Industries have been providing employment opportunities to thousands of people. These developments have given people the confidence that they can afford to feed more people if they beget.
- **Social attitude of Indians-** This also favours an increase in population. Poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, absence of recreational facilities, attitudes of conservatism, orthodoxy, feeling of dependence on God, a sense of resignation towards life, looking upon children as old age pension etc. are all responsible for rapid growth of population.
- **Lack of conscious family planning-** Married couples is not conscious about family planning. Use of contraceptives unknown to the illiterate masses. They feel that more children are wanted for economic prosperity.
- **Climatic conditions of the Country-** In India, climatic conditions are very conducive to the population growth. Montesquieu said that people of warm lands are more sex indulgent. Girls become physically mature at an early age between 11-15 years. Child bearing capacity of women lasts in the tropical regions.

- **Lack of entertainment facilities-** It has been observed that people especially in the rural area, have been forced to find entertainment in the sex paly in the absence of other entertainment facilities. This has further enhanced the problem.
- **Other causes**
  - Joint family system and lack of responsibility of Young couples in these families to bring up their children.
  - Lack of recreational activities.
  - Lack of information or wrong information about the adverse effects of vasectomy, tubectomy and the loop.
  - Poor parents produce children so that they can get help from them. This is evident from the fact that there are some 35 million child workers in the country.
  - Poverty is both the cause and effect of the population growth. A huge family size is the poor man's only way to combat poverty caused by the population boom.

#### **5.4 EFFECTS OF POPULATION EXPLOSION**

Population growth has direct effect on the living standard of people. If the growth exceeds the reasonable limits, problems will increase and has happened in India. This is one of the reasons, despite tremendous progress in agriculture and industry since independence, per capita income has not increase significantly. The extraordinary population growth during the recent years has brought about a series of serious consequences. Some of the major effects of population are described as:

- **Population and poverty:** Poverty and population often go together. Poverty is both cause and effect of rapid population growth. India has not counted its poor since 2011. But the United Nations estimated the number of poor in the country to be 364 million in 2019, or 28 per cent of the population. They do not have proper food, shelter and clothing.
- **Unemployment and underemployment:** It is the duty of nation to provide food and shelter to its population, besides they are also to be provided with jobs. But it is not easy to create jobs, there is already unemployment coupled with underemployment. Job opportunities created during the five year plans are not enough to meet the demand.
- **Low per capita income:** During the past 50 years of planning, the national income of the country has increased by about 3.6% per annum. But the per capita

income has increased only by 1.5% per annum. This low per capita income of the people in India is attributed to the rapid growth of population.

- **Shortage of food:** Rapid population growth has led to the problem of shortage of food supply. In spite of the fact that more than two third of its population engaged in agriculture. Population is unable to have minimum necessary amount of food, even though we have attained self-sufficiency in food production. As a result one out of every four is suffering from malnutrition and two out of every four get only half of the daily required quantity of food.
- **Increased burden of social overheads:** When there is rapid population growth in the country, government is required to provide the minimum facilities for the people for their living. Hence, it has increase educational, housing, sanitation, public health, medical, transportation, communication and other facilities. This will increase the cost of the social overheads. Government finds it difficult to find enough funds to meet the unproductive expenses.
- **Population and labour efficiency:** Increase in population reduces per capita income, thus resulting in low standard of living. This affects badly the health and efficiency of workers. Labour inefficiency reduces productivity and nation loses heavily.
- **Population and the standard of living:** Standard of living reflects the quantity and quality of the consumption of the people. Due to rapid population growth, standard of living of the people has been adversely affected.
- **Pressure on land:** Over population inevitably leads to heavy pressure on land. Land is limited and fixed in supply; increase in population can only bring more pressure on it. Hence the born people will have to share the land with the existing people.
- **Increased unproductive consumer:** With the rapid population growth, there will be large proportion of unproductive consumers. In fact, today about 51% of the total population of India is unproductive. Rapid increase in the population contributes to an increase in the dependency ratio.
- **Slow economic development:** Economic development will be slower in highly populated countries. Absence of savings results in low capital formation, thus restrict investments and contributed to the slow economic growth of the country.
- **Political unrest:** Unmanageable population size may contribute to political instability and unrest. The failure of the government to provide basic amenities to the people contributes in agitation and unrest among the masses.

## **5.5 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF POPULATION GROWTH AND CONTROL**

- **Development and control over population**

The relationship between population and development was explained by the Population Research Office of the Princeton University in the 1940s on the basis that development reduces fertility rate. It is said that development lowers the death rate faster than the birth rate resulting in population growth. The theory does not answer the crucial question as to when decline in birth rates would set in as development progresses. It also does not tell us the level to which fertility would decline and the time span over which the decline would occur. The question of threshold and speed of fertility declines inevitably bring up the questions of identification of factors which cause fertility declines.

- **Theory of economy of households**

According to this theory, a household weighs the cost of a large family with its benefits. As long as the cost of rearing children remains low, compared to the benefits they bring in terms of additional income, birth rate would remain high. The transition would occur when as a result of socio-economic changes like urbanization, compulsory schooling, market penetration, etc., the cost of bringing up children becomes higher than the benefits.

- **Theory of diffusion of ideas regarding access to contraception**

Ansley Coale (1973) supported this theory through his study of fall in fertility rate in Europe between 1850 and 1930. Availability of contraceptive reduces fertility rate and vice versa.

Studies in India have supported all these theories and pointed out other factors too which affects the course of fertility, like higher age at marriage, or what act as hindrance in the use of contraception like female literacy, importance of sons, poverty, female participation in economic activities, and so on. Some empirical studies in this context have also been conducted with Indian data by K G Jolly, Anirudh Jain etc.

## **5.6 NATIONAL POPULATION POLICY**

It cannot be denied that India is over populated country. So to tackle this problem India must make planned efforts and a well thought population policy. A policy is a “plan of action, statement of aims and ideals, especially one made by a government, political party, a business company, etc.” it guides the present and the future decisions.

Population policy refers to the policy intended to decrease the birth rate or growth rate. Statement of goals, objectives and targets are inherent in the population policy. According to UNEP it is “an effort to affect the size, structure and distribution or

characteristics of population. In broader term, it includes, “efforts to regulate economic and social conditions which are likely to have demographic consequences”. Two types of population policies have been suggested: (a) the ante-natal policy which aims at discouraging the growth of population and (b) the distributional policy which deals with distributional imbalances of population.

The population policy of a developing country like India has to aim at:

- i. Decreasing birth rate
- ii. Limiting the number of children in family
- iii. Decreasing mortality
- iv. Creating awareness among the masses regarding consequences of speeding population
- v. Procuring necessary contraceptives
- vi. Enacting laws like legalising abortion
- vii. Giving incentives as well as disincentives

India formed its first “National Population Policy” in April 1976. It called for an increase in the legal minimum age of marriage from 15 to 18 for females and from 18 to 21 years for males. The policy was modified in 1977. The new policy statements emphasised the importance of the small family norm without compulsion and changed the programme title to “Family Welfare Programme”.

National Population Policy 2020 (NPP-2020) is the latest in the series. it was announced on 15 February, 2020. It states the commitment of the government towards target free approach in administering family planning services. The NPP-2000 is not just a matter of fertility and mortality rates. It deals with women education, empowering women for improved health and nutrition, child survival and health, the unmet needs for family welfare services, healthcare for the under-served population groups like urban slums, tribal community, hill area population and displaced and migrant population, adolescent’s health and education, increased participation of men in Planned Parenthood and collaboration with non-governmental organizations.

The object of NPP-2000 is to bring the total fertility rate (TFR) to replacement levels by 2010. The goals and target to be achieved by 2010 are:

1. Giving rewards to panchayats and Zila Parishads for promoting small family norm.
2. Reduce infant mortality rate to below 20 per 100 live births.
3. Reduce maternal mortality ratio to below 100 per 1 lakh live births.



4. Achieve universal immunisation of children against all preventable diseases.
5. Achieve 80% institutional deliveries and 100 % deliveries by trained persons.
6. Achieve 100% registration of births, deaths, marriages and pregnancy.
7. Prevent and control communicable diseases.
8. Promote vigorously the small family norms to achieve TFR.
9. Strict enforcement of “Child Marriage Restraint Act”.
10. Contain the spread of AIDS.
11. Make school education up to age of 14 free and compulsory and to reduce drop-out rates at primary and secondary school levels to below 20% to boys and girls.
12. Health insurance covers of Rs.5000 for couple below the poverty line with two living children, who undergo sterilization.
13. Achieve universal access to information/ counselling and services for fertility regulation and contraception.
14. To take appropriate steps to make family welfare programme a people centred programme.
15. Setting up of a National Commission on Population headed by the Prime Minister.

### **5.7 FAMILY PLANNING**

Family planning means planning the number of children in the family. It is limiting the size of family by conscious efforts. The motto of family planning is, child by choice and not by chance. It seeks to inject social responsibility into married life.

Family planning is described by an Expert Committee of the WHO in the following manner. It refers to practices that help individuals or couples to attain certain objectives:

- a) to avoid unwanted births
- b) to bring about wanted births
- c) to regulate the intervals between pregnancies
- d) to control the time at which births occur in relation to the ages of the parent
- e) to determine the number of children in the family

India was the first country to evolve a government-backed family planning programme in the 1950s. Developing countries like Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea that followed suit have successfully stabilized their population growth, but India even after half century is trailing behind. A separate Department of Family Planning was created in 1966 under the union Ministry of Health. Between 1975-1977 Indira Gandhi government at the Centre implemented a forced sterilization programme against populations' wishes and even used such harsh and force methods that today one is reluctant to talk about family planning in public. The program is still criticized, and is blamed for creating a public disgust to family planning, which obstructed government programmes for decades.

In 1977, the Janta Party government formulated a new population policy. The acceptance of the programme was made purely voluntary. The Family Planning Department was renamed as the Family Welfare Department, and took all aspects of family welfare. Government of India adopted the UNEP guidelines of delaying the first child and spacing the subsequent birth.

The methods adopted in family planning are: sterilization, loop, pill, withdrawal, rhythm, sheath, and diaphragm. Condom and the pill seem most popular among the high socio-economic groups. Sterilization is preferred by low social strata people. A good number of women use more than one method, depending on the circumstances and availability. In 1951, only 147 family planning clinics were established during the first five year plan period (1951-56). Since then, a network of Community Health Centres (CHCs), Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and sub centres has been created for implementing family planning programme through state governments with a hindered per cent central assistance. About 50,000 centres and sub-centres are created in rural areas in each five year plan. There were 1,47,069 sub-centres, 23,673 PHCs and 4535 CHCs in the country (March, 2010). The PHCs perform two specific functions; providing services to the people and disseminating information about these services in an effective manner in order to motivate masses to accept family planning. Nearly half million medical and Para medical persons were engaged in the programme.

### **A New Approach**

A social policy with a new integrated approach to population stabilization has now been adopted. Following are the components of this approach:

#### ***Target-free Programme***

A significant shift has been made from April 1996 in the family planning programme by the introduction of target-free programme. Targets were a major obstacle in the programme in which village *patwaris*, school teachers and government functionaries had to achieve the minimum targets of sterilization and other measures. Postings, promotions and transfers depended on the fulfilment of targets. To achieve the success rate without setting targets is indeed a welcome change.

#### ***Bottom-up Approach or Decentralized Participatory Planning***

The programme is chalked out at the village level in consultation with health workers and PHC, i.e., male and female workers (ANMs), Panchayat members and active individuals. Planning for the district will be the aggregation of PHC plans and the requirements of district hospitals. These district plans will together make the State Plan and State Plans will contribute to the national Plan.

### ***State-specific Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Strategy***

States display a wide variation in health parameters, such as infant mortality, maternal mortality, birth rates etc., area specific RCH approach has been worked out separately for different states and the special category states where considerable infrastructure inputs flow from state health system projects.

### ***Integrated RCH Package***

It provides a minimum model framework for reproductive health services at different levels in the district, sub-centres, PHCs and district hospitals. These services are related to prevention and management of unwanted pregnancy, maternal care, services for new-born and infants and management of STDs.

### ***Comprehensive Integrated Training***

Emphasis will be laid on the training of personnel to improve efficiency of intervention, interpersonal communication and management. District would be responsible to provide training. Central and state governments will support the district in training, training material and periodic evaluation.

### ***Increased Involvement of NGOs***

More NGOs will be involved in clinic based interventions, in strengthening community participation in implementing project activities and in the training for technical skills. Private rural practitioners including those of indigenous systems of medicines will also be involved in plans.

### ***Independent Evaluation of Programme***

The programme will be monitored and evaluated for qualitative performance. Eighteen Population Resource Centres (PRCs) have been established which are engaged in working out formats for annual surveys. Eight regional teams have also been formulated by the government for cross checking of activities.

## **5.8 PROGRAMMES/ MEASURES SUGGESTED TO CONTROL POPULATION**

Overpopulation has adversely affected the progress of the economy and the standard of living. It brings down per capita and national income, it becomes difficult to face the challenges of poverty, unemployment and underemployment. Problem is an urgent and needs immediate solution. The following programmes may be suggested to check population growth:

### ***Incentives vs. Disincentives***

There are some scholars who support cooperation while others support coercion. Nobel laureate Professor Amartya Sen, in a lecture in Delhi in August 1995 on “Population Stabilization Programme” favoured ‘cooperation’ approach and condemned the use of coercion. Sen described Condorcet’s approach of cooperation as well defined and Malthus’a path of coercion as undesirable and even counter-productive in checking population growth. He gave the example of Kerala in support of his viewpoint and developed a hypothesis called “Kerala hypothesis of demographic transition.” In this hypothesis, increase in literacy and primary health care is described as two important factors in population control. ‘Chinese model’ is opposite to ‘Kerala model’ which supports coercion as an effective solution to the problem. Some thinkers however suggested the combination of both cooperation and coercion or incentives and disincentives to check the population growth.

### ***Division into Zones and Regions***

A study conducted in 1990 by two population experts of the Operation Research Group at Baroda has shown how the problem could be tackled. On the basis of the fertility pattern, they have divided the country’s 350 districts into 16 zones and four regions. They have identified districts and zones which reflect the impact of family planning on the fertility, the areas where fertility rates have remained low despite hardly any family planning efforts, and those regions which are the hard core areas where the maximum effort is needed. The region wise approach is expected to help in correcting the lacuna in the implementation of the family planning programme.

### ***Search for New Contraceptives***

The search for a new, inexpensive, easy to use and harmless contraceptive has not met so far. It is necessary that Indian herbs be thoroughly investigated for their effects. Pursuing vigorous investigation of the health status and dietary habits of some of the tribal in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, among some of whom the fertility rate is found to be extremely low, might provide the needed solution.

### ***Increase in Marriage Age***

There is direct relationship between age of marriage, size of family and attitude towards family planning. We can take the example of Kerala, during 1950s population growth in the state was one of the highest in the country. By, 1970 it began to fall significantly and subsequently became the lowest among the Indian states. During 1981-91, the growth rate dropped to 14.3 per cent and in the next decade it further came down to 9.4

per cent. This is all happened due to the rise in age at marriage and higher level of contraception. Rising the marriage age is, thus, bound to reduce the family size in other states too. This needs a necessary public awareness.

### ***Economic Development***

Economic development can be the best contraceptive. There is need for quick population control to meet the economic principle of demand and supply. To balance any economic situation, we can either increase the supply which depends on both financial and material resources or reduce the demand which depends on the number of people demanding for various services and commodities. Population problem should not be viewed out of social context. Development which aims at distribution and equality alone can remove poverty and contain population growth.

### ***Role of NGOs***

A programme is fully successful when it is accepted by the people. Unless the community is fully involved in the programme and is consider it to be its own programme, it may not be possible to achieve the desired results. This can be achieved in a better way by the non-government organizations (NGOs) as these have very close relation with the people. Their role in removing the deep-rooted beliefs cavorting large families and male children, improving female literacy, raising age at marriage of girls, essential new born care, birth spacing etc., can be very significant. Such organizations not only have the capacity to reach the remote areas but their activities are cost effective also.

### **Other Measures:**

#### ***Family planning measures***

The motto of family planning is-‘child by choice and not by chance’ or ‘child by desire not by accident’. The size of the family must be limited voluntarily and can be done by birth control measures and other family planning methods.

#### ***Providing education facility to the people***

Spread of education among illiterate masses is a significant step in reducing the birth rate. People must be educated regarding the benefits of small family and late marriage. Education helps to increase the earning capacity of males and females, improves the status of women and creates awareness regarding family planning.

#### ***Improving status of women***

High status of women is closely associated with a low birth rate. The desire to rise in the social scale develops a strong feeling for a smaller family. The educated, employed urban

women exhibits a desire for small family. Efforts must be made to attract rural women to go in the direction of a small family.

### ***Propaganda in favour of small family***

More publicity is to be given regarding the benefits of a small family to the general masses. Mass media of communication like press, radio, TV, movies, internet are of great help for this.

### ***Provision of incentives***

Incentives such as cash payments and promotions in jobs, free education, preference in admission etc. could be given to the people who accept and adopt family planning.

### ***Increasing the standard of living of people***

People with higher standard of living normally opt for small family. So it is necessary to increase the standard of living.

### ***Providing enough recreational facilities***

Lack of sufficient recreational facilities has often contributed to the problem of overpopulation. People must be provided with sufficient facilities to relax and refresh. This will prevent them from resorting to sex play whenever they feel like refreshing themselves.

### ***Internal migration***

Unequal distribution of population in different parts of the country can be dealt with internal migration. It means people must be encouraged to move from the densely populated areas towards the thinly populated areas.

### ***Provision of social security***

In the absence of social security especially in old age, sickness, unemployment and accident people have tended to depend on large families for security. Poor, consider children as their wealth. It is necessary to introduce various social insurance and social security schemes to help the poor.

### ***Reduction in infant mortality***

By taking the suitable medical steps the rate of infant mortality can be reduced. If it is reduced, then parents will feel that their children will survive and live long.

## **5.9 SUMMARY**

After independence it was believed that rising population was an asset and now we are thinking that India's rapid population growth will be checked through the process of development i.e., literacy, healthcare, employment etc. if the country wants to get rid of this problem, the only way is to administer the bitter dose of disincentives and compulsory family planning. This requires a suitable population policy. The population should aim not only at controlling the unregulated human growth but also at checking the unregulated movement of population and the increasing concentration of people in the urbanised areas, providing adequate living space and healthy environment to heterogeneous group. Family planning programme has to look inwards and treat itself as a development input in its own right. A variety of measures will have to be introduced to put the family campaign back on its feet. Legal awareness may help but more important is public awareness and responsible parenthood. Family planning will help to improve the general status of women and their health too. The goal of population control has to be jointly linked with the formulation and implementation of policies aimed at population regulation and planning for preserving natural and human resources. Thus, only population growth may not be perceived as a problem but its relation with the availability of resources may be viewed with great concern.

#### **5.10 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE**

- i. Evaluate the population growth since independence.
- ii. What do you think about the reasons of population explosion?
- iii. How overpopulation impact the social fabric of society?
- iv. Discuss the benefits of family planning on masses.
- v. What can be done to control the problem of overpopulation in India?

#### **5.11 SUGGESTED READINGS**

1. Mukherjee R K, 1976, *Family and Planning in India*. Orient Longmans, Kolkata
2. Ram Ahuja, 2014, *Society in India: Concepts, Theories and Recent Trends*. Rawat Publications, Jaipur.
3. Ram Ahuja, 2017, *Social Problems in India*. Rawat Publications, Jaipur.
4. Rao, C N Shankar, 2019, *Sociology: Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought*. S Chand and Company Limited, New Delhi
5. Sharma K Rajendra, 2020, *Demography and Population Problems*. Atlantic Publishers.
6. Srinivasan Krishnamurthy, 2017, *Population Concerns in India: Shifting trends, policies and programmes*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

**BACHELORS IN ARTS (LIBERAL ARTS)**

**SEMESTER: II**

**COURSE: INDIAN SOCIETY**

---

**UNIT 6: INDIAN RURAL SOCIETY: FEATURES AND CHANGING TRENDS**

---

**STRUCTURE**

- 6.0 Learning objectives**
- 6.1 Introduction**
- 6.2 Meaning of Rural Society**
- 6.3 Features of Indian Rural Society**
- 6.4 Folk Urban Continuum & culture of Poverty**
- 6.5 Emerging trends/changes occurring in rural society**
- 6.6 Summary**
- 6.7 Key words**
- 6.8 Questions for Practice**
- 6.9.1 Suggested Reading**



## **6.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The aim of present unit is to explain the meaning of rural society and highlighting the major features of Indian rural society along with changes occurring in it. After reading this unit you should be able to

- State the meaning of rural society.
- Explain what the salient features of rural society are.
- Explain what the changes are emerging in rural society.

## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Indian society is predominantly a rural society having about 65% total population of nation residing in countryside. Thus, anybody who wishes to understand Indian society will have to understand the rural social structure indispensably. Though rural social structure varies from region to region, yet there are wide similarities among the ruralities like caste and family system. In this unit we shall try to know the meaning of rural society and its major characteristics specifically in the context of Indian rural society.

## **6.2 MEANING OF SOCIETY**

Some of sociologists have attempted to defined rural society based on their works, though universality of such issue is not accepted due to geographical, economic, social and cultural factors. The term ‘rural society’ is defined by interchangeable terms like ‘villages’, countryside or folk society.

According to Robert Redfield rural or folk society is ‘such a society which is small, isolated, non literate and homogenous with a strong sense of group solidarity. The ways of living are conventionalized into that coherent system which we call ‘a culture.’ Behaviour is traditional, spontaneous, uncritical person; there is no legislation and habit of experiment and reflection for intellectual ends. Kinship, its relationship and institutions are the type of categories of experience and the familial group is the unit of action. The sacred prevails over the secular: the economy is one of status rather than the market.’

According to Dahama and Bhatnagar 'rural society comprises of all persons residing in an administrative unit of village. It is characterized by isolation, and hence the economic features develop around its regional self-sufficiency. The unit of production is the family, which tries to produce much of its required goods.

According to Long 'rural society is that where most people are engaged in agriculture and allied activities and they also constitute a big part of poor'

Generally rural society is characterized as a clusters of human population inhibited on scattered open natural space primarily engaged in agriculture, with homogeneous patterns of behavior, language and customs of social life.

### **6.3 SALIENT FEATURES/ CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL SOCIETY**

Rural society bears specific characteristics which make it different than that of urban one. Here we shall discuss some of the important characteristics of rural society.

#### **1. Occupation:**

One of the prime and foremost characters of rural society lies in the occupational structure. Main occupation of the rural people is agriculture and allied activities. Peasants and their families are the base of rural economy due to their total engagement in cultivation. Generally, it is concluded that 75% of the people in countryside are engaged in agricultural occupation. According to Desai 'rural society is based predominantly on agriculture. Village agriculture is sharply distinguished from urban industry by the fact that it is based on direct extraction from nature by man.' In Indian rural society prime crops grown by the peasants /farmers are wheat, paddy, sugarcane, cotton, jute, tea, chilly and various types of vegetables etc. Land is the basic means of production on which the peasants and their family members put their labour with the help of domesticated animals like, oxen, cows, buffaloes (now machines). Unlike now most of the agricultural production, in the typical rural setting, was at a subsistence level. Grazing of animals in open space was also a part of traditional rural society.

#### **2. General Environment And Orientation Towards Nature:**

Rural society is close to nature. The rural people have direct relationship with natural flora and fauna. By virtue of their work rural inhabitants usually experience sun, rain, heat, frost, drought over which they have no control. A strong belief prevails that only nature has strong role in their life hence natural phenomenon are taken with sacredness and people usually propitiate the various natural forces.

### **3. Isolated:**

An important characteristic of the rural society is that it is usually away from the urban centers and is considered as an isolated setting having its own territory and having different social, cultural characteristics. Physical mobility of the rural people is usually restricted to a narrow area.

### **4. Size of community:**

Rural society is small as compare to the urban one. Usually few hundred people reside in an ordinary village with almost direct link with each other. As there is wide size of land and population is scattered. In urban area size of community is comparatively quite large due to concentration on some specific places.

### **5. Residential Patterns:**

Different rural societies in the world have peculiar residence patterns or physical structure of the housing due to geographical and other reasons. In case of Indian rural society, except the hilly terrain, most people of countryside reside in the concentrated dwellings. In the traditional rural society most of the houses were muddy and roofs were connected. The most streets in the villages were congested one. Adjacent to house there used to be some place known, as *Warha, haveli etc*, for the animals. By and large all the family members used to take care of animals.

### **6. Density of Population:**

The density of population per square kilometre /mile is less in the rural areas. According to Desai 'generally density and rurality are negatively correlated.' In urban areas where big clusters of population come into being due to variety of work available to the different people hence the density of population is quite high.

### **7. Homogeneity Vs Heterogeneity:**

Another important feature of rural society is the homogeneous nature of rural people. According to Chitambar homogeneity or similarity of such social and psychological characteristics in the population as language, beliefs, mores and patterns of behavior is found much more in rural than in urban areas.

### **8. Joint Family System:**

In the typical rural society, particularly in our country, most rural population used to live in joint family system. In many houses four generations living together could be found. As land was the prime means of production and more muscle power used to be required, most ruralities lived together. Another fact associated with this phenomenon was that rural people used to feel more secure in big families due to tribal elements in the countryside.

### **9. Social Stratification and differentiation:**

Stratification is a hierarchical division of people in different societies. In rural society the people are less stratified or differentiated. In urban areas stratification is quite sharp as one industrialist may earn lakhs of rupees per day with more social status whereas a worker may earn a few hundred rupees and have low status also. In village most people have not much sharp economic differentiation due to limitation of crops production and profits to the people. So in a typical rural society social differentiation and stratification is less as compared to urban areas. Stratification based on caste is comparatively more intense in the rural society. In many villages different castes were having caste wise concentration. Sir Risely a noted scholar writes that caste is a collection of family or group of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descend from a mythical ancestors, human or divine ; professing to follow the same hereditary..... and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming single homogeneous community. Caste system in Indian society plays an important role in economic, social and cultural aspects of life of the people.

### **10. Social Mobility:**

Social mobility means change from one social group to another, adoption of new occupation from the old one, movement from one territory to another etc. In the rural society

mobility or changes in grouping and occupations is very less. In the context of Indian rural society it was little more difficult to move due to orthodoxy of caste and religion.

#### **11. Prevalence of fatalism and traditional value:**

According to A. R Desai the mind of rural people is usually gripped with fatalism and even crude form of religion. Animism, magic polytheism, ghost beliefs and other forms of primitive religion are rampant among the rural people. Traditional value system also plays a strong role among the rural people.

#### **12. Social Interaction:**

In rural society social interaction is quite intensive. As there is small community size and area of interaction is quite narrow, people have usually face to face and direct or primary relations. Simplicity, sincerity and transparency in behavior are largely found in the rural setting.

#### **13. Social Control:**

There are more informal means of social control in rural society. As role of social values, religion, families, mores and pressure of community is intensively followed hence human behavior is controlled largely with these means than formal laws as found in urban areas. Even role of village panchayat is very intense in rural society. Many petty issues are settled at village level by the panchayat.

#### **14. Religious Orientation:**

Rural society, particularly Indian, is also characterized as a religious society. In this regards Desai writes that the religious outlook of the rural people dominate the intellectual, emotional and practical life. It is difficult to locate any aspect of their life which is not permeated with and coloured by religion. Even different deities were designated for different purposes, like of rain, fire etc. Role of magic and shamanism was quite popular in traditional rural society.

#### **15. Leadership patterns:**

Leadership patterns in rural society are more traditional. Role of land is also very important in the village life because most of the state officials and institutions interacted with

land owning peasants/farmers. Choice of leadership is also based on personal contacts and informal means.

#### **16. Standard of Living:**

Infrastructural facilities, such as metalled (*pucca*) roads, lack of transport means, markets, recreational facilities, health and education facilities which determine the status of living, are less in comparison to urban setting hence low standard of living in countryside.

#### **17. Social solidarity:**

Social solidarity is more profound in rural society than urban society. Due to homogeneity in living patterns, social cohesiveness, strong kinship bonding, preference for intense social knitting, social solidarity among the rural people is an important characteristics of rural society.

#### **18. Position of Women:**

In the traditional rural society the position or status of women was very low as compared to urban ones. Even the religious and cultural texts depicted women in lower esteem. Hindi poet Tulsi Das wrote, “*Dhol Ganwaar Shuder Pasu Nari, Sakal Tarhana ke Adhikari*” meaning that Drum, lunatic, Sudra, animal, women, all deserve continuous suppression).

### **6.4 FOLK URBAN CONTINUUM & CULTURE OF POVERTY**

Based on his empirical research work Robert Redfield’s study, ‘The Folk Culture of Yucatan’ propounded this concept. He concludes that in folk-urban-continuum, folk society comes in contact with urban civilization and inherits certain characteristics. Thus the folk society has certain characteristics of folk and certain characteristic of urban. It is between literate and illiterate, between developed and undeveloped societies. Folk society is losing its characteristics because of urban contact. Isolation, kinship system, group feeling and homogeneity is no more there.

### **6.5 EMERGING TRENDS/CHANGES IN THE RURAL SOCIETY**

As we know that nothing is static in this world and so is with rural society. Due to a variety of factors such as economic, demographic, technological, etc rural societies across the world are experiencing perceptible changes in their structure. According to A.R. Desai in the medieval age, the town and the village lived almost independent of social, economic and cultural existence. This separatism was increasingly undermined as a result of the extension

and wider and wider ramification of modern means of transport and communication all over the country and resultant closer and closer contact with urban population.

**1. Reducing rural isolation:** One of the visible changes in rural society is the reduction in isolation. Gone are the days when rural people rarely visited the urban areas due to *kucha* roads and lack of transport facilities. Now most villagers, particularly in north India, can visit daily to cities and go back. This has happened due to road connectivity and availability of transport means. Now most of the villagers have even their own vehicles and the travel easily to various places. Horton & Hunt writes two generations ago isolation of rural life could be measured by the contrast between the styles shown in the Sears, Roebuck catalog and those on the pages of a metropolitan newspaper. Today the styles are similar. The automobile and good roads have wrought a transformation of rural and village life which is difficult for the present generation of students to appreciate. Thousands of small villages are no longer self-contained communities, as good roads have come up with their trade, their store keepers, professionals, and their recreation to nearby city.

**2. Commercialization of Agriculture:** About half a century ago most of agricultural activities and production was at the subsistence level. Peasants used to produce for self consumption or at the most barter at local levels the different crops to run their life smooth. Farming used to be a way of life which called for no special knowledge beyond that which farm youth absorbed unavoidably as they grew up. Today farming is a highly complex operation demanding substantial capital and specialized knowledge. The most successful farmers today not only use the latest farm technology but also study market trends and trade in commodities futures more actively. Now even big corporate are entering in the rural society for commercial ventures. Further folk beliefs are being replaced by the use of scientific knowledge.

**3. Decreasing proportion of population in rural areas:** Due to the penetration of technology in rural society, good education facilities, mass media and commercialization of agriculture, sub division of land holding, lot of people are shifting from rural to urban areas or even abroad. In 1901 about 98% Indian population was in the villages but now about 65% is left in countryside. And if this trend continues, it is estimated by 2050 about half of total Indian population will be found in the urban areas. In this process old arts and skills found with ruralities are also vanishing.

**3. Rise in standard of living:** Due to economic development, political ideology, changes in the occupational structure rural people achieving higher standard of living, means having a good house, availing good educational and health facilities, good roads machinery, household gadgets, vehicle for transport etc which were not available in the primitive rural society.

**4. Decline in importance of primary associations:** Old social institutions in rural society are changing fast. Joint family system is being replaced by nuclear families. Empirical studies showed that now about 60% rural families are nuclear. Role of religion is also declining in the rural areas. The new generation, particularly, is going away from religious practices and rituals. Old long ritualized practices of marriages, deaths are now quite short. Old political set up is being replaced by elected Panchayats.

**5. Change in position of women:** Due to a variety of reasons rural women are getting higher status in the rural society. They are now becoming equal partners' in political structures through Panchayati Raj Institutions, (village Panchayat, Panchayat Samitis, Zila Parishads), state assemblies and even in Parliament

**6. Changes in Social relations. Jajmani system:** In Indian rural society role of caste and untouchability was quite immense. Now social relations based on caste and untouchability are changing very fast. Untouchability is an offence now and any one found practicing it shall be punished. **Jajmani** system, in which contractual relationships were rigidly defined for different castes, has strongly been changed.

**7. Changed education system:** In the traditional rural society, education used to be given largely by religious institutions. Now the scenario has changed. The spread of schooling structure in rural areas all people of rural society are getting education whereas in the past some sections, particularly downtrodden, were prohibited from getting education.

## **6.6 SUMMARY**

Rural society is characterized by isolation, having prime occupation as agriculture, with low density of population, possessing strong solidarity, coupled with fatalism, religious orientation and women were put on lower rung of social structure. Now rural society is under perceptible changes. According to Horton and Hunt the farming has become the part of market economy, the attitudes appropriate to a subsistence economy died out. Farm people today appear to have as avid an appetite for new cars and color television set as urbanites. In other words rural people are being exposed to new technology, hence perceptible changes



in all spheres of rural society and hope with more technological penetration changes in the rural society are expected more and at higher speed.

**6.7 KEY WORDS:** Rural Society, Agriculture, subsistence economy, solidarity, market economy, changes

### **6.8 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE**

1. What do you mean by rural society?
2. Highlight the features of rural Society.
3. Discuss the changes emerging in the rural society.
4. What do you mean by folk –urban continuum and culture of poverty?

### **6.9 SUGGESTED READINGS**

1. Desai A.R. Rural Sociology in India, Popular Prakashan Bombay 1990
2. Chitambar J. B. Introductory Rural Sociology, New Age International New Delhi 2019
3. Doshi S.L & P.C. Jain. Rural Sociology, Rawat Jaipur 2001
4. Sukhdev Singh '*Pendu Samaaj Ate Pendu Vikas*' (Rural Society and Rural Development), Punjabi University, Patiala 2010
5. Dahama O.P. Bhatnagar. Education and Communication for Development 2014
6. Horton P.B and Hunt Chester. Sociology, Tata McGraw-Hill, New Delhi 2012

**BACHELOR IN LIBERAL ARTS**  
**SEMESTER: II**  
**COURSE: INDIAN SOCIETY**

---

**UNIT 7: URBAN SOCIETY IN INDIA: FEATURES AND CHANGING PATTERNS**

---

**STRUCTURE**

**7.0 Learning Objectives**

**7.1 Introduction**

**7.2 What is an urban and urbanization?**

**7.2.1 Urban-Rural Divides**

**7.3 The Urban society in India**

**7.3.1 Features of urban society in India**

**7.4 Changing urban scenario of India:**

**7.5 Summary**

**7.6 Questions for Practice**

**7.7 References and Suggested readings**

## **7.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

In this unit we are introduced to a very complex social phenomena i.e. urban society, especially in India. In this chapter, you will learn about what is the meaning of being urban and when any area becomes an urban. We also will understand the meaning of related terms like Urbanism, Urbanization, and Slums etc. And main differences between urban and rural society will be discus. Defiantly you will know about some prevalent features of urban society in India and we will discuss some prominent changing patterns at the end.

In short we will take following objectives for discussion as learning objectives:

- What is an urban?
- What is the meaning of urbanization and its present situation in India?
- What are the main features of urban society in general and in India particularly?
- What are the problems of urbanization?
- What are the changing patterns of urban society in India?

## **7.1 INTRODUCTION:**

Urbanization is a complex socio-economic process, intimately shifting the spatial distribution of a population from rural to urban areas with push and pull factors. It affects the demographic and social structure of both urban and rural areas. The contemporary world in the wake of globalization is passing through dramatic changes. The uneven economic development of urban and rural areas combined with a large pool of surplus labour has pushed the large number of rural workforce to the urban areas. A prime feature of industrial societies today is that a majority of the employed population works in factories, offices or shops rather than involved in agriculture. And majority of the people live in towns and cities, where most of the jobs are to be found and new job opportunities are created. The rampant urbanization is the phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For the first time in history, more than 50 percent of the world's population will live in urban areas. According to UN projections, if the current rate of urbanization continues, the urban share of the global population would reach 60 percent by 2030. The urbanization has brought unprecedented change by its unique nature and created highly populated urban areas in every part of the world. So this massive increase of population in the urban areas caused deterioration in the physical environment and quality of life (Sandhu, 1995).

This was the Industrial Revolution (began in Britain in the late eighteenth century) the broad spectrum of social and economic transformations that surrounded the development of new technological innovations such as steam power and machinery. The rise of industry led to an enormous migration of peasants from the land to factories and industrial work, causing a rapid expansion of urban areas and ushering in new forms of social relationships.

The development of Western Capitalism created new systems of inequality marked by the displacement of the poor from rural areas and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few people.

The related development of urbanization and industrialization also planted the seeds of the social problems that continue to confront us in the late twentieth century urban crowding and the development of slums, pollution and waste, poverty, crime and new tension in family life.

#### Activity 1

- You may define the relationship between Urbanization and Industrialization.
- How unplanned and uneven industrialization leads migration and urbanization of poverty?
- How urbanization responsible for economic growth?

Urbanization is responsible for the overall development of a nation in general and the economic development in particular (Sandhu et.al. 2003) A close relationship is said to exist between the level of urbanization and economic development. Urbanization is also associated with modernization. However, benefits of urbanization need not be uniform over time, space and different socio-economic groups of people (Neog, 1995). According to the Global Report on Human Settlement (UNCHS, 1996) the countries in the south that urbanized most rapidly in the last two decades are generally also those with most rapid urban economic growth and most of the world's largest cities are in the world's largest economies, which is further evidence of this link between economic wealth and cities. In India, cities account for over 55 percent of the country's GDP and more than 90 percent of total government revenues. Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata contribute around 60 percent of the total value added in manufacturing (Hindustan Times, September 6, 2005).

## **7.2 WHAT IS AN URBAN AND URBANIZATION?**

The city and the town are grouped under the category of urban and the rest are named as rural. As we all know that an urban area has a high density of population, but a city cannot be defined in terms of density of population only. It must be taken of absolute population and absolute area. But there is verity of definitions to define an urban area. In general, urban life is the product of complex social forces. They may produced by population momentum, immigration of rural people, availability of modern means of transportation and communication, markets, trade centers, and influences of industrialization.

Taking up the social aspect of an urban area, the city is a way of life. The word 'urbane' suggests this way of life; it indicates fashionable living, wide acquaintance with things and people and political manner of speech. Louis Wirth's concept 'urbanism' also denoted to that process by which inhabitants of urban areas interact with the built environment.

#### Activity-2

As you know there are causal connection between the demographic features and social features of an urban community. An area can be demographically urban but socially more rural than the one which is demographically rural and socially more urban. Can a rural area

be designated as 'Urban'?

Secondly, urbanization is a worldwide phenomenon and it is irreversible. The term 'urbanization' denotes an increase in the urban population. It may be happen by natural increase in population in urban areas or by migration of people from rural to urban areas. Urbanization exercises an influence on all aspects of society, affecting the nature of economic development, and demographic, ethnic, and all other social processes. In the other words, urbanization means a breakdown of traditional social institutions and values. According to Rao (1974), under the influence of urbanization in India, caste system has been shaken and transformed into class system, nuclear family system has also been emerged and religion may became highly secularized.

In India, urban centers are notified by government by using different methods. These towns are known as statutory towns and always have distinct administrative bodies like municipality, corporation etc. In addition to statutory towns, there are census towns also. The census accepts all statutory towns notified by the government. The census has developed criteria to define urban centers and cities. According to census an urban center must contain;

- Must have a local authority like municipality, corporation etc.
- A minimum population of 5000 or above
- At least 75 percent of all adult male members must be engaged in non-agricultural pursuits
- A density of population of at least four hundred (400) persons per square kilometer.

The census of India distinguishes three categories of human settlements based on size and density of population; city, town and village.

- A human settlement with a population of 1, 00,000 or more is called a city.
- A town should have at least a population of 5,000 or more.
- A village has a population of less than 5,000.
- The local self-government system of a city is called corporation, at the town level municipality, and a village has a panchayat.

Further cities can be classified as follows, Class I Cities whose population is 100,000 and above, Class II has 50,000 to 99,999, Class III 20,000 to 49,999, Class IV 10,000 to 19,999, Class V 5,000 to 9,999, Class VI less than 5000.

### **7.2.1 URBAN-RURAL DIVIDES:**

It is difficult to frame a universal definition of the term 'urban' but we may understand the concept by discussing the distinction between 'rural' and 'urban' areas. Sorokin and Zimmermann used occupational point of view to distinguish the 'rural' from 'urban'. Before discussing these points we may recognize that the perception of a village in Asian continent may be entirely different from that in Western regions. It is not easy to demark clear cut line

between urban and rural areas. We cannot demarcate where a village ends and a city begins. And the difference between village and city is one of degree rather than of kind. We may see the following points given by Sorokin and Zimmerman for the understanding of rural-urban divides:

- Occupation: In the rural community usually a few representatives of other non-agricultural pursuits. But people from urban centers always engage in non-agricultural pursuits.
- Environment: People in rural areas lives in direct relationship to nature and predominance of nature over anthro-social environment is the main characteristic of the rural world. But people from urban areas lives in great isolation from nature. Predominance of man-made environment over nature is prevalence in the urban world.
- Density of Population: Generally density at rural areas is less than urban communities. Population density is always high at urban centers than rural areas because due to urban pull and rural puss people are tending to migrate towards urban areas.
- Size of community: Size of community is always small at rural centers than urban areas.
- Homogeneity of the population: Compared with urban population, rural communities are more homogeneous in racial and psychological traits.
- Social stratification: in the rural comminutes social stratification and differentiation are mainly based upon caste and other social aspects but in urban centers it is based upon class and other economic aspects.
- Mobility: Rural communities are usually do their traditional occupations, because of that there are very less scope of upward mobility, at the same time in urban world, territorial, occupational and other forms of social mobility of the population are comparatively more intensive.
- System of interaction: Urban area is usually predominating by impersonal, casual and short-lived relations. But in the rural centers system of interaction is always based upon personal and relatively durable relations. Comparative simplicity and sincerity of relations are present over there.

**Activity-3**  
With the above discussion, we may draw some features of rural-urban divides in Indian context.

David Pocock rightly pointed out that in India there is no dichotomy between the village and the traditional city. But there is a great difference between traditional Indian cities and the colonial Indian cities. He said that in the Indian context, urbanization is not equal to western world.

However, there are differences, in terms of property relations and interpersonal behavior patterns within the joint families in the urban contexts. There are different types and degrees of interactions between towns and villages.

### **7.3 URBAN SOCIETY IN INDIA**

#### **7.3.1 FEATURES OF URBAN SOCIETY IN INDIA**

The following features are prevalent in contemporary urban society in India.

- **Social Heterogeneity:** When a large population concentrated in a small area social heterogeneity might be there. High density leads to competition for space and other advantages and further it forced people for specialization. The cities always have variety of people from different professions and cultures. Due to their different concerns and area of belonging social heterogeneity can be consider the feature of urban India.
- **Social Control:** In cities informal agencies of social control are not very effective like villages. The city usually promotes the feeling of alienation and loneliness. Social control became a big issue in cities. Formal agencies might be helpful to control the people but not fully effective.
- **Voluntary Association:** unlike its rural counterparts urban India is a representative of voluntary associations. The size, close proximity, diversity and easy contact, makes it the perfect setting for voluntary associations. In such associations membership does not depend on kinship or other ascribed identities. There are a variety of clubs, and other different associations.
- **Individualism:** The feeling of individualism might be necessary because cities are known for professionalism and very less scope for recreation. The competitiveness of the city life gives very less time for the family care and commitments that are found in traditional communities. As a result, competition for all advantages, professionalism, self-interest and individualism tends to grow in urban people.
- **Social Mobility:** Urban areas are known for its multidimensional nature and variety of opportunities is there. It promotes great economic and social mobility. In the city person can raise or lower her or his status by their efforts. Because all status are open to achieve. It promotes an open stratification system characterized by inequality.
- **Greater Inequality:** In urban centers there is existence of both extreme poverty and inequality. Due to unplanned economic growth and industrialization unskilled people tends to migrate to the cities. They are not welcomed by the very professional nature of cities. On the other hand monopoly over business and sources of production creates high level of inequality. Urban slums and elite clubs are notable examples of greater inequality in cities.
- **Spatial Segregation:** Indian cities are characterized by its traditional spatial segregation. The centre of the city is monopolized by functions of basic importance to the whole city. Centre of a traditional city might be occupied by any religious place.

#### **7.4 CHANGING URBAN SCENARIO OF INDIA**

Urban India has increased by more than ten times in size of population in 10 decades from 25 million in 1901 to 285 million in 2001, which is 28 per cent of the total population. By 2020, urban population will be 40 per cent of the total population and by 2050 the figure will be 50 per cent. India's cities are growing at a rate which is much faster than the rest of the world, including China's. Mumbai for instance had a population of 28 lakh in 1951 and

was the 17<sup>th</sup> largest city in the world. Today it is the world's sixth largest with 18.3 million people and in the next ten years it is expected to become the second largest, next to Tokyo. Also by 2015, three more Indian cities Kolkata, New Delhi and Hyderabad will be among the 15 most populated cities in the world. What these numbers say is that even though India's urbanization process has been slow, the absolute figures are impressive, and problematic. Urban India is coming apart at seams.

An analysis of the distribution of urban population across size categories reveals that the process of urbanization in India has been large city- oriented (Kundu, 2003). This is manifested in a high percentage of urban population being concentrated in class 1 cities which have gone up systematically over the decades in the last century. The massive increase in the percentage share of class 1 cities from 26.0 in 1901 to 68.7 in 2001 has often been attributed to faster growth of large cities, without taking into consideration the increase in the number of these cities.

## **7.5 SUMMARY**

Though, the relationship between urbanization and economic growth is visible in all over the world. Large urban centers are always big economies. But the ultimate aim of economic growth must be for the betterment of living conditions of the poor. Economic growth that does not lead to sharp and sustained reduction in poverty may create more problems than it solves (Jha, 2000). Urbanization is however, a positive sign of economic development in any country and important for socio-economic development of the people and is to be encouraged but we require more of urban planning to do that. Due to the concentration of industries near the existing cities, unplanned urbanization and unabated migration and concentration of poor population from the rural areas to the urban settlement, numerous problems of very complex nature have emerged. It has created social and economic imbalances. The migration has strained infrastructure facilities in the cities to the breaking point. The intermixing of various land uses has created confusion and chaotic conditions. Urbanization of poverty is a dominant trend in the developing world and it has become the most challenging problem of the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Sandhu, 2001). Half of the poor lives in the urban areas. Urban poverty leads to proliferation of slums. According to estimates half of the urban poor lives in slums. Under the assumptions made, the reduction in poverty will be higher in rural areas than in urban areas due to the fact that relative inequalities are more pronounced in urban areas.

In India, Rapid urbanization has put tremendous pressure on existing infrastructure and public services; population too is on rise and most strikingly, the population of the urban poor is increasing in many developing counties/cities (Kumar, et. al., 2003) There has been acute housing shortage in the urban areas with the result that the cities face very grim situation with increasing number of shanty dwellers, squatters, pavement dwellers, and slums in all metropolitan and other cities throughout India. There are areas which are full of



confusion and their problems are negative in character. Such areas of extreme negative character are called slums. Having migrated to the city in hope of better livelihoods, most end up living in poor under serviced settlements because of high land prices and lack of affordable/better quality shelter in cities.

### **7.6 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE**

1. Write a note on the relationship between Urbanization and Industrialization.
2. How unplanned and uneven industrialization leads migration and urbanization of poverty?
3. How urbanization responsible for economic growth?
4. What do you mean by urbanization?
5. Write about Urban-Rural divides.
6. Write a note on urbanization in India.

### **7.7 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS**

1. Berger, L. Peter. (1976). Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective. Penguin Press, Harmondsworth.
2. Bhushan, Vidya & D.R. Sachdeva (2008) An Introduction to Sociology, Kitab Mahal, New Delhi.
3. Giddens, Anthony (2010). Sociology, Polity Press, Cambridge
4. Jayram, N. (1987). Introductory Sociology, Macmillan India Ltd., Delhi
5. Kundu, Amitabh, (2000), "Inequality Mobility and Urbanization", Indian Council of Social Science Research and Manak Publications, New Delhi.
6. Kundu, Amitabh, (2003). "Urbanization and Urban Governance", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 29, July 19-25.
7. Sandhu, R.S., (1989). The City and its Slums, Guru Nanak Dev University Press Amritsar, Amritsar.
8. Sandhu, R.S. (2003). Urbanization in India: Sociological Contributions. Sage Publication. New Delhi.

**BACHELOR IN LIBERAL ARTS**

**SEMESTER: II**

**COURSE: INDIAN SOCIETY**

---

**UNIT 8: TRIBAL SOCIETY IN INDIA: MEANING, TYPES, FUNCTIONS AND  
CHANGING PATTERNS**

---

**STRUCTURE**

- 8.0 Learning Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Historical Context
- 8.3 Definitions
- 8.4 Demographic Structure
- 8.5 Theories regarding Tribals
- 8.6 Social Formation of Tribals
- 8.7 Constitutional Provisions for Tribals
- 8.8 Modern Changes in Tribal Society
- 8.9 Summary
- 8.10 Key Words
- 8.11 Suggested Readings

**7.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After the completion of this unit, you will be able to learn:

- Meaning of Tribal Society.
- Understand the types and functions of Tribal Society.
- Evaluate the changing patterns.

## **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

Tribals were originating from one of the oldest ethnological sections of population, usually known as aboriginal people or ‘indigenous inhabitants’ of a region. They are generally socially, educationally and economically deprived groups for centuries, living in geographical isolation all over world hence called son of soil. Tribe is a group of people who share common patterns of communication, territory, cultural characteristics, and religious belief. Since time immemorial, the different groups and sub groups of tribals live in the forests, hills, deserts, naturally isolated; in varying environmental and ecological conditions in different parts of the country. The word used for the tribe is *Adivasi* which comprise of two words *Adi* means aboriginal and *vasi* means inhabitants. The other popular names of tribals are vanyajati, vanvasi, pahari, adimjati, janjati, and anusuchit janjati or schedule tribe (*Constitutional Name*).

If we see the historical context, we would find that Tribals were an integral part of the Indian civilization. It is believed that they were the earliest among the present inhabitants of the country. The ancient and epic literature, the Vedas, the Purans, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, presents good accounts about the tribal people. During the British period and post independent period tribals faced lots of problem regarding their land, forest ownership, conversion and tribal identity.

In India tribal population do not constitute a homogenous entity. There are around 705 Tribals (with about 170 sub-groups/ segments), inhabiting in 26 states and 4 union territories. The tribal population of India has been found to speak 105 different languages and 225 subsidiary languages.

Tribals in general a unified society, an insignificant population and are found in isolation, within hills and forests. The social life of tribals is very specific in nature and has their own ways of life. The four main qualities of tribals are distinctiveness; smallness; homogeneity; and self-sufficiency.

The process of identification of tribals is based on the procedures and provisions made in the constitution of India. The criteria followed for specification of communities, as schedule tribals are indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness. There is no religious criterion for this purpose and a tribal can belong to any religion.

## **8.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

- ***Tribals in ancient India:*** The tribals in the early historical period appeared to have lived in a state of internal movement cutting across the country and their movements

were generally guided by the rivers, valleys and destinations were the hills and the forest regions of the country. Tribals were an integral part of the Indian civilization. It is believed that they were the earliest among the present inhabitants of the country. The ancient and epic literature, the Vedas, the Purans, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, presents good accounts about the tribal people. During the long Hindu period of Indian history only a few scattered references of tribals were there. Their history cannot be traced exactly because of the unrecorded past. There has been continuous migration during the historic period; therefore, it is not possible to locate their original place in the absence of records.

- ***Tribals in medieval India:*** Before the medieval period tribals enjoyed sovereignty, but during the medieval period, the tribal people all over India, were harassed and disturbed by Muslim rulers or by the regional rulers. Those tribals who came into direct conflict were destroyed. Some tribals gradually lost their status and were converted into Islam.
- ***Tribals in modern India:*** Prior to the intervention of the outside agencies i.e., Britishers, tribal people had free access into the land owned by their respective communities; individual ownership of land was unknown in their customary rule. During the British period several tribal groups faced the problem of conversion into Christianity, they created factions into two sections, i.e., tribals and Christian tribals. The conversion as well as the excluded area policy gave rise to a somewhat separate identity in the minds of the tribals of the region.
- ***Tribals in Independent India:*** The situation of tribals in the country after the independence also was not very satisfactory. They were worse than the agrarian folk. The plight of the tribals was poor because of the exploitation made by the non-tribals. The colonial and the triumvirate of trader, money lender and revenue farmer in sum disrupted the tribal identity to a lesser or greater degree. Unbridled exploitation was the root cause of their too loss of land, backwardness, illiteracy and above all a poverty-stricken life. The intensity of tribal exploitation was not similar all over the country; it differed from region to region. Even today, since the tribal people live within the forest coverage and or near the forest and hills, their dependence on forest still prevails. Forest and hills influence their livelihood, personality, world-views and ideology.

### **8.3 DEFINITIONS**

- The term tribe/tribal originated around the time of the Greek city-states and the early formation of the Roman Empire. The Latin term Tribus has since been transformed to mean “A group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor” (Oxford English Dictionary, IX, 1933, pg-339).
- Tribe is a group of persons with a common occupation, interest, or habit, and a large family. (Morris, 1980, pg-1369)

- The term tribe has assumed different meaning in different historical contexts. For the first time Ghurye (1943) brought forward a wealth of evidences from classical, medieval and modern sources to demonstrate the interpretation of tribal cultural practices and social organized.
- According to dictionary of Anthropology “A tribe is a social group usually with a definite area, dialect, cultured homogeneity and unifying social organized. It may include social sub-groups, such as sib or villages”. (*Vidhyarthi & Rai*)
- Piddington (1956) says that “A tribe is a group of people speaking a common dialect, in habiting a common territory and displaying a certain homogeneity in their culture”. (*Vidhyarthi & Rai*)
- Hoebel (1949) opines that “A tribe is a social group speaking a distinctive language or dialect and possessing a distinctive culture that marks it off from other tribe it is not necessarily organized politically”. (*Vidhyarthi & Rai*)
- Lucy Mair defined a Tribe as an independent political division of a population with a common culture. (*Upreti*)
- The meaning of tribals shifts uneasily with changing world views. Its earliest usage refers to a group of people who live in primitive or even barbaric conditions under a chief or head man. Tribe came to mean a group connected through descent from a common ancestor, organized around an ascribed status structure’. (*Macmillan Encyclopedia*)

#### **8.4 DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE**

In India tribal population do not constitute a homogenous entity. There are around 705 Tribals (with about 170 sub-groups/ segments), inhabiting in 26 states and 4 union territories. The tribal population of India has been found to speak 105 different languages and 225 subsidiary languages.

According to the 2011 Census Total population in the country is 1,21,05,69,573, out of these 10,42,81,034 are classified as Schedule Tribals with 5,24,09,823 males and 5,18,71,211 females. The tribal population of India constitutes 8.6% of total population of the country and majority of them reside in the rural areas (90%).

If we distribute the tribal population state-wise than we will find that the highest proportion of tribal population resides in north eastern states namely; Mizoram (94.4%), Nagaland (86.5%), Meghalaya (86.1%), Arunachal Pradesh (68.8%), Manipur (35.1%), Sikkim (33.8%) and Tripura (31.8%). Apart from north eastern states tribal population in Lakshadweep islands comprises of 94.8%.

Numerically the major share (67%) of the tribal population of the country is in the central belt which includes seven states viz. Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Gujarat. The highest tribal concentration is in Madhya Pradesh, which is 14.7% of the total tribal population of India followed by Maharashtra (10.1%) and Odisha (9.2%). These three states together comprise 19.3% tribal population to the country.

## **8.5 THEORIES REGARDING TRIBALS**

### **▪ THEORY OF ISOLATION-**

Varrier Elwin after his research on tribals gave the isolationist theory also known as 'National Park Theory'. According to him the tribals living in the interior parts of the country had a happy life and they are away from the evils of civilized society. He also argued that if tribals were allowed to break their isolation and began to mix with the non-tribal society, they would suffer and acquire all bad habits from them. He also suggested that tribals should be encouraged to retain their isolation in the hills and forests.

### **▪ THEORY OF ASSIMILATION-**

A.V. Thakkar *and* G.S. Ghurye advocated this theory. According to Ghurye, a large section of tribals has assimilated in the Hindu/Christian society. These tribal groups had accepted Hindu gods, goddesses, festivals, ceremonies, rituals, customs and traditions etc. He coined the word 'backward Hindus' for tribals.

### **▪ THEORY OF INTEGRATION-**

*D.N. Majumdar* gave third approach. He argued that there was nothing substantial in the argument of keeping the people in isolation from the main currents of society. He also said that it is not justified that one segment of the society should be deprived from the benefits of modern technology in the name of keeping away from the civilization evils. He pleaded for the integration of tribals in the mainline civilization.

### **▪ NEHRU'S APPROACH-**

Jawaharlal Lal Nehru was very conscious of the poor conditions in which the tribals lived. He had observed the evil impact of British Raj on the tribals of the country. He was aware that The British government challenged the authority of tribals on forests and usurped the forest lands and restrictions them to access forest products, cultivation of forest and village common lands. Nehru disapproved the assimilation theory and argued that the tribals were not Hindus. They were inhabitants of forest and hills and need more safety and security. He explicitly made his tribal policy very clear and propounded the theory of *Panchsheel*, i.e., five principals for approach to tribal society. His major contention in his theory was that the state should not impose anything on the tribals. They have their own traditions, customs, rituals, religion and culture; therefore, any social change or cultured change should not be imposed on them.

## **8.6 SOCIAL FORMATION OF TRIBALS-**

Tribals in general a unified society, an insignificant population and are found in isolation, within hills and forests. The social life of tribals is very specific in nature and has

their own ways of life. The four main qualities of tribals are distinctiveness; smallness; homogeneity; and self-sufficiency. The Tribals have all intermingled organizations i.e., socio-economic, socio-political, religio-economic and so on. Tribals have their own structure and organization, a common name, dialect, culture, behavior, tattoos, full faith in their deities; leaders; and priests. They form a small community of their own in a particular territory and their relations are direct and intimate. They have retained their customs, traditions, practices and regulations and are guided by their own elders or chiefs in their internal and external affairs. Almost all the tribal communities have more or less similarities found in the composition and functioning of their family. They neither have joint family like traditional Hindus, nor do they have modern nuclear family. The institution of succession and inheritance with a little variation is more or less common in all the tribals. Family is regarded as the first agency of socialization. Family imparts the knowledge of culture; traditions; knowledge of forests, agro-economic activities, and indigenous skills to new generation.

***Tribal political associations*** are of various kinds and incorporate individuals, elders, families, a clan group, a village and a tribal territory. The political institutions are mainly of five kinds, viz. the council of elders; the village headman; the village Panchayat; the union of villages; and the tribal chief. Political-oriented activities were also very important and powerful among tribals. Tribal chiefs were among the most respected persons among them. For all the disputes the decisions of tribal chiefs were final and nobody could challenge their decisions. In the post-independence period, with the inauguration of formal Panchayati raj institution gave a set back to the traditional panchayat. Due to increasing interference of police and courts, the powers of tribal leaders are now totally reduced or they become powerless.

***The socio-economic structure*** of tribals is distinctly different from that of the non-tribals. They have a very simple technology which fits well with their ecological surroundings and conservative outlook. The structure of the tribal economy is generally based on forest products. The simple technology and absence of technological aids is the other structural feature of the tribal economy. The family is a unit of both production and consumption. The communities itself works like a co-operative unit. The distribution is generally based on gifts and ceremonial exchange. The other features of tribal economy are the absence of profit in economic dealing and presence of periodical markets. The tribals obtain their numerous requirements from the area they inhabit with the help of most simple implements and without any technological aid from outside.

***Religion of tribals*** in India is very unique and different from non-tribals. They live in their own religious world, practicing some distinct and typical religious rituals and are considered as having a separate religious identity. Several religious agencies tried to assimilate the tribals into their religious culture to help in breaking their isolation. Several Christian missionary, Bodhand Hindu religious bodies have attempted to assimilate (convert) tribals into their religious structure. The conversion of tribals by different religious agencies generates a crisis of their identity and ethnicity, and it has often disrupted the tribal cultural

fabric or social solidarity. As per the census of India 2011 about 90% of the tribals in India were considered Hindus, 6 percent were Christians, and rest 4 percent were others.

*Cultural Practices of tribals* is also very different and uncommon in comparison to so called developed world. They have their unique tradition, customs, leisure and lifestyles. The group-oriented activities were the most important leisure in the tribal region. The most important group-oriented activity of village was *chaupal*. *Chaupal* was the lifeline of male villagers and all the major discussions from local to international, gossiping and smoking *hukka* for hours there. Daily debates as well as village decisions were the main attraction of *Chaupal*. Aged villagers were the given respect at the time of discussions. Village wells were also very important for females, not only to fetch the water but also to chat, gossip and discuss the daily family life. The other leisure activities were village *melas* /fair in tribal area. *Melas* were very popular and attended by large crowds due to various reasons. These *melas* serves multiple purposes but one of the most important aspects of it relates to the leisure activity and recreational life of the tribal people. During *melas*, tribals (both male and female) dress good and clean clothes, wear ornaments and enjoy shopping (new artificial ornaments, bangles, fashionable items, local weapons, toys and other essential items), selling their products, watching circus, dances, puppet shows and *swaang* etc.

Majority of tribals are considered to be a part of Hindus, therefore influence of Hindu cultural and religious practices can be seen in the tribal areas. The celebration and feasting during religious occasion were also the important core activities, and group participation was an essential ingredient. *Ramleela* was enjoyed by the tribals with great enthusiasm. During *holi*, *gangaur*, *teej*, and other festivals as well as marriage and child birth ceremony, tribal females sing traditional songs. Besides these major celebrations many other activities and local festivals take place which have been celebrated for hundreds of years past. The occasion may be the day of a particular god or local deity. Bathing during particular days and months in the reservoir also has traditional and religious significance. Many people (male and female) do fast during these occasions. During fast and festivals, preparations of special dishes were dedicated to god as well as distribution to Brahmins, cows, dogs, and crows were a unique feature of leisure. Religious activities also include occasional as well as daily *Bhajan* and *kirtan* in temples during morning and evening hours.

Traditional games like *kho-kho*, *kabbadi*, *hocky*, *kusti*, *gilli-danda*, *mardadhi*, *sitolia*, *kanchae*, rounder, playing cards, *shatranj* and *chaupad* etc. which were main leisure pursuit of tribals. The other traditional ways of employing leisure were activities like road side games of dice and *pawns*, *lattu*, acrobatics and jugglery, idolatry etc. Swimming in *kund* / *johad* and Listening radio was the most common means of leisure activities among tribals.

Family-oriented activities like folk songs, dances, music, during festivals and marriages were the main leisure activities for the tribal people. During the festivals females decorate their houses with *maandna* and *rangoli*; group songs and dances during nights, visit their relative's house and prepare delicious food. The arrival of guests and relatives were also the occasion of celebration. During marriages celebration was started fortnight before. A marriage or child birth in any family was celebrated by whole community. Marriage is also



very important institution of society. In the past the rituals or the religious activities in the marriage were of very little significance and full of simplicity. It was more of a contract based on cooperation and reciprocal needs. Generally, marriage takes place at a late age and full liberty were given to the couples to understand each other.

## **8.7 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR THE TRIBALS**

While framing the Indian Constitution, members of constituent assembly considering the difference on the qualitative and quantitative bases, preferred to make different footings for Schedule tribals, which are known as Constitutional safeguards. Therefore, they laid responsibility on the shoulders of both the Central as well as State government for the tribal development.

### **SOME IMPORTANT ARTICLES FOR THE TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT**

- Article 16(4) and 16(4A) empowers the state to make provision for reservation in the appointments for post in favour of schedule tribals along with other special categories, both in direct recruitments and in promotions.
- Article 46 states that the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the people and in particular of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribals and shall protect them from social injustice and all other forms of exploitation.
- Article 244(1) and 244(2) provides that the provisions of fifth and sixth schedule shall apply to the administration and control of schedule areas and schedule tribals.
- Article 275(1) provides that grant in aid would be provided out of consolidated fund of India to the states to meet the cost of such schemes of development as may be undertaken by them with the approval of government of India for the purpose of promoting the welfare of schedule tribals or raising the level of administration of the schedule areas.
- Article 330 and 332 provides reservation for the schedule tribals in lok sabha and state legislative assemblies respectively.
- Article 335 provides reservation in the services of the union and states.
- Article 338 provides the appointment of special officer to assess the tribal welfare activity.

## **8.8 MODERN CHANGES IN TRIBAL SOCIETY**

Societies throughout the world are experiencing profound transformations in each and every field, and tribal society is not an exception. Growing affluence and prosperity, influence of Mass media has dominated and acquired an important place in modern society and is reflected in the life of tribal people. The framers of the constitution while taking note of the centuries old injustice perpetrated against the tribal communities, have adopted two-prolonged strategy of tribal development which seeks to provide them protection from exploitation and assist them in their economic development. Protective discrimination has

been provided for in favour of scheduled tribals in the constitution, particularly under the fifth and sixth schedule.

Over a long period of history the tribals had lived on bare subsistence economy therefore, for the development of tribal economy, high priority was given to agriculture, land reforms, irrigation, improved methods of cultivation and completion of land records, as well as special attention to vulnerable groups like shifting cultivators and forest villages; generation of employment opportunities for better utilisation of available manpower through programmes in the fields of horticulture, animal husbandry and allied occupations; development of cottage and small scale industries based on the local raw materials etc.

The economic protection to tribals results in their economic integration. Integration implies that tribals have shown their acceptance to the broader economic policies of the nation-state. In the sphere of economic enhancement, the tribals are gradually giving up on the jajmani system and are being drawn into the market economy. The forces of modernization released at the hands of community development blocks, tribal blocks, and communication links have created a congenial situation in which the tribals are confidently and positively responding to improved and advanced agriculture. Educated tribals have chosen to go to the white-collar jobs whereas less educated become manual labourer.

Tribals were traditionally hunters, fisherman and food gatherers. All over the country they have not been agriculturists in any period of their development. The tribal cultivation is generally a shifting affair. Their agriculture is a recent development and they have now become semi peasants. The tribals of central zone have taken to agriculture as a main source of livelihood and the method of cultivation and irrigation is similar to that practiced in the non-tribal villages of India.

The need to improve literacy and education levels has been identified by various governmental and private fore analysts, as the priority area for action to improve the overall status of the tribals. In framing the seventh five-year plan, stress was put on the education of tribals. The tribals are being brought under increasing educational programmes. The tribals have been given scholarships and other benefit by government for pursuing higher education. Tribal students are in large numbers getting admitted to technical and professional courses of education. The ministry of social justice and empowerment give award of post-metric scholarships, coaching and allied facilities like pre-examination training, educational facilities like book banks, hostels (Boys and Girls), research and training centres etc.

Due to this encouragement the literacy rate of tribals has increased. As per statistics of School Education-2010-2011 the literacy rate of tribals in India is 63.1% (Male-71.7% and Female- 54.4%) out of which 80.4% (male 88.0% and female-72.0%) are urban and 61.5% (Male70.1% and Female- 52.6%) are rural.

Since the attainment of independence, the tribals have become part and parcel of the general political system of the country. The tribals have taken to political life, the

opportunities for which are amply available with the reservation in the parliament, legislative assemblies and Panchayati raj. This has created a political awakening among the tribals.

The tribal councils which used to be all powerful in direction the behaviour of its members is now weakening and new generation leaders are emerging. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment Act have offered greater opportunity for an increased involvement of tribals (both man and women) in the political activities.

The tribal social life is very specific in nature, and has their own way of life. They are a unified society, a negative size and are found in isolation, within hills and forests. Even at the village habitation level, they are found to practice isolation i.e., scattered layout of villages. Due to introduction with other people, the life of tribal people was also affected. Due to efforts of government as well as NGOs and Christian missionary the education level increased. Now tribal people are going out for higher and technical education, white collar jobs, and business. Previously the tribal family pattern is polygamous, but the process of modernization has tended to make them monogamous. They have changed their dress pattern, diet, worship pattern, language and dialects, and other social practices of various kinds. Now tribals are using mobile, vehicles, televisions, cables, modern sports etc for their leisure and entertainment.

In fact, the process of development itself presupposes the availability of some community infrastructure. It is the responsibility of the government to provide the basic community infrastructure to the tribal community and the general population as a whole. The provision of electricity, transport, drinking water, irrigation facilities, schools and dispensaries is made by the government. One of the important strategies which adopted by the government to construct the road transport in the hill and forest areas so that other basic requirements can be fulfilled. To provide medical and health facilities, the norms for setting up sub-centres, primary health centres and CHCs have been relaxed for the tribal areas. Due to infrastructural development the living standard of tribals has increased.

## **8.9 SUMMARY**

Tribals usually known as aboriginals or indigenous inhabitants of region, and they are socio-economic deprived groups live in isolation all over the world. In India several tribals live in the forests, hills, deserts, outskirts of the village or in naturally isolated environment. In India as per Article 342 of the constitution, the tribals were notified as schedule tribals. In 2011 there are 705 ethnic groups in 30 States / UT have been notified as schedule tribals i.e. 8.6% of total population. Tribals in past enjoyed an autonomous status but during the medieval and modern period their status and identity was destructed. Even after independence the condition of tribals was not satisfactory and till today tribals are the most backward section of the population in India. Social transformation and change are an ongoing process and all the societies of the world are undergoing change since time immemorial and tribal groups are no exception to this process. Schedule tribals constitute one of the socially excluded sections of Indian society for centuries. For a long span of time, they have saved their cultural identities and uniqueness due to adoption of global culture, now they are losing

their ethnic culture and identities. Modernization, globalization, liberalization, commercialization of economy and urbanization, improvement in the education are some forces that had transformed the life of tribals and make their life hectic and busy.

A sharp decline in group- oriented activities, family-oriented activities, traditional sports, religious activities, martial activities, sexual oriented activities and adoption of new leisure and lifestyle, increased mobility, economic prosperity, adoption of new education and employment are some changes that can be seen among the tribals.

### **8.10 KEYWORDS**

Ethnological sections, Indigenous inhabitants, Adivasi, Anusuchit Janjati, Homogenous entity, isolation, assimilation, integration, indigenous

### **8.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS**

- Doshi, S.L., “*Emerging Development in India: Reality or Myth*”, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1997
- Aethayil, Mathew., “*Impact of globalization on tribals*”, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2008
- Vidyarthi, L.P., & Rai, B.K., “*The Tribal culture of India*”, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2000
- Behura, N.K., & Panigrahi, N., “*Tribals and the Indian Constitution*” Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2006
- Meenakshi, Hooja., “*Policies and strategies for Tribal Development*”, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2004
- Akram, Mohammed., “*Tribal health studying sexual behavior*”, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 2008
- Verma, R.C., “*Indian Tribals through the Ages*” Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1955
- Chaudhari, S.K., & Chaudhri, Suchita.,(ed) “*Primitive tribals in contemporary India: Concept, Ethnography and Demography*”, (ed) vol.1& 2, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005
- Sinha, B.B., “*Society in Tribal India*”, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1982
- Ghurye, G.S., “*The Scheduled Tribals*” 1959, Popular Prakashan, Bombay.
- Upreti, H.C., “*Indian Tribals then and now*”, Pointer Publishers, Jaipur, 2007
- Bose, N.K., “*Tribal life in India*”, National Book Trust, Delhi, 1971
- Sharma, B.D., “*Tribal Development: The concept and the frame*”, Prachi Prakashan, New Delhi, 1980

- Census of India, 2011

**BACHELOR OF ARTS LIBERAL ARTS**

**SEMESTER II**

**COURSES: INDIAN SOCIETY**

---

**UNIT 9 CASTE IN INDIA: ORIGIN, FEATURES AND CHANGING PATTERNS**

---

**STRUCTURE**

**9.0 Learning Objectives**

**9.1. Introduction**

**9.2 The Caste System in India**

**9.3 Origin of Caste**

**9.4 Features of Caste System**

**9.5 Changing Patterns of Caste in India**

**9.6 Summary**

**9.7 Questions for Practice**

**9.8 Suggested Readings**

**9.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This Unit would enable you to understand:

- The concept of caste

- Prevalence of caste system in India
- Origin of caste system
- Feature of caste system
- Changing patterns of caste in India

## **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

While studying Indian society, one comes across the phenomenon of caste that makes the case of Indian society peculiar and distinct. It is something that works as a marker of identity for an average person but a marker that also creates a condition of social inequality that does not go well with the modern principles of equality and fraternity. It is so much part and parcel of Indian society that its mention and usage does not raise any concern among most of Indians. For example, each weekend one comes across matrimonial advertisements classified along caste lines. Many of the advertisements very clearly mention that they are looking for a bride or a bridegroom belonging to a particular caste. If one visits any market one will invariably come across shops carrying caste names or caste identifiers. Despite its widespread prevalence caste remains a sensitive topic of discussions in public. Caste continues to be a symbol of backwardness, inequality and anti-modern character of Indian society. It remains one of the most contentious issues in Indian society and social scientists have tried to understand the phenomenon in depth.

The term caste is derived from the Portuguese word '*casta*' which literally means race or lineage. The Portuguese '*casta*' in itself is further derived from the Latin word '*castus*' which means pure or chaste. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, the term was first used in English in early seventeenth century. The current usage of the term owes its origin to the advent of Portuguese observers who tried to understand the social groups within Hindu social order that were set apart from each other on the basis of their birth, lineage etc with much more elaborate rules of segregation. Over a period of time the term has come to specifically refer to a specific form of social category within Hindu social order. Social category in Hindu society best depicted by the English term caste is called '*jati*' in Hindi. Some authors have found the term 'caste' somewhat incomplete to capture the complexity of '*jati*' in Hindu community. Over a period of time the term has evolved to depict the main elements of '*jati*' as prevalent in Hindu society and has therefore acquired a specific meaning restricted to a form of social division prevalent in India especially among the Hindus.

Caste therefore can be said to be a social group in which a person is born into and remains associated with all through his/her life. The caste therefore is acquired by birth. One cannot choose one's caste, it is given to one by birth. To understand the concept better it is important to know the whole system of caste within which particular castes make sense.

## **9.2 THE CASTE SYSTEM IN INDIA**

Caste system is a system of social stratification prevalent in Indian society. Like all systems of social stratification caste system also divides society into various segments and places them in a hierarchy. However, what differentiates caste system from other types of social stratification is its rigidity, the practice of untouchability and its enduring nature.

Once born into a caste, one lives and dies in that caste only. No amount of effort on the part of an individual can alter his or her caste. The idea and practice of caste gets reinforced by the religious texts of Hinduism. The fact that caste system finds expression in some religious texts of Hindus makes it a formidable institution to deal with. The caste system is one of the oldest systems of social stratification. The earliest reference to caste system in ancient Indian society is found in Rigveda, one of the oldest sacred texts of the Hindus.

As an institution caste system also shows immense recalcitrance and refuses to vanish with changing times due to ideological strength that it draws from traditional religious texts of Hinduism. The traditional caste system divides all members of society into four hierarchical categories called *Varnas*, namely, *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* with Brahmins at the top and *Shudras* at the bottom. All castes can be classified into one of these four *Varnas*. The membership of one's caste is ascribed by birth and one's progeny also by default falls into the same caste category. These groups are classified into the twice borns '*Dvijas*' and the *Shudras* who are '*non-Dvijas*'. The twice borns are the ones who have special privilege to adorn the sacred thread after a few years of birth. The ceremonial adorning of sacred thread is called *Upnayana* and is metaphorically referred to as the second birth through which a child gets initiated into the caste group. *Shudras* being *non-Dvijas* are not allowed to wear that thread and therefore remain identified as separate and underprivileged vis-à-vis *Dvijas*.

There is another social group which falls outside the Varna system and is called *Avarnas*. They are different from the *Savarnas* who belong to the *Chaturvarna* (four Varnas) scheme mentioned above. *Shudras* despite being a lower caste belong to the *Savarnas* and are therefore considered better than *Avarnas*. Being outside the Varna scheme *Avarnas* do not enjoy any privileges in society which are otherwise available to rest of the members. In caste hierarchy they are considered lower even to *Shudras* who otherwise form the bottom of the caste hierarchy. *Avarnas* were considered outcaste people and traditionally they were not permitted to have any social ties with members of the mainstream society and were also not allowed to own any resources. They used to live on the outskirts of the village and with no means of production or employment; they used to depend completely on *Savarnas* for their survival. This was the group that was traditionally called the Untouchables.

Untouchables that we are discussing here refer to a group of people in Indian society who belong to the lowest rung of hierarchical division of caste society and as per caste system are considered so impure and polluted that their mere touch is assumed to pollute others. In the opening lines of his essay Charsley writes that "If there were one person whom responsibility for initiating the twentieth century career of the concept of "**untouchability**" might be ascribed it would be Sir Herbert Risley" (Charsley: 1996). It was in his "grand experiment in classifying and ranking castes in the sub-continent" that Risley, after becoming

Commissioner for the 1901 Census of India, ended up institutionalizing the term Untouchables for certain communities.

Though the history of the term in English is recent, the concept had many terms in Hindi like '*Achut*', '*Ati-Shudra*' etc. The term was reserved for the *Avarnas* who were ranked below *Shudras* and had no social, cultural or political rights as they were considered outcastes. They were the most deprived segment of society that was hardly recognized as part of it and lived on its margins, both spatially and socially. Deprived of social ties with larger society, devoid of right to own houses, land, or any other sources of subsistence they were virtually isolated and lived a miserable existence. Due to their extreme poverty and helplessness they were the most exploited segment of society which was made to perform all kind of menial labour for the rest of society in order to survive. They were assigned critical socially and economically critical tasks which were otherwise 'polluting' like sweeping, tanning leather (Joshi: 1986), carrying night soil, cremating the dead etc., and therefore over a period of time they were identified with these menial occupation categories. Untouchables are described as "people considered too impure, too polluted, to rank as worthy beings" (O'Neill: 2003). An Untouchable was considered so polluting and impure that his mere touch or even shadow would defile the upper castes and evoke severe sanctions against him.

In earlier times they were supposed not to venture near village settlements during early sunrise or during evenings when the shadows would be longer and therefore a threat to others. They were supposed to make noise while moving into public areas to warn others of their movement and drag brooms on their back to clean their footmarks (Anand: 1981). There was an elaborate set of rules regarding the kind of punishment imposed on them in case they happen to touch someone from the *Savarana* castes who had to undergo certain rituals and ablution to ward off the impurity imposed upon them by an Untouchable. Hence, all public places and facilities like well or any other water reservoir, places of worship, cultural events etc., were out of bounds for Untouchables and the stigma of being Untouchable was imposed upon them by virtue of being born into that community. It appalls one's senses to know how a segment of human population was kept at such inhuman level of existence over centuries. One wonders how a society could legitimize existence of such a social category over such a long period of time and one finds the justification in *Karma* theory of Hindu religion whereby the Untouchables are blamed for their pitiable condition owing to the sins of their past lives.

The castes considered Untouchables were kept in their deplorable condition by a set of social, cultural, political and economic practices and beliefs which can be referred to as Untouchability. These set of beliefs and practices which were discriminatory against Untouchables tended to maintain social distance with them on account of their caste status.

While the caste system is very old, the institution of Untouchability is estimated to have emerged around second century AD and had completely rooted itself during Gupta Period (Gupta: 1999). Afterwards, the institution was somewhat challenged by the Bhakti movement, Islam and the Sufi movements in India. However, it was the advent of British rule in India that saw the practice being challenged legally, though only in the later phase of British period. The British officials brought up in modernized intellectual tradition found the practice of Untouchability a sign of a backward society. To an extent the notion of Indian



society as essentially pre-enlightened and superstitious and therefore inherently inferior and different to modern European societies suited the British establishment (Mendelsohn & M Vicziany: 2000). Early British period did not offer much legal support for the Untouchables (Galanter: 1969). “Until the 1920s British and wider European interest in the Untouchables was for the most part left to Christian missionaries” (Mendelsohn & M Vicziany: 2000). This resulted in serious effort by social reformers within Hinduism to check conversion of Untouchables to Christianity or other religions. The political necessity of national movement also demanded that the Untouchables are embraced by their own society to forge a more powerful alliance against British rulers. Gandhi realized how the institution of untouchability weakened moral force of the nationalist movement. He acknowledged Untouchability as a grave social wrong (Gandhi: 1929) and the need to get Hindu society rid of this practice. He preferred to use the term ‘*Harijans*’ for the Untouchable castes and pleaded for more humane treatment towards them. ‘*Harijan*’ means ‘the people of God’. The term, however, was not widely accepted by the untouchables who found it too patronizing. During this period the Untouchables were already using another term for themselves through which they claimed their status as original inhabitants of the land. The term is popular with many Untouchable leaders since 1917 was ‘*Adi-*’ as prefix of Dravidians, hence *Adi-Dravidians*, *Adi- Andhras*, *Adi-Dharmi* etc. The prefix ‘*Adi-*’ conveyed the sense of untouchables as original inhabitants of India in contrast to non-*dalit* ‘Aryans’ who were seen as aggressors who had forcibly extended their control over the land of Untouchables.

In 1931 Census reports the Untouchables were covered under the term ‘**Depressed Classes**’. “In 1928 the depressed Classes Association was formed which functioned upto 1942” (Louis: 2003). The term however was contested by Dr Ambedkar in 1932 on account of the fact that the term created an impression of these communities as helpless and lowly. In 1935, the term “...Scheduled Caste was coined by the Simon Commission and embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935. In 1936, for the first time Government of British India published a list of Scheduled Castes” (Louis: 2003).

Soon after independence, India became a republic in 1950 and adopted a constitution that envisions a kind of society which will be egalitarian and democratic in character. The modern principles of equality, fraternity and justice enshrine in the constitution made the caste system incongruent to the avowed vision. Any kind of caste

### **9.3 ORIGIN OF CASTE IN INDIA**

The origin of caste has been a matter of debate among scholars and there are a few theories of its origin. The dominant theories of origin of caste system have been discussed as under.

The theory of divine origin emerges from the story of the origin of mankind explained in the religious texts of Hinduism. The *Purush Sukta* hymn of Rig Veda explain how from the primeval being were created the four *Varnas*, namely, Brahmins from the mouth, Kshatriyas from the arms and shoulders, Vaishyas from the things and Shudras from the Feet. This scheme of origin of mankind laid the foundation of caste system in India where these four

Varnas were not merely mentioned to have been born from different part of the primeval being but also segmented into hierarchical order on the basis of their mythical origin. The Brahmins having born from the mouth were regarded as the superior most and were delegated the task of reading, writing and other intellectual activities. The shatriyas having born out of arms and shoulders represented strength and therefore were believed to have been born to be warriors. Being just below the mouth in their location of origin, they were considered second in hierarchy after Brahmins. The third varna consisted of Vaishyas who were born out of the thighs of the primeval being and thus they were meant to engage in trade and production in society. Born just below the shoulders they automatically followed Khastriyas in hierarchy. Born from the bottom most part of the primeval being, the feet, Shudras were accordingly considered the lowest in Varna hierarchy and were ordained to do nothing except serve the upper three Varnas. According to the *Purush Sukta* hymn, it was the will of God that particular group of people be engaged in particular occupations. Being this the word of God for the Hindus, it was difficult for them to distance themselves from the discriminatory character of caste system where people born as *Shudras* were for once and all relegated to a subservient category and assigned servile position vis-à-vis other caste groups. The hymn only talks about the four *Varnas* which indicates that the fifth Varna became part of Hindu social order at some later stage. As mentioned earlier, it is believed to have emerged around second century AD out of the existing set of *Varnas*.

Another major text of Hinduism, *Manusmriti*, gives a detailed account of the laws governing Hindu social order. The text provides elaborate set of prescriptions and prohibitions for the Hindus. It highlights the religious significance of natural social order of a segmented society and elaborates upon the kind of punishment for those who did not abide by the principles of caste society. The *Smriti* does not treat all individuals at par and prescribes different set of norms for different caste groups. The Brahmins being the highest group were to be given special treatment in all walks of life while *Shudras* being the lowest in hierarchy were refrained from seeking any privileges at all. Given the kind of treatment meted out to the *Shudras* in these texts one can imagine the situation of untouchables who later on became part of the scheme as outcaste people and were considered even lower to the *Shudras*. The religious sanctions behind the caste based hierarchy made sure that the institution of caste persisted. The status of one's life was believed to be the result of one's past Karmas. The religious texts ordained it as the moral duty of each one to live one's life according to the caste in which one is born. By following the injunctions of caste society the most deprived had a chance of a better future.

Another theory that explains origin of caste is based on race. According to this theory Indian subcontinent was raided and invaded by a tribe from central Europe called Aryans. During the invasion they subjugated the autochthonous communities called Dravidians or *Dasyus*. Once invaded, they enslaved local community and exploited it by assigning them the most menial tasks. Their contempt for *Dasyus* ensured that there was no inter-mixing and no social intercourse with them. Having been subjugated by Aryans, all their resources were taken away from them and they were treated like slaves by the Aryans. Another version of the race theory by Prabhati Mukherjee suggests that initially, till about 800 BC, the Aryans had an 'amicable relationship' with the local communities. However, some indigenous

communities that refused to get assimilated into the culture of ruling Aryans, they had to face extreme hostility of the rulers. Most of them “were constantly being driven out of their homes and hearth” (Sha et al.: 2006). The aboriginals ousted from mainstream society and relegated to extreme levels of subjugation were reduced to the status of Untouchables. The racial theory, however, was questioned by Ambedkar who believed that there was no racial difference between Brahmins and Dravidians in India and also there is no mention in Vedic sources of any invasion of India by the Aryans.

There is an occupational theory of origin of caste system propounded by Nesfield who believed that earlier there was simple division of labour in society and as per the significance of these occupations people were considered superior or inferior. People in society could take up any occupation as per their liking or ability. However, after some time the priestly class of Brahmins gained immense importance due to nature of their assignment. A small and specialized group of priests gradually restricted entry of other members into their fold and made their occupation hereditary to ensure their dominance in the profession. Likewise society was segregated into four main divisions over a period of time making these divisions permanent.

The economic theory is primarily proposed by Marxian thinkers who look at caste system “rooted in the mode of production” (Shah et al.: 2006) As per this perspective *Varna* scheme was merely class social division of labour which became more rigid over a period of time and transformed into caste. The surplus labour due to overpopulation made easy labour available for small and menial jobs. With changing modes of production the caste based relations will also undergo change. They believe that forces of modernization and industrialization will on its own change the caste dynamics and pave way for a casteless society. This perspective, however, fails to explain deep rooted caste based biases of many even in this age of globalization and modernization. Though it can be said that Indian society has hardly been modernization and industrialized it is also true that pockets of society where sufficient degree of modernization and urbanization has occurred the caste based discrimination is not completely absent.

### **9.3.1 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

7. What is the difference between *Savarnas* and *Avarnas*?
8. What is untouchability?
9. What is the racial theory of caste system?
10. How does Karma theory say about caste?

### **9.4 FEATURES OF CASTE SYSTEM**

Caste system has developed into an elaborate set of sanctions and privileges regulating the nature of social, political and economic relations among different caste groups. Ghurye has

identified six most significant feature of caste system which has been widely accepted as central to caste system. These features are:

- 1) **Segmental Division of Society:** The caste system divides society into various segments which are clearly set apart from each other. The caste society therefore is essentially a divided society. Each of the caste remain comfortably separated from other caste categories and is governed by its own set of rules and practices. The customs of each caste could be different and the caste-councils of each caste had the responsibility of managing the affairs of that caste. All disputes within the caste group were traditionally resolved within the caste-panchayats. Each caste therefore has a complete social world to offer to its members. In a completely traditional system of one could easily spend one's life without depending on the members of other caste groups. The primary allegiance of caste members is thus to their caste groups rather than to the larger society within which they operate. The segmented caste groups as per caste system are allowed to intermingle as per prescribed norms in which the hierarchy of the concerned castes is the central principle in determining the nature of interaction, if possible.
- 2) **Hierarchy:** All castes are vertically segregated and placed in hierarchy vis-à-vis other castes. All castes can be broadly classified under five main categories of *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*, *Sudras* and the Scheduled Castes. The Brahmins are at the top of the hierarchy followed by *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*, *Sudras* and the Scheduled Castes who form the bottom of the caste hierarchy. The hierarchy is claimed to be on the basis of their ritual status within Hindu society.
- 3) **Commensal Restrictions:** One of the significant features of the caste system is that it imposes certain kind of restrictions on the food habits of the individuals. The members of a caste are strictly governed by these restrictions. According to caste system all food can be divided into two categories, *Kucha* and *Pakka* food. *Kucha* food is that food which is uncooked or cooked in water whereas *Pakka* food is one that is cooked in Ghee alone and does not use water in its cooking. The members of different castes cannot dine together. Even accepting food from lower castes is prohibited as per caste rules. However, in case there is exchange of food among castes, the caste hierarchy determines who can accept food from whom. Generally the caste system restricts upper castes from taking food from the lower castes. If at all food is to be exchanged with other castes, the upper caste members will not accept *kucha* food from the lower caste while the lower castes can accept food from the higher castes.
- 4) **Civil and religious Disabilities and Privileges of the different sections:** Caste system also imposes selective restrictions on members of society. While the upper castes are extended many privileges, the lower castes are generally imposed with disabilities. The caste system hence ensures that the caste hierarchy is maintained through an elaborate set of limitations imposed upon the lower castes vis-à-vis the

upper castes which get more and more privileges in all walks of life. Traditionally the scheduled castes were not permitted to own any property at all, be it agricultural land or a home. The Brahmins on the other extreme had the privilege of receiving gifts and donations from rest of the castes as it was considered auspicious to offer them money, cattle, food or other prized assets in society. The Sudras and the untouchables were not permitted to enter the premises of temples. The lower castes, Sudras and untouchables were not permitted to have food in the same stall where members of higher caste would be having their food. The untouchables were not permitted to draw water from the common well in the village. The untouchables were not permitted to wear respectable piece of cloth on their body.

- 5) **Hereditary occupations/ Lack of unrestricted choice of occupations:** Members of a particular caste were considered to follow the same occupation as of their parents. One's occupation was considered to be one's vocation ordained by God and therefore anyone trying to change his occupation was neither permitted nor tolerated. The Brahmins therefore had the sole privilege of receiving education and becoming a priest. Any other caste member trying to do so was severely punished and reprimanded as per caste rules. Similarly, the Kshatriyas alone can take up arms and fight as warriors, Vasihiyas alone can engage in business activities and it is the duty of the Sudras to provide manual labour and service to the higher caste groups. Any violation of such rules invoked string sanctions against the person who committed the mistake of not following the caste rules.
  
- 6) **Endogamy Restrictions on marriage:** The last but perhaps the most potent instrument used by the caste system to maintain caste boundaries is the rule of endogamy. As per this rule members of a particular caste can marry only within their caste category. The rule of endogamy is one of the strictest rules of the caste system. The racial sense of superiority and inferiority entwined in caste system ensures that intermixing of castes is never permitted. The only exception outside caste is when a girl from lower caste is marrying a boy from upper caste. However, if the boy from the lower caste marries the girl from an upper caste, it is not accepted.

The above mentioned features of the caste system in India are some of the most significant ones. Violation of caste principles has often invoked worst kind of sanctions from the society. From excommunication to imposition of monetary penalties, the range of sanctions is wide. The basic principles of caste system, even today, remain the same. However, the institution of caste in itself has undergone tremendous changes

## **9.5 CHANGING PATTERNS OF CASTE IN INDIA**

After independence, the Constitution of India declared Untouchability as a legal offence under Article 17. To further weaken the institution of Untouchability, the Untouchable castes were identified and clubbed together under the category of Scheduled Castes and special provisions were made for their upliftment and participation in larger society through policy of reservation in parliament, education and jobs. Through reservation and various democratic processes *Dalits* continue to struggle for a dignified life.

Constitution of India aims to achieve through legislation in independent India what it could not do in ages. After independence from British rule Indian leadership envisaged a society which would remove all forms of inequality and generate new forces of nationalism and togetherness in a society that is otherwise marked with diversity of religion, caste, language, region etc. From the perspective of Scheduled Castes, it was a historic opportunity to break away from the tradition of subjugation and humiliation and look forward to a free society where they will enjoy equal status with other citizens.

Untouchability is a strange notion in contemporary times and many people believe that it is a thing of past that does not exist anymore. Though there has been some remarkable progress in the condition of *Dalits* since independence the weight of centuries old tradition is still too heavy to be lifted within a span of seven decades. Untouchability continues to manifest itself in newer forms and different shades in many places. In their study Shah et al found untouchability to be a “pan-Indian phenomenon” whose “specific forms and intensity vary considerably across regions and socio-historical contexts” (Shah et al: 2006). That Untouchability is still exercised in contemporary Indian society has been sufficiently reported by various studies (Mendelsohn: 2000; Louis: 2003; Kumar 2001; O’Neill: 2003; Shah et al: 2006; Sarukkai: 2009). There have been efforts in the past also to fight against practice of untouchability but most rapid progress has been achieved only after India’s independence in 1947.

The constitution remains one of the strangest defenders of the rights of all marginalized segments of society today. It is true that through legislation and political mobilization Indian society tried to seize a historic opportunity to undo the inequities of the past but it is also true that there has been major resistance by dominant social groups to concede space to historically deprived groups.

The Scheduled Castes still face stiff resistance from the caste Hindus and their achievements are often denigrated. According to a study by O’Neill featured in National Geographic magazine in 2003, Untouchability remains in practice in India despite being abolished by the Constitution. He describes how prejudice against untouchables remains deeply entrenched in rural areas where majority of the Indian population resides. “Untouchables are shunned, insulted, banned from temples and higher caste homes, made to eat and drink from separate utensils in public places, and, in extreme but not common cases, are raped, burned, lynched, and gunned down” (O’Neill: 2003). Study by Ghanshyam Shah et al also found rural areas to be the main sites where untouchability is more openly practiced. Their study found that “over 70 percent of villages deny *Dalits* entry into non-*Dalit* houses, over 60 percent deny entry into places of worship [...] Dalit marriage processions were banned in almost 50 percent of villages” (Zelliot: 2007). An important finding of the study

was that in interpersonal relationships untouchability is experienced much more frequently but in the public sphere its prevalence has decreased somewhat. Villages remain more entrenched in practice of untouchability while urban areas provide more anonymity and therefore weaker observance of caste principles in public spheres.

The forces of modernization, urbanization and marketization have somewhat diluted the rigid caste structure. Modern secular education has also played a significant role in weakening the old institution and producing better awareness among *Dalits* about their basic rights. *Dalits* have also developed newer strategies like “dissociation, distancing and autonomy” (Jodhka: 2002) to check practice of untouchability. These strategies however work more effectively where *Dalits* have some alternative opportunities available to them. For example in case of Punjab most of *Dalits* have moved away from their traditional caste based occupations and have constructed their own *Gurudwaras* in order to distance themselves from the relations of dependence over dominant castes and to have their autonomous religious activities. Interestingly religion still remains a dominant arena within which *Dalits* vie for a respectable place by either converting into new religions or by gaining more access to religious symbols within Hinduism. Education remains one of the most powerful tools of emancipation among *Dalits* as almost all other resources are controlled by non-*Dalits* (Oommen: 1968). Though study by Shah et al revealed that almost 40 percent of village schools act as sites “reproducing the hierarchies of caste and untouchability” (Shah et al.: 2006). Ambedkar had called upon *Dalits* to ‘educate, organize and agitate’. The central role of education for *Dalits* was not merely emphasized by Ambedkar but he also showed way by example. Ambedkar continues to be one of the most formidable symbols of emancipatory zeal among *Dalits*. He has emerged as an all India icon among *Dalits* who constantly inspires them to yearn for a free and equal society.

## **9.6 SUMMARY**

The caste system in India is one of the oldest institutions of social stratification. It has drawn attention of scholars from across the globe due to its enduring capacity to maintain deep rooted social divisions in modern society. The institution of caste goes against the grain of modern values yet it has been able to survive and adapt to changed social conditions. After independence Indians adopted a constitution which envisioned a society free from the ills of caste based society. The most opprobrious aspect of caste system, the practice of untouchability has been squarely under attack in the last two centuries. However, despite abolition of untouchability by the Constitution, the practice of untouchability remains an extant reality. In rural areas Untouchables are more oppressed compared to urban centres. The caste continues to be a significant factor in determining many a political processes, matrimonial alliances and cultural organizations etc. The forces of liberalization, privatization and globalization coupled with rise in education, growth of information technologies etc. were supposed to dilute the effects of caste system. Though caste system has been weakened over the years due to various factors as mentioned above, it cannot be denied that the system

has refused to die. However, the incongruent nature of caste in contemporary times makes it difficult to sustain the logic of caste.

### **9.7 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE**

1. What is the difference between *Kacha* and *Pakka* food?
2. What is meant by caste endogamy?
3. What is meant by commensal restrictions?
4. Is untouchability still practiced in contemporary Indian society? Explain.
11. What changes can be observed in caste system in contemporary Indian society?

### **9.8 SUGGESTED READINGS**

1. Ambedkar, B. R. (1990) [1948] "The Untouchables", in Vasant Moon (ed.) *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 7*, Bombay: Education Department, Govt of Maharashtra.
2. Anand, Mulk Raj (1981) [1935] *Untouchable*, New Delhi: Arnold Publishers.
3. Bhat, Janaki Nath (1954) 'Untouchability in India', *Civilisations*, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp 565-570. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41377660>. Accessed on 13-05-2016)
4. Charsley, Simon (1996) " 'Untouchable': What is in a Name?", *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 2, No. 1, March, pp 1-23.
5. Dahiwale, S.M. (Ed.) (2006) *Understanding Indian Society: The Non-Brahmanic Perspective*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
6. Deshpande, Ashwini (2012) *The Grammar of Caste: Economic Discrimination in Contemporary India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
7. Galanter, Marc (1969) 'Untouchability and the Law', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 4, No. 1/2, Jan, pp 131-133, 135-137, 139-141, 143-157, 159-170. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40736850> Accessed on 13-05-2016)
8. Gandhi, M.K. (1929) 'Backward and Untouchable Classes', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 145, Part 2: India, Sep. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1016900>. Accessed on 13-05-2016)
9. Gupta, Dipankar (1999) 'From Varna to Jati' in K. L. Sharma (ed.) *Social Inequality in India: Profiles of Caste, Class and Social Mobility*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
10. Guru, Gopal (2009) 'Archaeology of Untouchability', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 37, Sep 12-18, pp 49-56.
11. Jafferlot, Christophe (2005) *Dr Ambedkar and Untouchability: Analysing and Fighting Caste*, Delhi: Permanent Black.
12. Jodhka, Surinder S (2002) 'Caste and Untouchability in Rural Punjab', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 19, May 11-17, pp 1813-1823.



13. Juergensmeyer, Mark (1988) *Religious Rebels in the Punjab: The Social Vision of Untouchables*, Delhi: Ajanta Publications.
14. Kumar, Vivek (2001) 'Untouchability in Uttaranchal', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 49, Dec 8-14, pp 4536-4537.
15. Louis, Prakash (2003) *Political Sociology of Dalit Assertion*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
16. Mendelsohn, Oliver & M Vicziany (2000) *The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.
17. Oommen, T.K. (1968) 'Strategy for Social Change: A Case Study of Untouchability', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 3, No. 25, Jun. 22, pp 933-936.
18. O'Neill, Tom (2003) 'India's Untouchables', *National Geographic*, June, pp 2-31
19. Passin, Herbert (1955) 'Untouchability in the Far East', *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 11, No. 3, October, pp 247-267. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2382914>. Accessed on 13-05-2016)
20. Prashad, Vijay (1996) 'The Untouchable Question', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 31, No. 9, Mar 2, pp 551-559.
21. Sarukkai, Sundar (2009) 'Phenomenology of Untouchability', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 37, Sep 12-18, pp 39-48.
22. Shah, Ghanshyam et al. (2006) *Untouchability in Rural India*, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

**BACHELOR OF ARTS (LIBERAL ARTS)**

**SEMESTER II**

**COURSE: INDIAN SOCIETY**

---

**UNIT 10: STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW,  
GENDER DISCRIMINATION**

---

**STRUCTURE**

**10.0 Learning Objectives**

**10.1 Introduction**

**10.2 Position of women in Rig Vedic Era**

**10.3 Status of women during the Epic period**

**10.4 Status of women in the Medieval India**

**10.5 Women Role in the Religious Field**

**10.6 Women in the Buddhist Period**

**10.7 Restriction on Women Marriage**

**10.8 Property Rights in Inheritance**

**10.9 Better status of women in Southern India in comparison to Northern India**

**10.10 Women in Pre-Industrial Societies**

**10.11 Industrialization and Changing Status of Women**

**10.12 Status of Women in Different Religions**

**10.13 Subordinate Role of Women and Religious Rituals**

**10.14 Religion as a Tool for Oppressing Women**

## **10.15 Changing Status of Women in Indian Society: Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Independence Period**

### **10.15.1 Women in Pre-colonial India**

### **10.15.2 Colonial Period**

### **10.15.3 Indian Government and Women's Equality**

## **10.16 Women's Struggle and Reforms**

## **10.17 Gender Discrimination**

### **10.17.1 Introduction**

### **10.17.2 Causes of Gender Inequality**

### **10.17.3 Factors of Gender Discrimination**

### **10.17.4 Gender Discrimination in Employment**

## **10.18 Summary**

## **10.19 Key Concepts/Words**

## **10.20 Questions for Practice**

## **10.22 Suggested Readings**

## **10.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this chapter, the student shall be able to:

- To understand historically the status of women in Indian society; and
- To understand the concept, causes and factors of gender discrimination.

## **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

Status and role are interlinked with the concepts of power and position. A role confers social, economic, political and cultural power on the individual. In other words, status is determined to a great extent by the power enjoyed by men and women in the domestic and social spheres. Five key aspects have been identified over which women's control has to be assessed to understand status of women in society: (a) women's labour (b) control over resources i.e. economic, health, education and political (c) sexuality (their physical integrity and freedom from all types of physical and mental violence); (d) on their reproduction and (e) mobility. These are the most important parameters to measure and compare women's position in society vis-à-vis men and to define her status. Two other terms like "access" and "control" are important indices for women's autonomy and status in society. These two terms are of significance for comparing women's position in society with men and its changing nature in course of historical phases. The status of women correlates with the social space occupied by them in a particular society at a particular time.

“Status” of women is correlated to the participatory rights and obligations of women in the managing of society. The term refers to the position of women vis-à-vis men in the social structure in terms of rights and obligations. Status of women in society is explained in terms of “role” which is assigned to them by tradition, religion, ideology and the state of economic development. The enhancement of status essentially means the enlargement of the scope of participatory rights in society. The more balanced the opportunity structure for men and women, the larger the role women have in society and consequently higher their status. The idea of status also connotes the notion of equality (Krishnaraj 1986). If we want to study the status of women in any society, we must study the complexity of roles which women perform in society in the socio-economic, cultural, religious and political fields. It is also important to find out such factors as how they face the problems and situations that are connected with their sex roles from birth to death and how they adjust themselves to these role situations. The role of women has differed from society to society and from time to time. Within one society itself, it has changed over time. There were societies where women performed important economic roles. In these societies’ women had complete, or at least major, control over the economic activity. However, the model pattern has been the societies where the status of women is inferior to men. It is important to note that the inferior status of women in societies also coincides with the denial of property rights and education, as well as denial of certain occupations to them.

There are certain constraints, historical, traditional and constitutional, which are responsible for lowering of women’s status in society. The (low) status of women constitutes a problem in almost all societies and it has emerged today as a fundamental issue in human development. Studying women’s status means a sensitive diagnosis of the nature of gender subordination through an understanding of gender relations in a specific context. Gender based role differentiation is basic to the understanding of the status of women in society. A gender-based concept of status denotes women’s social, legal and ideological position and rights and privileges in a given social set up. It is very often conditioned by the prevalent ideas and functions in that society, the attitudes and behaviours of men towards women and their acceptance and rejection of women’s role in society. Women’s status, which encompasses their traditional as well as changing position in a society, is a dynamic concept where both their present and emerging status is based on the prevalent ideas, functions, norms and traditions. The corresponding changes in the status of women are directly linked with social and cultural traditions, stages of economic development, level of education and political participation. Sociologists while doing women’s studies often refer the term “changing status of women” rather than the term status of women in society. However, in a complex and stratified social structure and cultural plurality two other dimensions have been introduced in recent times to facilitate status assessment, particularly in a period of change (Mazumdar 1978).

## **10.2 POSITION OF WOMEN IN RIG VEDIC ERA**

Women constituted the key role in the arch of Indian society. No doubt the Rig Vedic Women in India enjoyed high status in society and their condition was good. Even the

women were provided opportunity to attain high intellectual and spiritual standard. But from enjoying free and esteemed positions in the Rig-Vedic society, women started being discriminated since the Later-Vedic period in education and other rights and facilities (Saravana kumar, 2016) Indian society doubts that we are in the midst of a great revolution in the history of women. The voice of women is increasingly heard in Parliament, courts and in the streets. While women in the West had to fight for over a century to get some of their basic rights, (Altekar,1983) like the right to vote, the Constitution of India has given women equal rights with men from the beginning (Devandra,Kiran,1985). The ancient and medieval status of women in modern Indian society regarding equality, education, marriage and family life, race and gender, religion and culture is maintained or deteriorated.

The Rig Vedic Women in India enjoyed high status in society. During the Vedic Age wife was put in an esteemed position. She was considered as half of the man, his trust friend, companion in solitude, father in advice and the rest in passing the wilderness of life. The women were provided opportunity to attain high intellectual and spiritual standard. There were many women Rishis during this period. Though monogamy was mostly common, the richer section of the society indulged in polygamy. There was no sati system or early marriage. But from enjoying free and esteemed positions in the Rig-Vedic society, women started being discriminated since the Later-Vedic period in education and other rights and facilities. Child marriage, widow burning or sati, the purdah and polygamy further worsened the women's position The Indian cultural tradition begins with the Vedas. It is generally believed that the Vedic period is spread over from 2000 BC to 500 B.C.(Altekar, 1983) Vedic women had economic freedom. Some women were engaged in teaching work. Home was the place of production. Spinning and weaving of clothes were done at home. Women also helped their husbands in agricultural pursuits.

### **10.3 STATUS OF WOMEN DURING THE EPIC PERIOD**

The women of Epic India enjoyed an honourable position at home. Both Ramayana and Mahabharata Epics had given a respectable place for women; women had been called the root of Dharma, prosperity in the epics. We find vast references of the expression of courage, strong will power and valour of women like Kaikeye, Sita, Rukmani, Satyabhama, Savitri, Draupadi and others. The Ramayana is a glorious illustration for the Hindu ideal woman hood, it glorifies the value of "Pativradya" and idealises womanhood as one of the most venerable aspects of our heritage (Chaturvedi, Geeta 1985). The Mahabharata also outlines the attitude of the wife to husband. The Women during the Period of Dharmashatras and Puranas the status of women gradually declined and underwent a major change. The girls were deprived of formal education. Daughters were regarded as second class citizens. Freedom of women was curtailed. The women were prevented from learning the Vedas and becoming Brahma charinis. The law giver of Indian society gave the statement that women have to be under father during childhood, under her husband during youth and under her son during old age. Shall she deserve freedom? (Saravanakumar, 2017).

### **10.4 STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIEVAL INDIA**

The Medieval period (Period between 500 A.D-1500 A.D) proved to be highly disappointing for the Indian women, for their status further deteriorated during this period. Medieval India was not women's age it is supposed to be the 'dark age' for them. When foreign conquerors, the Muslims invaded India they brought with them their own culture. For them women were the sole property of her father, brother or husband and she does not have any will of her own. This type of thinking also crept into the minds of Indian people and they also began to treat their own women like this. One more reason for the decline in women's status and freedom was that original Indians wanted to shield their women folk from the barbarous Muslim invaders. As polygamy was a norm for these invaders, they picked up any women they wanted and kept her in their "harems". In order to protect those Indian women started using 'Purdah', (a veil) (Dutt, 1937). They were not allowed to move freely and this led to the further deterioration of their status. These problems related with women, resulted in changed mindset of people. Now, they began to consider a girl as misery and a burden, which has to be shielded from the eyes of intruders. Thus, a vicious circle started in which women was at the receiving end. All this gave rise to some new evils such as Child Marriage, Sati, *Jauhar* and restriction on girl education.

### **10.5 WOMEN ROLE IN THE RELIGIOUS FIELD**

In the religious field, wife enjoyed full rights and regularly participated in religious ceremonies with her husband. Religious ceremonies and sacrifices were performed jointly by the husband and wife. Women even participated actively in religious discourses. The role of women in public life could shine as debaters in public assemblies (Krishnaraj, Maithveyi, 1986) 5. They usually occupied a prominent place in social gatherings but they were denied entry, into the "*Sabhas*" because these places besides being used for taking political decisions were also used for gambling, drinking and such others purposes. Women's participation in public meetings and debates, however, became less and less common in later Vedic period.

### **10.6 WOMEN IN THE BUDDHIST PERIOD**

The status of women improved a little during the Buddhist period though there was not tremendous change. Some of the rigidities and restrictions imposed by the caste system were relaxed. Buddha preached equality and he tried to improve the cultural, educational and religious statuses of women. During the benevolent rule of the famous Jain and Buddhist kings such as Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka, Kanishka, Sri Harsha and others, women regained a part of their lost freedom and status due to the relatively broad-minded Buddhist and Jain philosophy (Sen, 1988)8. Women were not only confined to domestic work but also, they could resort to an educational career if they so desired. In the religious field women came to occupy a distinctly superior place. Women were permitted to become "Sanyasis". Many women took a leading role in Buddhist monastic-life, women had their *sangha* called the *Bhikshuni Sangha*, which was guided by the same rules and regulations as these of the monks. The *sangha* opened to them avenues of cultural activities and social service and

ample opportunities for public life. Their political and economic status however remained unchanged.

### **10.7 RESTRICTION ON WOMEN MARRIAGE**

It was a norm in medieval India. Girls were married off at the age of 8-10. They were not allowed access to education and were treated as the material being. The plight of women can be imagined by one of the *shlokas* of *Tulsidas* where he writes "*Dhol, gawar, shudra, pashu, nari, and sabtadan keadhikari*" meaning that animals, illiterates, lower castes and women should be subjected to beating. Thus, women were compared with animals and were married off at an early age. The child marriage along with it brought some more problems such as increased birth rate, poor health of women due to repeated child bearing and high mortality rate of women and children. The veil or the '*Purdah*' system was widely prevalent in medieval Indian society (Menon Indu, 1989). It was used to protect the women folk from the eyes of foreign rulers who invaded India in medieval period. But this system curtailed the freedom of women. It is also more or less similar to Sati but it is a mass suicide. *Jauhar* was prevalent in the *Rajput* societies. In this custom wife immolated themselves while their husband was still alive (Nanda, 1976). When people of *Rajput* clan became sure that they were going to die at the hands of their enemy then all the women arrange a large pyre and set themselves afire, while their husband used to fight the last decisive battle known as "Shaka", with the enemy. Thus, protecting the sanctity of the women and the whole clan, the ritual of dying at the funeral pyre of the husband is known as "Sati" or "*Sahagaman*". According to some of the Hindu scriptures women dying at the funeral pyre of her husband go straight to heaven so it's well to practice this ritual. Initially it was not obligatory for the women but if she practiced such a custom she was highly respected by the society. Sati was considered to be the better option than living as a widow as the plight of widows in Hindu society was even worse.

The condition of widows in medieval India was very bad. They were not treated as human beings and were subjected to a lot of restrictions. They were supposed to live pious life after their husband died and were not allowed entry in any celebration. Their presence in any good work was considered to be a bad omen. Sometimes heads of widows were also shaved down. They were not allowed to remarry. Any woman remarrying was looked down by the society. This cruelty on widows was one of the main reasons for the large number of women committing Sati (Cormak, 1953). In medieval India living as a Hindu widow was a sort of a curse. It's a serious issue. Courts are flooded with cases related to death due to dowry harassment by husband and in laws. In ancient times women were given '*Stridhan*' when they departed from the house of their parents. This amount of money was given to her as a gift which she can use on her and her children but her in-laws did not have any right on that amount. This amount was supposed to help the girl in time of need. Slowly this tradition became obligatory and took the form of dowry. Nowadays, parents have to give hefty amount in dowry, the in laws of their girl are not concerned whether they can afford it or not. If a girl brings large amount of dowry she is given respect and is treated well in her new home and if she does not bring dowry according to expectations of her in laws then she has to suffer

harassment. Due to this evil practice many newly wedded women of India have to lose their lives.

### **10.8 PROPERTY RIGHTS IN INHERITANCE**

Women rights were very much limited in inheriting property. A married daughter had no share in her father's property but each spinster was entitled to one-fourth share of patrimony received by her brothers. Women had control over gifts and property etc. Received by a woman at the time of marriage but the bulk of the family property was under the control and management of the patriarch. As a wife, a woman had no direct share in her husband's property. However, for second wife was entitled to 1/3rd of her husband's wealth. A widow was expected to lead an ascetic life and had no share in her husband's property (Sharma Rathakrishna, 1981). Thus it could be generalized that the social situation was not in favour of women possessing property and yet protection was given to them as daughters and wives.

### **10.9 BETTER STATUS OF WOMEN IN SOUTHERN INDIA IN COMPARISON TO NORTHERN INDIA**

The status of women in Southern India was better than in the North India. While in Northern India there were not many women administrators, in Southern India we can find some names that made women of that time proud. Priyaketala devi, queen of Chalukyas Vikrama ditya ruled three villages. Another woman named Jakkiabbe used to rule seventy villages. In South Indian women had representation in each and every field. Domingo Paes, famous Portuguese traveler testifies to it. He has written in his account that in *Vijayanagara* kingdom women were present in each and every field. Nunez, another famous traveller to the South also agrees to it and says that women were employed in writing accounts of expenses, recording the affairs of kingdom, which shows that they were educated. There is no evidence of any public school in northern India but according to famous historian IbnBatuta there were 13 schools for girls and 24 for boys in Honavar. There was one major evil present in South India of medieval time. But it was the custom of Devadasis (Clark, Alice, 1987). *Devadasis* was a custom prevalent in Southern India. In this system girls were dedicated to temples in the name of Gods and Goddesses. The girls were then onwards known as '*Devadasis*' meaning servant or slave of God. These *Devadasis* were supposed to live the life of celibacy. All the requirements of *Devadasis* were fulfilled by the grants given to the temples. In temples they used to spend their time in the worship of God and by singing and dancing for the God. Some kings to invite temple dancers to perform at their court for the pleasure thus some *Devadasis* converted to *Rajadasis* prevalent in some tribes of South India.

### **10.10 WOMEN IN PRE-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES**

A number of scholars addressed the issue of male domination and low status of women as a historical phenomenon, grounded in a particular set of circumstances rather than



flowing from some universal aspect of human nature of culture. Many of the Marxist and socialist feminists claim that it is necessary to examine history to find out how and why inequality between the sexes came about. The most important factor in the transition to a society with gender stratification was the development of a form of communal property to a group of kin who had exclusive rights over property (Kin corporate property). The senior members of kinship group gained control over property. Women as gatherers were continued to act as producer and gradually lost control over their products. In the course of history there developed of patrilocal, matrilineal and polygamous societies. Thus, the position of women and gender inequalities vary from society to society in different pre-industrial societies and has altered in many ways after industrialization. The pre-industrial era saw a greater degree of sharing of work and emotional roles by men and women than the industrial era which followed (Bell 1981: 307). In colonial America, there was more equality of men and women in pre-industrial society; women worked to provide for the family, and men played a greater part in raising the children. The trend changed with industrialization, women often stayed home to take care of the children and men went to work in factories. Gender roles became more distinct with industrialization than they were before. (Rothman, 1978; Lerner, 1979; Bell, 1981)

### **10.11 INDUSTRIALIZATION AND CHANGING STATUS OF WOMEN**

In modern industrial societies we find significant differences in gender roles. For example, in socialist societies there tends to be more equality between men and women than capitalist societies. In fact, even within a single society we often find important differences in gender roles for various classes and ethnic groups (Conklin 1984: 223). In Western European societies the consequence of industrialization was the modern role of housewife as the dominant mature feminine role. During the early stages of industrialization after the Industrial Revolution in England (dates from 1750 to 1841) the factory system steadily replaced the family as the unit of production. The women were employed in factories where they often continued their traditional work in textiles. From 1841 until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 a combination of pressure from male workers and reformers in Europe restricted female employment in industry and gradual withdrawal of all female labour from the factory. Ann Oakley (1974) states that from 1914 to 1950, there was a “tendency towards the growing employment of women coupled with retention of housewifery role.

During these years women received many legal and political rights in England but all these had little effect on the mother housewife role, which was central to their lives. Industrialization has had many effects on the role of women. There was a “separation of men from the daily routines of domestic life” and emergence of the “economic dependence of women and children on men and “the isolation of housework and child care from other work. Thus, in the twentieth-century British society housewife mother role became institutionalized as “the primary role for all women”. These generalizations became less valid as the twentieth century progressed. In contemporary societies “patriarchy” is the most important and dominant concept for explaining gender inequalities, low status of women and sexual exploitation against women. Kate Millet (1970) gave the concept of relationship of

domination and subordination based on sex and inherent politics based on male-centric power-structured relationships where males controlled females in society. According to her such relationships are organized on the basis of “patriarchy” — a system in which “male dominate female. Patriarchy is the most pervasive ideology and basis of power and more rigorous, more uniform and more enduring system existing in human society. Gender is the primary source of identity for all individuals in modern societies. Eight factors for explaining the existence of patriarchy in human society: a) biological b) ideological c) sociological d) relationship between class and subordination e) educational factors; f) myth and religion g) psychological h) physical force. She attributes some importance to superior male strength and importance to socialization of male (aggressive) and female (passive) characteristics for the formation of patriarchal ideology.

### **10.12 STATUS OF WOMEN IN DIFFERENT RELIGIONS**

A number of writers noted that historically women were not always been subordinate within world’s most religions. Armstrong (1993) for example, argues that in early history women were considered central to the spiritual quest. In the Middle East, Asia and Europe archaeologists have uncovered numerous symbols of great mother goddess. With the development of societies there were many gods and goddesses but Mother Goddess still played a crucial role. Armstrong noted, “Mother Goddess was absorbed into the pantheon of deities and remained as a powerful figure. She was called Inanna in sumer, in ancient Mesopotamia; Ishtar in Baloylon; Anat or Asherah in Canaan; Isis in Egypt and Aphrodite in Greece. In all culture people told about the importance of Mother Goddess in their spiritual lives. Everywhere she was revered as the source of fertility (Armstrong 1993: 21). There was gradually the eventual decline of the Mother Goddesses. In Babylon, goddess Tiamot, the goddess of the sea was replaced by the male god Marduk. The final death knell of female goddesses came with the acceptance of monotheism – belief in single god rather than many. This originated with Yahweh, the god of Abraham. Furthermore, this Hebrew “God of Israel” would later become the god of the Christians and the Muslims, who all regarded themselves as the spiritual offspring of Abraham, the father of all believers. Thus, historically with the development of religion impertinence was attributed to the masculine characteristics of the God. Christianity, Islam and Hinduism all have constituted through the important stages in the evolution of humanity. But when the cause of women was concerned, they all added a new load on them in different historical phases. Therefore, for determining status of women in society, religion plays a key role and the problems faced by women of a particular religion are not only peculiar to that religion. They are problems of women in general and that should be addressed and redressed as problems of gender bias, male domination, patriarchy and age-old prejudice against women.

### **10.13 SUBORDINATE ROLE OF WOMEN AND RELIGIOUS RITUALS**

In the classical teachings of many religions there was stress on equality between men and women, but in practice women have usually been far from equal. Women do, of course, have a part to play in many religions, but it is almost always subordinate to the role of men, and it is likely to be in the “private” rather than “public” sphere. Thus, women are devalued by different religious beliefs. There is always a tendency of “patriarchal misinterpretation of religion”. Holm (1994) gives a number of examples in this regard. In Buddhism, both men and women can have a religious role as monks and nuns respectively but all monks are seen as senior to all nuns. In Hinduism only men can become Brahminic priests. In Islam, in some regions women are not allowed to enter mosques for worship and men have made all the legal ruling. Orthodox Judaism only allows men to take a full part in ceremonies. In Japanese folk religions women can take part only in organizing public rituals, while only men can take part in public performances. In Chinese popular religion women are associated with less important spirits (Yin) whereas men are associated with more important and powerful spirits (Yang). Christianity has also been male dominated. Many of the most influential ideas were worked out by celibate men in the first five centuries of the church’s history and the significant developments of the medieval church and reformation were also shaped by men (Holm 1994: pxiii). Sikhism is perhaps the most egalitarian of the major religions of the world since all offices are equally open to men and women although in practice only a small minority of women have significant positions within the religion. The second-class status of women in different religion is often related to her sexuality. Menstruation and childbirth are often regarded as polluting. In many religions women are forbidden to enter the sacred places and to touch the sacred objects during the menstrual period. For example, Hindu women are forbidden to touch sacred objects and prohibited from entering family shrines when she is pregnant or menstruating. Muslim women are not allowed to touch a Koran, go to a mosque and to offer prayer during this period.

#### **10.14 RELIGIONS AS A TOOL FOR OPPRESSING WOMEN**

According to Simone de Beauvoir (1949) Religion is used by the oppressors (men) to control the oppressed group (women) and it also serves as a weapon for the second class status of women in society. Men have generally exercised control over religious beliefs. He enjoys the great advantage of having a God endorse code he writes to support his dominance. Beauvoir writes from the perspective of a Western, Christian women. For all major religions, man is master by divine right and thus repress the downtrodden female. However, modern societies show evidence of changes in which the inequality between men and women in religion is gradually reduced. Nawal El Saadwi (1980) considers the importance of religion in creating and perpetuating female oppression under Islam. According to her Christianity is much more rigid and orthodox and the oppression of women is caused by the patriarchal system which came into being when society had reached a certain stage of development. Nevertheless, she does see religion as a crucial instrument in women’s oppression. “Men do distort religion to serve their own interests, to help justify or legitimate the oppression of women.” She also believes that religion became oppressive to women since the development of monotheistic religions. Such religions drew inspiration and guidance from the values of patriarchy and class societies prevalent at that time. For example, the Jewish religion drew

upon the patriarchal power of Abraham (Mythological father of all religions). Islamic society is also developed in a patriarchal way through the dominance of male “patriarch” under the authority of male head of the family, the supreme ruler, or the *Khalifa* (political ruler) or Imam (religious leader). Even today, in countries like Egypt women are subject to extremely restricted marriage laws under religious dictum. El Saadwi describes Christ as a revolutionary leader who opposed female oppression. Early Christianity had stricter moral codes than other religious and codes which treated the sexes fairly equally. “Despite the limitations placed by Christianity on man’s sexual freedom, women were maintained in her inferior underprivileged status as compared with man. The patriarchal system still reigned supreme and grew even more ferocious with the gradual shift to a feudal system” (El Saadwi 1980: 119).

The Quran and other religious books of Islam evidenced that women are not badly treated in Islam. El. Saadawi believes that the recent enhancement of the status of Arab women has been due to a combination of social, economic and political changes of the country and the women’s own struggles. The socialist revolution has a positive impact. Revolutions will further the cause of women even more if the positive aspects of Quran can be emphasized and the patriarchal misinterpretations abandoned. According to many non-Muslim writers’ veil is variously depicted as a tangible symbol of women’s oppression, a form of social control, religiously sanctioning women’s invisibility and subordinate socio-political status. However, there is another view point: *Idijale*, or religious modestly maintained through veil, actually has advantage for women, which can reduce or allow them to cope with male oppression.

### **10.15 CHANGING STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY: PRE-COLONIAL, COLONIAL AND INDEPENDENCE PERIOD**

Many important changes have taken place in India in the last two hundred years. Some of these are more apparent than real. This is particularly so in relation to the status of women. During the last two hundred years a large number of women have marched out of their segregated households into the public life. However, the position of contemporary Hindu women in India is full of familiar contradictions. There are women politicians who hold high positions, yet men control politics both at the grass roots and at the top. There are some important women intellectuals and professionals in India who occupy top position while the vast majority are still ignorant and illiterate. A large number of women are in the workforce and are landless labourers in the remote villages. There are female deities like Durga, Kali, Chandika, Manasa, etc. who are worshipped and feared by most yet the majority of women at home have low ritual status and live-in depressed conditions. Women are revered as mothers at the same time they suffer from brutal violence like rape and physical molestation. They are also worshipped as pure beings, but in order to elevate the status of their men folk rather than themselves. Thus, there are seeming paradoxes in the social life of women in India. The historians argue that despite of many legislations and other changes that have occurred in favour of women over the past two hundred years there has been little significant alteration to the traditional structure of male dominance and authority because still

there are some deep ideological and structural roots through which this domination has been perpetuated (Allen and Mukherjee 1982).

Women in India constitute nearly fifty percent of the total population. Yet they do not seem to have enjoyed equal status with men. Women's status, by and large, has been one of general subordination to men in societies known for the perpetuation of cultural heritage and tradition. It has been observed that women in India seem to have experienced various problems, particularly those that are socio-cultural over a period of time.

India is a multicultural society with a great diversity and various forms of social hierarchy and inequality like caste and class. Women's role, rights, norms, values, customs, etc. are greatly influenced by religion, institutions of family, marriage, kinship, descent, inheritance, caste hierarchy, and other cultural traditions. Hindu society is a complex phenomenon, developed by the integration of a system of theology with a system of social organization. It is often said that Hinduism is not just a religion but a way of life. As a way of life, Hindu society cannot be regarded as being homogenous, for the religious influences have varied through the ages and among peoples at different levels of the social hierarchy (Ponniah 1989).

#### **10.15.1 WOMEN IN PRE-COLONIAL INDIA**

The status of women in Indian society has changed from time to time. Their status has been variously estimated and there are many views regarding her place in civilization. There is so much variability in the relation of women to society during different time period that it is difficult to make a general statement. Categorically, her utility, resourcefulness in domestic life, refreshing company and affectionate care for children have always proved a great asset to her partner in life and have to a considerable extent determined her status at different stages of civilization. Throughout the Vedic period, women in India especially of the upper caste were given equal status with men. In view of this equality of status, women participated in sacrificial rites and had to be men's equals in upholding "*Dharma*". Women had been able to hear and learn the Vedas, during 600 B.C. In Rig-Veda, the husband and wife appear to have occupied equal status – both of them were designated as "*Dampati*".

In Indian culture, since the post Vedic period the overall status of women in family and society has been low. This low status of Indian women were mainly emerged from overpowering patriarchy and male domination, economic dependence of women over men, various caste restrictions, religious prohibitions and prejudices, illiteracy, lack of leadership quality, low self-esteem and apathetic and indifferent attitude of men. It was the age of *Sutras* and *Epics* (500 BC to A.D. 500) that the status of women changed considerably. Procreation of a son became a religious necessity for he alone could discharge certain ritual obligations to the ancestors. A wife was expected to provide all services needed by her husband and to keep him satisfied. The religious dictum (Manu's) was that a wife ought to respect her husband as a "god" even if he was a drunkard or dumb headed or lunatic was accepted and applying to all women. Practice of *Sati* was gradually established by A.D. 700. The women were

socialized and were expected to play the completely dependent role on men with no opportunity to take decisions of her own.

The status of women continued to deteriorate during the age of Smriti (A.D. 500 – A.D. 1800) and Muslim rule till they almost lost all status in society. Scholars like Matson Everett (1981) have identified five specific factors responsible for low status of women in India, both in the family and society and also for seclusion of women. There are Hindu religion, caste system, joint family system, Islamic rule and British colonialism. The values of Hinduism support the male supremacy over female, women's "mother-housewife" role in private domain and men's "public" role in economic and political spheres. Hindu religious scripture prescribed inferior positions of women in ritual activities and a dependent position of woman on man throughout her lifetime. For the first time in Indian history, Indian women were subjected to cruelty during the Mughal period. In view of the Muslim invasion, the indigenous culture had been subjected to acculturation. The customs and traditions of Islam had made in-roads into the native culture. For example, the "purdah" system was widely practiced among the middle classes. According to Altekar (1956) for nearly 2000 years from B.C. to 1800 AD, the status of women steadily deteriorated. The revival of Sati, the prohibition of remarriage, spread of *purdah* system, and the greater prevalence of polygamy made the position of women worst. Generally speaking, before the advent of Muslims, the status of Hindu women was certainly better. There were many factors directly or indirectly responsible for the continuous deterioration of the status of Indian women in medieval times. Early marriage became a rule – to safeguard the honour and chastity of girls. The Hindu laws gave unequal and discriminated treatment to women. They were discriminated in marriage, marital status, divorce, widowhood and inheritance. Very few women received education even in the 1850s. Literacy reached such low ebb after 1857 that there was hardly one woman in a hundred who could read and write. This was so because of the evil socio-religious practices, sinister customs, irrational religious rites and inhuman superstitions and ceremonies unknown in ancient periods, which had crept into Hinduism such as child marriage, enforced widowhood, sati temple prostitution (devadasi), purdah, dowry, female infanticides, polygamy, etc. All these made Hindu society a huge, static and immobile one where women had practically no positive role. In this period Hindu women were in a perpetual depressive state. The social structure allowed men greater freedom and liberty and greater access and control over resources, from which women were excluded. Different standards were adapted to judge the individual and social conduct of man and women. The laws did not recognize equality of sexes and equal rights for men and women. Thus there was perpetual decline of status of women for several centuries, had reached its lowest ebb in the nineteenth century.

### **10.15.2 COLONIAL PERIOD**

There was much unrest among women in India during colonial period; a general desire to change the existing state of things. This had become possible because the 1920's were a period of social and political awakening in India, followed by intense reformist efforts made by social reformers with or without organized support. Thus, the issue of women's status, which had long become the focus of social reform, was also reflected in a series of

legal enactments relating to or affecting women. To mention only a few, the Sati Abolition Act was passed in 1829 and the Widow Remarriage Act in 1854. By 1929, Indian Women had been granted the right to vote. The Sarda Act, which fixed the minimum age at marriage for girls at 14 was enacted in 1929. Mahatma Gandhi stressed the need for educating women. Women's education and amelioration of their status had received a great deal of impetus by the third decade of nineteenth century (Chanana, 1996: 116-121). One of the outstanding features of modern India has been the unprecedented awakening of Indian women during nineteenth and twentieth century. A number of movements, both religious and social like *Brahmo samaj*, *Aryasamaj* and *Prarthana samaj* were launched in the middle of nineteenth century, reforming Hinduism and Indian society. These movements have had a deep impact on the women's identity and women's life in India. The social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar in Bengal, Malabari, Ranade in Bombay and Dayananda Saraswati in Punjab and many others and their ideas changed the total atmosphere in India and brought about a near revolution through laws which started the new era of emancipation for women in India.

The political upheaval under Mahatma Gandhi marked the climax when women participated in the independence movement. In the 1930s and 1940s the outlook of leaders of the nationalist movement became more egalitarian and less hierarchical. The nationalist leaders' commitment to equality influenced the Indian women's movement to turn to liberal egalitarian values. Some women's organizations were formed to promote modern ideals to women on a nationalist basis. Of these Bharat Stri Mahamandal (BSM) was founded in 1910, Women's India Association (WIA) founded in 1917 by Madame Annie Besant, National Council for Women in India (NCWI) founded in 1925 by Lady Aberdeen, Lady Tata and others and All India women's Conference (AIWC) founded in 1927 by the efforts of Margaret Cousins and others. These organizations took up various issues like women's education; abolition of social evils, Hindu law reform; moral and material progress of women, equality of rights and opportunities and women's suffrage. According to Ahuja (1992) the Indian Women's movement worked for two goals: 1) uplift the status of women in India, that is, reforming social practices so as to enable women to play a more important and constructive role in society and ii) equal rights for men and women, that is, extension of civil rights enjoyed by men in the political, economic and familial spheres to women also.

### **10.15.3 INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND WOMEN'S EQUALITY**

What Indian women achieved after independence of India and the provisions for gender equality in the Indian Constitution was a consequence of their participation in the freedom struggle. The Constitution of India brought Indian women at par with men. Article 326 gave them the right to vote. Articles 14, 15 and 16 ensure equality of opportunity and equality before the law. The state can make special provisions for women. Thus, the Constitution gives equality to Indian women through its fundamental rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. The adult franchise brought Indian women on an equal footing with men. The Constitution of India guarantees all those rights to women which are given to men. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was established by the Government of India 1953 to promote and strengthen voluntary efforts for the welfare of women. The Five Years

Plans also laid emphasis on women's rights and stressed on the welfare activities, education, health and family planning for women.

After Independence in 1947, there was an acceptance of professional life for women although they were not encouraged in scientific and technological vocations. It has been observed that women of the upper classes have better educational and job opportunities whereas the rural and lower-middle class women do not enjoy such wide perspectives because they unfortunately still believe in traditional social taboos. Many of them are still confined to the four walls of domesticity and strict patriarchy. The appointment of the National Committee on the status of women in India 1972, and the publication of its report in 1975 marked the first comprehensive official attempt in contemporary times to study the status of Indian women and recommend changes to improve their position.

The report highlighted that despite constitutional guarantees the roles, rights and participation of women in all spheres of life were limited. The literacy rate of Indian women is still half of the literacy rate of men; sex ratio is still very low and life expectancy at birth for females is still lower than males and the economic participation rate of women is still very low when compared to men. The National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up on January 31, 1992 to look into women related issues, to probe into the status of women, to study various legislations and point out the gaps, to look into the discrimination and violence against women and analyse possible remedies. Still the status of Indian women is not up to the mark or to the desired level. The question looks large that even in the twenty first century are Indian women belong to the category of second sex? It is true that one set of disabilities of women like – Sati, child marriage, female infanticide, widowhood, denial of property rights, *devadasi* system, etc. have been removed by social reforms and legislations but others have taken their place in some new forms and practices such as bride-price, female foeticide, girl trafficking, divorce, etc. A series of laws have been passed in last five decades since independence for the upliftment of status of women in India but it is really pity for Indian women that all these are far from reality. A handful of womenfolk only enjoy the benefits from the state who belongs to a small section of privileged educated women of urban upper economic strata. We cannot deny that various opportunities for women have considerably widened certain levels and enabled them to achieve numerous advances/gains in various spheres. But the process of modernization, westernization and of latest globalization further complicated the situation.

A large section of the population of India lives in rural areas with traditional mentality and it is difficult for them to accept modern role of women in India based on equality, rationality and progressive mind. Society's attitude in general is changing slowly towards women's due role and status, but the pattern of male superiority is still dominating. Although legally and theoretically women are now recognized as the social equal of men, the patriarchal family, the caste system, religious mores and prevailing value system are still surcharged with the spirit of male domination. The attitude, which determines behaviour and the ideology, is the crucial variable affecting the changing process of status of women. People act on the values or beliefs of the society. Hence a change in status of women can come about



only through persuading the public that a given set of values is wrong and must be modified. The attitudes related to women's low position and inequality is very difficult to change except under compulsion. Nevertheless, higher education and employment operated as an effective engine of change in the lives of women. Holding a job has involved women in a role — that of bread earner — which by all accounts is most salient in defining the differences between the sexes.

The change in women's economic role has provided a necessary precondition for the revival of the drive for equality. As more and more women become educated and join in the labour force they will gain personal knowledge of discrimination and the need to correct it. The present unit examines the status of women from a historical perspective. At the outset the unit discusses the different parameters through which one can understand the very concept of status of women and against which the status of women can be analyzed. Then it goes on discussing the status of women in earlier societies. Earlier societies are said to be egalitarian in terms of gender. But with the economic development of the society the status of women deteriorated. An array of factors collectively contributed to this process. The patriarchal system found a stronghold with industrialization pushing women to secondary position in all areas of social life.

#### **10.16 WOMEN'S STRUGGLE AND REFORMS**

Though women of India are not at par with her counterpart in Western world but she is struggling hard to make her mark in men's world (Desai, Neera, 1977). There have been social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, and Swami Dayananda Saraswati who have helped women gain their previous status in society.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was strictly against the evils prevalent in society in his time. He is the one who has done women a great favour by abolishing Sati lawfully. He himself married a widow thus setting the example for the whole society. Along with 'Dwarkanath Tagore' he founded "Brahma Samaj" for the reform of Indian society and emancipation of women.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was popularly known as Vidyasagar, which means sea of Knowledge. He was a pillar of social reform movement of Bengal in the 19th century. He strongly supported women education in Bengal and went door to door to persuade people to send their girl child to school. He also did a lot in the field of widow remarriage (Forb, Geraldine, 1998). He opened many schools for girls.

Jyotirao Govindrao Phule was a real philanthropist. He was the one to open first girl school in India. He is also credited with opening first home for widows of the upper caste and a home for new born girl children so that they can be saved from female infanticide.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati was the founder of Arya Samaj and gave a cry, "back to Vedas". He translated Vedas from Sanskrit to Hindi so that a common man can read it and understand the Vedic Hindu scriptures gave utmost importance to women (Sharma, Radakrishna, 1981). He emphasized for the equal rights for women in every field. He tried to change the mind-set of people with his Vedic teachings.

## **10.17 GENDER DISCRIMINATION**

### **10.17.1 INTRODUCTION**

Gender disparity still exists in India. Being born as women in Indian society, one has to face gender discrimination at all levels. At the household level, females are confined to their household chores, raising children and looking after families, irrespective of their education degrees or job profile. At her workplace: women have limited access to job opportunities and are paid less for the same work. In India, discrimination was deep rooted and it is being exist since ages. In spite of the provision of equal rights to both the sexes, inappropriately sexual category still exists in the country. Time and again studies conducted and results shows gender discrimination is mostly in favour of men in many fields, including the workplace.

Gender discrimination is uneven or detrimental conduct of an individual or group of individuals based on gender. Gender discrimination is the unequal or disadvantageous treatment inflicted on someone because they belong to a specific gender. It is usually the women who usually have to face such gender discrimination.

Education and learning opportunities: gender-wise literacy rates in India showcase the wide gap between men and women. As per 2011 census data, effective literacy rates (age 7 and above) were 82.14% for men and 65.46% for women. Parents are unwilling to spend on girls' education because educating women is of no value as they will only serve their husbands and the in-laws in the future.

The Indian constitution provides equal rights and privileges for both men and women, but most women across India don't enjoy these rights and opportunities guaranteed to them. This is because of a number of reasons.

### **10.17.2 CAUSES OF GENDER INEQUALITY**

1. **Poverty** – This is the root cause of gender discrimination in the patriarchal Indian society, as the economic dependence on the male counterpart is itself a cause of gender disparity. A total of 30% of people live below the poverty line, and out of this 70% are women.
2. **Illiteracy** – Gender discrimination In India had led to educational backwardness for girls. It's a sad reality that despite educational reforms in the country, girls in India

are still denied a chance at learning. The mind-set needs to be changed, and people need to understand the benefits of educating girls. An educated, well-read woman ensures that other members, especially the children of the house, get a quality education.

3. **Setup in our Indian society** – Men dominate societal and family life in India. This has been the case in the past ages and continues to be practised in the majority of households. Though this mind-set is changing with urbanization and education, there is still a long way to permanently change the scenario.
4. **Social Customs, Beliefs and Practices** – To date, a lot of families have a preference for a male child and disfavoured towards the daughter. Sons, especially in the business communities, are considered economic, political, and ritual assets where daughters are considered liabilities.
5. **Lack of Awareness among Women** – Most of the women are unaware of their fundamental rights and capabilities. They lack a basic understanding of how the socio-economic and political forces affect them. They accept all discriminatory practices that persist in families from generation to generation in the name of tradition and societal norms primarily due to their ignorance and unawareness.

Gender-based discrimination across India can only be checked when girls are not denied their chance to learn and grow in life. Girls like boys should get a great start in life in terms of educational opportunities. This will help them attain economic independence and help them be rightly equipped to contribute towards their upliftment and that of the society they are part of.

### **10.17.3 FACTORS OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION**

While there are many factors that explain sex differentials in mortality and morbidity, a key factor is gender inequality. Gender inequalities are obvious in different ways, such as unequal access to resources, power, education and discriminatory socio-cultural practices. The Indian laws on rape, dowry and adultery have women's safety in the forefront, these highly discriminatory practices are still taking place at an alarming rate, affecting the lives of many today.

It is said that 'education starts from home and mother is our first teacher'. But what if the mother herself is denied education? The daughters of our country are reportedly denied even the basic education. They are even disadvantaged of the basic needs of a human being, just because of their gender! Most of the women unfortunately are not even aware of their fundamental rights.

Gender inequality is a major menace that we face in our country. It remains complex to make change in the family front. It pervades in all levels of the society and in the background of social institutions. Some of the major causes are biology, sex roles, illiteracy, so called custom and gender; these are also being applied to the family.

In India as soon as a baby is born, their sex determines how they should be treated, how should they be groomed, what opportunities they should be provided with and how they should behave according to the leading gender maxims in their society, besides how far they should be send for higher education.

Due to inequality in the society, daughters and womenfolk experience discrimination, arrogance, vehemence, harassment, and struggle even to get equal remuneration and opportunities. In order to get equal wages, they had to fight tooth and nail and to get a law enacted in their favour. However, the status quo and scenario is yet to change positively and regrettably, ensuring the right till date remains a myth.

#### **10.17.4 GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT**

Men undoubtedly get paid higher and riskier jobs as compared to women. It is generally thought that the job areas where females are dominant over lower wages. As a woman enters an occupation, the glamour of the occupation associated with the job diminishes and men consequently switch over jobs. People also think that women entering specific occupations like nursing, teaching are less competent and are unskilled. Forgetting the past, that it is the bounded duty of the so-called fair sex to feed the weaker sex, they let women to work, and then belittle the jobs they prefer to do.

Gender inequality in relationships has been increasing over the years. It is highlighted when a couple makes a decision about who will resolve the family matters or issues or who will shoulder the responsibility of the family affairs.

Till recent times women are seen as machines producing successor for their families putting their scholastic and career goals in shelves and to raise their children while their husband's work. Regrettably, gender discrimination is considered as a normal factor and not at all considered as violence against women. In a way poverty can be quoted as the prime issue of gender discrimination in the patriarchal Indian society as women economically depend solely on their male counterpart. However, if women happen to be the breadwinners of the family also the status is not going to change for obvious reasons of domination and claim of supremacy.

The Constitution of India which generously extends rights to all citizens talks mainly about equality, dignity, education and freedom from discrimination. In addition to that India has various rulings prevailing the rights of women which runs parallel with the UN

convention. Article 14, 15, 16, 21, 23, 39, 243 and many more, connected with the rights of women comes handy.

### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

1. Discuss the status of women in Indian society in different periods.

.....  
.....  
.....

2. Explain different causes and factors involved in gender discrimination?

.....  
.....  
.....

### **10.18 SUMMARY**

Woman constitutes the key role in the Indian society. Women in ancient India enjoyed high status in society and their condition was good. The ancient and medieval status of women in modern Indian society regarding equality, education, marriage and family life, race and gender, religion and culture is maintained or deteriorated. The Vedic women had economic freedom. Some women were engaged in teaching work. Home was the place of production. Spinning and weaving of clothes were done at home. Women also helped their husbands in agricultural pursuit. In the religious field, wife enjoyed full rights and regularly participated in religious ceremonies with her husband. Religious ceremonies and sacrifices were performed jointly by the husband and wife. Women even participated actively in religious discourses. The status of women improved a little during the Buddhist period though there was no tremendous change. The role of women in Ancient Indian Literature is immense. Ancient India had many learned ladies. The Medieval period (Period between 500 A.D-1500 A.D) proved to be highly disappointing for the Indian women, for their status further deteriorated during this period. Women are not treated with respect as in the Ancient Indian society. Lot of crime against women is seen in the modern society. The Constitutional provisions are not sufficient to get the respectable position in society.

The Rig Vedic Women in India enjoyed high status in society. The women were provided opportunity to attain high intellectual and spiritual standard. In Vedic India, women did not enjoy an inferior status rather they occupied an honorable place. They had ample rights in the social and the religious fields and limited rights in the economic and the political fields. They were not treated as inferior or subordinate but equal to men. We have honored our country as our Motherland “Bharat Mata” and our nationalism has grown up from the seed Mantra “Vande Mataram”. Positions of women in society are the index to the standard

of social organization. Through this study we come to the conclusion that the women have equal participation in human development. She is half of the human race. But she lacks in society. Women are not treated with respect as in the Ancient Indian society. Lot of crime against women is seen in modern society. Constitutional provisions are not sufficient to get the respectable position in society. Some certain changes inside mind-set of women as well as man are required.

In the gender blind society, the crusade towards equality began in the late 19th century with the longing for aping the western culture. This sought to allow women to vote and hold elected office. If the human beings are in existence, mere gender cannot make one inferior to the other on a few scores or not supposed to overrule the other gender or dominate another, christening them the weaker sex. It is a serious abuse of human rights semblance of chauvinism, possessiveness or be it protection. To an extent, the justified self-esteem be given with the thought in mind that women are not doormats but fellow beings; And especially before the eyes of law, all are equal.

In spite of various protective legislations mentioned herein have been passed by the Parliament to remove mistreatment of women and to give them equal status in society, regrettably the discrimination prevails unabated. Though the government of India has passed various acts to ensure gender equality in the country, the quantum of awareness is little that the steps to ensure the implementation of laws have to be zoomed up.

### **10.19 KEY CONCEPTS/WORDS**

**Gender Discrimination:** Gender disparity still exists in India. Being born as women in Indian society, one has to face gender discrimination at all levels. At the household level, females are confined to their household chores, raising children and looking after families, irrespective of their education degrees or job profile. At her workplace: women have limited access to job opportunities and are paid less for the same work. In India, discrimination was deep rooted and it is being exist since ages. In spite of the provision of equal rights to both the sexes, inappropriately sexual category still exists in the country. Time and again studies conducted and results shows gender discrimination is mostly in favour of men in many fields, including the workplace. Gender discrimination is uneven or detrimental conduct of an individual or group of individuals based on gender. Gender discrimination is the unequal or disadvantageous treatment inflicted on someone because they belong to a specific gender. It is usually the women who usually have to face such gender discrimination.

### **10.20 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE**

1. What do you understand by gender discrimination?
2. Elaborate the status of women in Indian society historically.

### **10.21 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

1. Gender Discrimination
2. Status of women in Rig Vedic era
3. Status of women in Buddhist period

### **10.22 SUGGESTED READING**

1. Saravanakumar, A. R. (2016). *Present scenario of women's education in India*. In a National Seminar sponsored by ICHR on Educational Practices in Chola Kingdom (850 – 1279 AD) EPICK – 2016 organized by Department of History & DDE, Alagappa University, Karaikudi
2. Altekar, A. S. (1983). *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*. Banaras: The Culture publication House
3. Devandra, Kiran. (1985). *Status and Position of Women in India. With Special Reference to Women in Contemporary India*. New Delhi: Shakti Books.
4. Sharma, Radakrishna. (1981). *Nationalism, Social Reform and Indian Women*. New Delhi: Janaki Prakashan
5. Krishnaraj, Maithveyi. (1986). *Women's studies in India*. Bombay Popular Prakashan
6. Chaturvedi, Geeta (1985). *Women administration in India*. Jaipur: RBSA Publication
7. Saravanakumar, A. R. (2017). *Difference between human rights and fundamental rights*. In two day National Conference on Human Rights Education: (NCHRE – 2017) organized by Department of Education, Alagappa University, Karaikudi.
8. Sen, S. N. (1988). *Ancient Indian History and Civilization*. New Delhi: Wiley Eastern Limited
9. Dutt, M. N. (1937). *Status of Women*. Calcutta: Mohendra Publishing Committee
10. Menon, Indu, M. (1989). *Status of Muslim Women in India. A case study of Kerala*. New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House
11. Nanda, B. R. (1976). *Indian women from purdha to modernity*. New Delhi: Vikas Publications
12. Cormack, M. (1953). *The Hindu Women*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.
13. Clark, Alice. (1987). Social demography of excess female mortality in India: New directions. In *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22(17), 12-21
14. Desai, Neera. (1977). *Women in Modern India*. Mumbai: Vora Company
15. Forb, Geraldine. (1998). *Women in Modern India*, Cambridge University: Replica Press
16. Krishna Raj, Maitreyi (ed) 1986. *Women's Studies in India: Some Perspective*. Popular Prakashan: Bombay
17. Oakley, Ann 1981. *Subject Women*. Martin Robertson: Oxford Wadley, S. 1988. "Women and the Hindu Tradition", in Rehana Gadially (ed.) *Women in Indian Society*. Sage Publications: New Delhi.