

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Concepts of Unity and Diversity
 - 1.2.1 Meaning of Diversity
 - 1.2.2 Meaning of Unity
- 1.3 Forms of Diversity in India
 - 1.3.1 Racial Diversity
 - 1.3.2 Linguistic Diversity
 - 1.3.3 Religious Diversity
 - 1.3.4 Caste Diversity
- 1.4 Bonds of Unity in India
 - 1.4.1 Geo-political Unity
 - 1.4.2 The Institution of Pilgrimage
 - 1.4.3 Tradition of Accommodation
 - 1.4.4 Tradition of Interdependence
- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 Keywords
- 1.7 Further Reading
- 1.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you should be able to

- explain the concept of unity and diversity
- describe the forms and bases of diversity in India
- examine the bonds and mechanisms of unity in India
- provide an explanation to our option for a composite culture model rather than a uniformity model of unity.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with unity and diversity in India. You may have heard a lot about unity and diversity in India. But do you know what exactly it means? Here we will explain to you the meaning and content of this phrase. For this purpose the unit has been divided into three sections.

In the first section, we will specify the meaning of the two terms, diversity and unity.

In the second section, we will illustrate the forms of diversity in Indian society. For detailed treatment we will focus on the four forms of diversity, race, language, religion and caste.

In the third section, we will bring out the bonds of unity in India. These are geopolitical, the culture of pilgrimage, tradition of accommodation, and tradition of interdependence.

Above all, we will note that the unity of India is born of a composite culture rather than a uniform culture.

1.2 CONCEPTS OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY

We begin by clarifying the meaning of the terms diversity and unity.

1.2.1 Meaning of Diversity

Ordinarily diversity means differences. For our purposes, however, it means something more than mere differences. It means collective differences, that is, differences which mark off one group of people from another. These differences may be of any sort: biological, religious, linguistic etc. On the basis of biological differences, for example, we have racial diversity. On the basis of religious differences, similarly, we have religious diversity. The point to note is that diversity refers to collective differences.

The term diversity is opposite of uniformity. Uniformity means similarity of some sort that characterises a people. 'Uni' refers to one; 'form' refers to the common ways. So when there is something common to all the people, we say they show uniformity. When students of a school, members of the police or the army wear the same type of dress, we say they are in 'uniform'. Like diversity, thus, uniformity is also a collective concept. When a group of people share a similar characteristic, be it language or religion or anything else, it shows uniformity in that respect. But when we have groups of people hailing from different races, religions and cultures, they represent diversity. D.N. Majumdar wrote a book with the title, *Races and Cultures of India*. Mark the words in the plural: Races (not Race); Cultures (not Culture).

Thus, diversity means variety. For all practical purposes it means variety of groups and cultures. We have such a variety in abundance in India. We have here a variety of races, of religions, of languages, of castes and of cultures. For the same reason India is known for its socio-cultural diversity.

1.2.2 Meaning of Unity

Unity means integration. It is a social psychological condition. It connotes a sense of one-ness, a sense of we-ness. It stands for the bonds, which hold the members of a society together.

There is a difference between unity and uniformity. Uniformity presupposes similarity, unity does not. Thus, unity may or may not be based on uniformity. Unity may be born out of uniformity. Durkheim calls this type of unity a mechanical solidarity. We find this type of unity in tribal societies and in

traditional societies. However, unity may as well be based on differences. It is such unity, which is described by Durkheim as organic solidarity. This type of unity characterises modern societies. Let us see it in a diagram

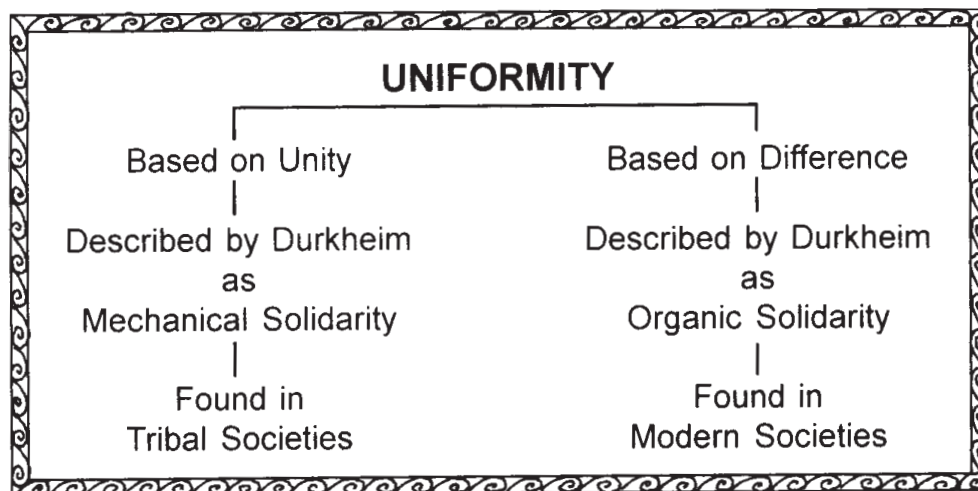


Fig. 1.1: Two types of unity

The point to note is that unity does not have to be based on uniformity. Unity, as we noted earlier, implies integration. Integration does not mean absence of differences. Indeed, it stands for the ties that bind the diverse groups with one another.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Mark which of the following is the correct meaning of diversity?
 - a) Differences between two individuals
 - b) Similarities among the members of a group
 - c) Dissimilarities among groups
- ii) Mark which of the following is the correct example of social diversity?
 - a) Temperamental differences between men and women
 - b) Property differences between the two neighbours
 - c) Differences of religious belongingness between two groups.
- iii) Indicate which of the following statements are true and which are false. Use T for True and F for False.
 - a) Unity means absence of differences.
 - b) Unity is opposite of diversity.
 - c) Uniformity is a necessary condition for unity.
 - d) Unity in diversity is a contradiction in terms.
 - e) Mechanical solidarity is based on uniformity.
 - f) Unity signifies integration.

1.3 FORMS OF DIVERSITY IN INDIA

As hinted earlier, we find in India diversity of various sorts. Some of its important forms are the following: racial, linguistic, religious and caste-based. Let us deal with each one of them in some detail.

1.3.1 Racial Diversity

You may have seen people of different races in India. A race is a group of people with a set of distinctive physical features such as skin colour, type of nose, form of hair, etc.

Herbert Risley had classified the people of India into seven racial types. These are (i) Turko-Iranian, (ii) Indo-Aryan, (iii) Scytho-Dravidian, (iv) Aryo-Dravidian, (v) Mongolo-Dravidian, (vi) Mongoloid, and (vii) Dravidian. These seven racial types can be reduced to three basic types—the Indo-Aryan, the Mongolian and the Dravidian. In his opinion the last two types would account for the racial composition of tribal India. He was the supervisor of the census operations held in India in 1891 and it was data from this census, which founded the basis of this classification. As, it was based mainly on language-types rather than physical characteristics; Risley's classification was criticised for its shortcomings.

Other administrative officers and anthropologists, like J.H. Hutton, D.N. Majumdar and B.S. Guha, have given the latest racial classification of the Indian people based on further researches in this field. Hutton's and Guha's classifications are based on 1931 census operations. B.S. Guha (1952) has identified six racial types (1) the Negrito, (2) the Proto Australoid, (3) the Mongoloid, (4) the Mediterranean, (5) the Western Brachycephals, and (6) the Nordic. Besides telling you what the various types denote, we shall not go into the details of this issue, because that will involve us in technical matters pertaining to physical anthropology. Here, we need only to be aware of the diversity of racial types in India.

Negritos are the people who belong to the black racial stock as found in Africa. They have black skin colour, frizzle hair, thick lips, etc. In India some of the tribes in South India, such as the Kadar, the Irula and the Paniyan have distinct Negrito strain.

The **Proto-Australoid** races consist of an ethnic group, which includes the Australian aborigines and other peoples of southern Asia and Pacific Islands. Representatives of this group are the Ainu of Japan, the Vedda of Sri Lanka, and the Sakai of Malaysia. In India the tribes of Middle India belong to this strain. Some of these tribes are the Ho of Singhbhum, Bihar, and the Bhil of the Vindhya ranges.

The **Mongoloids** are a major racial stock native to Asia, including the peoples of northern and eastern Asia. For example, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Eskimos, and often American Indians also belong to this race. In India, the North Eastern regions have tribes of **brachycephalic** Mongoloid strain. A slightly different kind of Mongoloid racial stock is found in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Mikir-Bodo group of tribes and the Angami Nagas represent the best examples of Mongoloid racial composition in India.

The **Mediterranean** races relate to the **caucasian** physical type, i.e., the white race. It is characterised by medium or short stature, slender build, long head with **cephalic index** (the ratio multiplied by 100 of the maximum breadth of the head to its maximum length) of less than 75 and dark (continental) complexion.

The **Western Brachycephals** are divided into the following three sub-groups: (1) The **Alpenoid** are characterised by broad head, medium stature and light skin, found amongst Bania castes of Gujarat, the Kayasthas of Bengal, etc. (ii) The **Dinaric**- They are characterised by broad head, long nose, tall stature and dark skin colour, found amongst the Brahmin of Bengal, the non-Brahmin of Karnataka, (iii) The **Armenoid**- They are characterised by features similar to Dinaric. The Armenoid have a more marked shape of the back of head, a prominent and narrow nose. The Parsi of Bombay show the typical characteristics of the Armenoid race (Das 1988: 223).

Finally, the **Nordic** races belong to the physical type characterised by tall stature, long head, light skin and hair, and blue eyes. They are found in Scandinavian countries, Europe. In India, they are found in different parts of north of the country, especially in Punjab and Rajputana. The Kho of Chitral, the Red Kaffirs, the Khatash are some of the representatives of this type. Research suggests that the Nordics came from the north, probably from south east Russia and south west Siberia, through central Asia to India. (Das 1988: 223).

1.3.2 Linguistic Diversity

Do you know how many languages are there in India? While the famous linguist Grierson noted 179 languages and 544 dialects, the 1971 census on the other hand, reported 1652 languages in India which are spoken as mother tongue. Not all these languages are, however, equally widespread. Many of them are tribal speeches and these are spoken by less than one percent of the total population. Here you can see that in India there is a good deal of linguistic diversity.

Only 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 by 39.85 percent of the total population; Bengali, Telugu and Marathi by around 8 percent each; Tamil and Urdu by 6.26 and 5.22 percent, respectively; and the rest by less than 5 percent each as per 1991 census report (India 2003).

The above constitutionally recognised languages belong to two linguistic families: Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu are the four major Dravidian languages. The languages of Indo-Aryan family are spoken by 75 percent of India's total population while the languages of Dravidian family are spoken by 20 percent.

This linguistic diversity notwithstanding, we have always had a sort of link language, though it has varied from age to age. In ancient times it was Sanskrit, in medieval age it was Arabic or Persian and in modern times we have Hindi and English as official languages.

1.3.3 Religious Diversity

India is a land of multiple religions. We find here followers of various faiths, particularly of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, among others. You know it that Hinduism is the dominant religion of India. According to the census of 1981 it is professed by 82.64 percent of the total population. Next comes Islam, which is practised by 11.35 percent. This is followed by Christianity having a following of 2.43 percent, Sikhism reported by 1.96 percent, Buddhism by 0.71 percent and Jainism by 0.48 percent. The religions with lesser following are Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Bahaism.

While Hinduism saw a slight reduction in the percentage of their followers by the year 1991, most of the other religions increased their strength though by very narrow margin. According to the 1991 census the Hinduism has 82.41 percent followers to the total population. 11.67 percent followed Islam and 2.32 percent followed Christianity. Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism followed by 1.99, 0.77 and 0.41 percent, respectively. And 0.43 reported to follow other religions. (*Census of India 1995, Series 1, Paper 1 on Religion*).

Then there are sects within each religion. Hinduism, for example, has many sects including Shaiva, Shakta and Vaishnava. Add to them the sects born or religious reform movements such as Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj, Ram Krishna Mission. More recently, some new cults have come up such as Radhaswami, Saibaba, etc. Similarly, Islam is divided into Shiya and Sunni; Sikhism into Namdhari and Nirankari; Jainism into Digambar and Shvetambar; and Buddhism into Hinayan and Mahayan.

While Hindu and Muslim are found in almost all parts of India, the remaining minority religions have their pockets of concentration. Christians have their strongholds in the three southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and in the north-eastern states like Nagaland and Meghalaya. Sikhs are concentrated largely in Punjab, Buddhists in Maharashtra, and Jains are mainly spread over Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat, but also found in most urban centres throughout the country.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) List, in one line, some of the major forms of diversity found in India?
.....
- ii) According to Grierson, how many dialects and languages are spoken in India?
.....
.....
- iii) What are the various religions found in India? Use two lines for your answer.
.....
.....

1.3.4 Caste Diversity

India, as you know, is a country of castes. The term caste is generally used in two senses: sometimes in the sense of *Varna* and sometimes in the sense of *Jati*. (i) *Varna* refers to a segment of the four-fold division of Hindu society based on functional criterion. The four *Varna* are Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra with their specialised functions as learning, defence, trade and manual service. The *Varna* hierarchy is accepted all over India. (ii) *Jati* refers to a hereditary endogamous status group practising a specific traditional occupation. You may be surprised to know that there are more than 3,000 *jati* in India. These are hierarchically graded in different ways in different regions.

It may also be noted that the practice of caste system is not confined to Hindus alone. We find castes among the Muslim, Christian, Sikh as well as other communities. You may have heard of the hierarchy of Shaikh, Saiyed, Mughal, Pathan among the Muslim. Furthermore, there are castes like teli (oil pressure), dhobi (washerman), darjee (tailor), etc. among the Muslim. Similarly, caste consciousness among the Christian in India is not unknown. Since a vast majority of Christians in India are converted from Hindu fold, the converts have carried the caste system into Christianity. Among the Sikh again you have so many castes including *Jat* Sikh and *Majahabi* Sikh (lower castes). In view of this you can well imagine the extent of caste diversity in India.

In addition to the above described major forms of diversity, we have diversity of many other sorts like settlement patterns - tribal, rural, urban; marriage and kinship patterns along religious and regional lines; cultural patterns reflecting regional variations, and so on. These forms of diversity will become clear to you as you proceed along Blocks 1 to 7 of this course.

Activity 1

What language do you speak and to which stock of languages does it belong? Find out what language/s is/are spoken in the ten families living on the left side of your own family. Divide them according to the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian stock of languages. Write down all this information on a separate sheet. Compare your findings with those of other students at your study centre.

1.4 BONDS OF UNITY IN INDIA

In the preceding section we have illustrated the diversity of India. But that is not the whole story. 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. Census Commissioner in 1911, Herbert Risley (1969), was right when he observed: "Beneath the manifold diversity of physical and social type, language, custom and religion which strikes the observer in India there can still be discerned a certain underlying uniformity of life from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin". We will describe the bonds of unity of India in this section. These are geo-political unity, the institution of pilgrimage, tradition of accommodation, and tradition of interdependence. We will now describe each of them in that order.

1.4.1 Geo-political Unity

The first bond of unity of India is found in its geo-political integration. India is known for its geographical unity marked by the Himalayas in the north end and the oceans on the other sides. Politically India is now a sovereign state. The same constitution and same parliament govern every part of it. We share the same political culture marked by the norms of democracy, secularism and socialism.

Although it has not been recognised till recently, the geo-political unity of India was always visualized by our seers and rulers. The expressions of this consciousness of the geo-political unity of India are found in Rig-Veda, in Sanskrit literature, in the edicts of Asoka, in Buddhist monuments and in various other sources. The ideal of geo-political unity of India is also reflected in the concepts of *Bharatvarsha* (the old indigenous classic name for India), *Chakravarti* (emperor), and *Ekchhatradhipatya* (under one rule).

1.4.2 The Institution of Pilgrimage

Another source of unity of India lies in what is known as temple culture, which is reflected in the network of shrines and sacred places. From Badrinath and Kedarnath in the north to Rameshwaram in the south, Jagannath Puri in the east to Dwaraka in the west the religious shrines and holy rivers are spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. Closely related to them is the age-old culture of pilgrimage, which has always moved people to various parts of the country and fostered in them a sense of geo-cultural unity.

As well as being an expression of religious sentiment, pilgrimage is also an expression of love for the motherland, a sort of mode of worship of the country. It has played a significant part in promoting interaction and cultural affinity among the people living in different parts of India. Pilgrimage can, therefore, rightly be viewed as a mechanism of geo-cultural unity.

1.4.3 Tradition of Accommodation

Have you heard of the syncretic quality of Indian culture, its remarkable quality of accommodation and tolerance? There is ample evidence of it. The first evidence of it lies in the elastic character of Hinduism, the majority religion of India. It is common knowledge that Hinduism is not a homogeneous religion, a religion having one God, one Book and one Temple. Indeed, it can be best described as a federation of faiths. **Polytheistic** (having multiple deities) in character, it goes to the extent of accommodating village level deities and tribal faiths.

For the same reason, sociologists have distinguished two broad forms of Hinduism: sanskritic and popular. Sanskritic is that which is found in the texts (religious books like Vedas, etc.) and popular is that which is found in the actual life situation of the vast masses. Robert Redfield has called these two forms as great tradition of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and the little tradition of worship of the village deity. And everything passes for Hinduism.

What it shows is that Hinduism has been an open religion, a receptive and absorbing religion, an encompassing religion. It is known for its quality of openness and accommodation.

Another evidence of it lies in its apathy to conversion. Hinduism is not a **proselytising** religion. That is, it does not seek converts. Nor has it ordinarily resisted other religions to seek converts from within its fold. This quality of accommodation and tolerance has saved the way to the coexistence of several faiths in India.

Mechanisms of coexistence of people of different faiths have been in existence here for long. Take for example, the case of Hindu-Muslim amity. Hindus and Muslims have always taken part in each other's functions, festivities and feasts. How did they do it? They did it by evolving the mechanism of providing for a separate hearth and a set of vessels for each other so as to respect each other's religious sensibility. This always facilitated mutual visiting and sharing in each other's joy and grief. They have also done so by showing regards for each other's saints and holy men. Thus, both Hindus and Muslims have shown reverence to the saints and Pirs of each other. And this holds as well for the coexistence of other religious groups like Sikh, Jain, Christian and so on.

Activity 2

Write the answers of the following questions on a separate sheet of paper and discuss them with other students at your study centre.

- i) Give, at least one example, in each of the following areas, to show the blending of Hindu and Muslim cultures in India.
 - a) architecture
 - b) literature
 - c) music
 - d) religion
- ii) Have you recently attended a wedding in a community other than your own? What has struck you as a markedly different feature, which is, absent during a wedding in your community?

1.4.4 Tradition of Interdependence

We have had a remarkable tradition of interdependence, which has held us together throughout centuries. One manifestation of it is found in the form of *Jajmani* system, i.e., a system of functional interdependence of castes. The term "*jajman*" refers generally to the patron or recipient of specialised services. 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. *Jajmani* relations were conspicuous in village life, as they entailed ritual matters, social support as well as economic exchange. The whole of a local social order was involved (the people and their values) in such *jajmani* links. A patron had *jajmani* relations with members of a high caste (like a Brahmin priest whose services he needed for rituals). He also required the services of specialists from the lower *jati* to perform those necessary tasks like washing of dirty clothes, cutting of hair, cleaning the rooms and toilets, delivery of the child 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.

The *jajmani* relations usually involved multiple kinds of payment and obligations as well as multiple functions.

We shall also discuss the *jajmani* system in the next unit on Rural Social Structure. Here it will suffice to note that no caste was self-sufficient. If anything, it depended for many things on other castes. In a sense, each caste was a functional group in that it rendered a specified service to other caste groups. *Jajmani* system is that mechanism which has formalised and regulated this functional interdependence.

Furthermore, castes cut across the boundaries of religious communities. We have earlier mentioned that notions of caste are found in all the religious communities in India. In its actual practice, thus, the institution of *jajmani* provides for inter linkages between people of different religious groups. Thus a Hindu may be dependent for the washing of his clothes on a Muslim washerman. Similarly, a Muslim may be dependent for the stitching of his clothes on a Hindu tailor, and vice-versa.

Efforts have been made from time to time by sensitive and sensible leaders of both the communities to synthesise Hindu and Muslim traditions so as to bring the two major communities closer to each other. Akbar, for example, founded a new religion, *Din-e-Ilahi*, combining best of both the religions. The contributions made by Kabir, Eknath, Guru Nanak, and more recently Mahatma Gandhi, are well known in this regard.

Similarly, in the field of art and architecture we find such a happy blending of Hindu and Muslim styles. What else is this if not a proof of mutual appreciation for each other's culture?

Quite in line with these traditional bonds of unity, the Indian state in post-Independence era has rightly opted for a composite culture model of national unity rather than a uniform culture model. The composite culture model provides for the preservation and growth of plurality of cultures within the framework of an integrated nation. Hence the significance of our choice of the norm of secularism, implying equal regard for all religions, as our policy of national integration.

The above account of the unity of India should not be taken to mean that we have always had a smooth sailing in matters of national unity, with no incidents of caste, communal or linguistic riots. Nor should it be taken to mean that the divisive and secessionist tendencies have been altogether absent. There have been occasional riots, at times serious riots. For example, who can forget the communal riots of partition days, the linguistic riots in Tamil Nadu in protest against the imposition of Hindi, the riots in Gujarat during 1980s between scheduled and non-scheduled castes and communal riots of 2002? The redeeming feature, however, is that the bonds of unity have always emerged stronger than the forces of disintegration.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) List the bonds of unity in India, in the space given below.
.....
.....
.....

ii) Indicate the mechanism of the following set of terms, in the space provided against each.

- a) geo-political unity
- b) geo-cultural unity
- c) religious accommodation
- d) social interdependence

iii) Distinguish between great tradition and little tradition, in the space given below.

.....

.....

.....

iv) Distinguish between composite culture and uniform culture models of national integration, in the space provided below.

.....

.....

.....

1.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have studied that diversity refers to i) patterned differences between groups, ii) socio-cultural variety, and iii) lack of uniformity. Unity means integration that may or may not be based on uniformity, a sense of oneness arising from the bonds that hold the members together or that bind the diverse groups with one another.

You have also studied that there are major forms of diversity in India: race, language, religion and caste.

Underlying all the diversities there is a remarkable measure of unity. We have noted four bonds of unity in India: geo-political, geo-cultural, religious accommodation and functional interdependence. Closely related to these bonds are four mechanisms of integration: constitution, pilgrimage, provision of a separate hearth, cook and kitchenware for members of other religious community, and *jajmani*.

Finally, we have noted that India has opted for a composite culture model of unity rather than uniform cultural model.

1.6 KEYWORDS

Brachycephalic

In terms of anthropometric measures, heads with a breadth of 80 cephalic index and over are categorised as broad or brachycephalic. Those with an index under 80, but not under 75, are classified

Caucasian	Relating to the white race of mankind as classified according to physical features.
Cephalic Index	The proportion of the breadth of the head to its length is expressed as a percentage and it is called the cephalic index.
Mechanical Solidarity	The condition of unity or of one-ness in a society may be based on the elements of uniformity or similarities. Such condition is described by Durkheim as mechanical solidarity.
Mediterranean	Relating to a physical type of the Caucasian race characterised by medium or short stature, slender build, long head with cephalic index of less than 75 and dark complexion.
Mongoloid	A major racial stock native to Asia including peoples of northern and eastern Asia. For example, Malaysians, Chinese, Japanese, Eskimos, and often American Indians also belong to this race. In India, besides several others the Naga tribes in north east belong to this race.
Negrito	A people belonging to the African branch of the black race. In India, the south Indian tribes like Kadar, the Irula, etc. are said to belong to this race.
Nordic	Relating to the germanic peoples of northern Europe and specially of Scandinavia. This is a physical type characterised by tall stature, long head, light skin and hair, and blue eyes. In India, they are found in different parts of north of the country such as Punjab and Rajputana.
Organic Solidarity	The condition of unity or one-ness in a society may arise out of differences of socio-cultural characteristics. Such unity as described by Durkheim as organic solidarity.
Polytheistic	Relating to the worship of more than one god.
Proselytising	Converting from one religion to another.
Proto-Australoid	Relating to an ethnic group including the Australian aborigines and other peoples of southern Asia and Pacific islands, including the Ainu of Japan the Vedda of Sri Lanka. In India, the Chotanagpur tribes of Bihar called Ho and Bhil are considered to be of this race.

- i) the **Alpenoid** is characterised by broad head with rounded occiput (the back part of the head or skull) prominent nose, medium stature, round face. Skin colour is light; hair on face and body is abundant, body is thickly set. This type is found among the Bania of Gujarat, the Kathi of Kathiawar, the Kayastha of Bengal etc.
- ii) Amongst the **Dinaric** people, the head is broad with rounded occiput and high vault; nose is very long, stature is tall, face is long, forehead is receding; skin colour is darker, eyes and hair are also dark. This type is represented in Bengal, Orissa and Coorg. The Brahmin of Bengal and the Kanarese Brahmin of Mysore are also some of the representatives.
- iii) The **Armenoid** is in most of the characters like the Dinaric. In the former, the shape of occiput is more marked and the nose is more prominent and narrow. The Parsi of Bombay show typical Armenoid characteristics.

1.7 FURTHER READING

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Mukerjee, Radha Kumud 1954. *The Fundamental Unity of India*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan: Bombay, pp. 17-22

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Srinivas, M.N. 1969. *Social Structure*. Publications Division, Government of India: New Delhi

1.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) C
- ii) C

iii) Statements a, b, c and d are false. Statements e and f are true.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Racial, linguistic, religious and caste-based.
- ii) 179 languages and 544 dialects.
- iii) Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Bahaism.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Geo-political, geo-cultural, tradition of accommodation, interdependence.
- ii)
 - a) constitution
 - b) pilgrimage
 - c) separate cook and kitchenware
 - d) *jajmani*
- iii) Great tradition is sanskritic, based on sacred texts and scriptures, and elitist. Little tradition, on the other hand, is oral, village-based and popular.
- iv) Composite culture model provides for cultural pluralism while uniform culture model implies dominance of one culture.

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The Nature of Rural Social Structure
 - 2.2.1 Social Structure
 - 2.2.2 Rural Social Structure in India
- 2.3 Family and Kinship
 - 2.3.1 Family in Rural India
 - 2.3.2 Changes in Family
 - 2.3.3 Lineage and Kinship
- 2.4 Caste Groups
 - 2.4.1 Caste
 - 2.4.2 Sub-caste
 - 2.4.3 Changes in the Caste System
- 2.5 Agrarian Class Structure
- 2.6 The Village
 - 2.6.1 The Issue of Village Autonomy
 - 2.6.2 The *Jajmani* System
 - 2.6.3 Changes in the Village Power Structure and Leadership
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Keywords
- 2.9 Further Reading
- 2.10 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the time you finish reading this unit you should be able to

- identify various elements of rural social structure in India, in particular the family, caste, class and village
- describe the characteristic features of these four elements of rural social structure
- state and explain the important changes in the family and the caste system
- describe the nature of the village community in India and explain the changes therein.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In unit 1 on Unity and Diversity, you learnt about the cross-cutting networks of uniformity and diversity of races, castes, religions and languages etc. You

will note that as the knowledge of this aspect is crucial to study Indian society, we discuss it through all the units of ESO-12.

Unit 2 on Rural Social Structures deals with the major element of diversity of social life in India. Rural way of living is the dominant pattern of social life in developing countries like India in contrast to the predominant urban style in the developed countries. Social scientists, especially sociologists and social anthropologists, have made important contributions to the understanding of rural social structure.

In section 2.2 of this unit, our first effort is to understand the concept of **social structure** and then relate it to rural social structure in India. The specific components of rural social structure in India have been identified as family, kinship, caste, class and village. Further, in section 2.3, important features of family and kinship in India have been described and the nature of emerging changes in family discussed. Section 2.4 deals with the important characteristics of the caste system against the backdrop of the *varna* model of society. The pattern of change in the caste system has been taken note of. In section 2.5, the character of agrarian classes during the colonial and post-colonial period has been discussed. Section 2.6 examines the exaggerated notion of village autonomy. Moreover, '*jajmani*' system, which is an important social institution, has been discussed. In addition, we have tried to discern the pattern of changes in the nature of power structure and leadership in villages in India. Lastly, section 2.7 gives a summary of this unit.

2.2 THE NATURE OF RURAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In order to gain an understanding of rural social structure, we first clarify what we mean by social structure. Then we relate this understanding of the concept to ethnographic description of society in the rural areas of India.

2.2.1 Social Structure

Human world is composed of individuals. Individuals interact with one another for the fulfillment of their needs. In this process, they occupy certain status and roles in social life with accompanying rights and obligations. Their social behaviour is patterned and gets associated with certain norms and values, which provide them guidance in social interaction. There emerge various social units, such as groups, community, associations and institutions in society as a product of social intercourse in human life.

In this scenario, social structure is conceived as the pattern of inter-related statuses and roles found in a society, constituting a relatively stable set of social relations. It is the organised pattern of the inter-related rights and obligations of persons and groups in a system of interaction.

2.2.2 Rural Social Structure in India

India is a country of ancient civilisation that goes back to the Indus Valley Civilisation, which flourished during the third millennium B.C. Since then except for a brief interlude during the Rig-Vedic period (Circa 1500-1000 B.C.) when the urban centres were overrun, rural and urban centres have co-existed in India.

Rural and urban centres share some common facets of life. They show interdependence especially in the sphere of economy, urbanward migration, and townsmen or city dwellers' dependence on villages for various products (e.g., foodgrains, milk, vegetables, raw materials for industry) and increasing dependence of villagers on towns for manufactured goods and market. Despite this interdependence between the two there are certain distinctive features which separate them from each other in terms of their size, demographic composition, cultural moorings, style of life, economy, employment and social relations.

Rural people live in settled villages. Three main types of settlement patterns have been observed in rural areas:

- i) The most common type is the nucleated village found all over the country. Here, a tight cluster of houses is surrounded by the fields of the villagers as shown in figure 2.1. An outlying hamlet or several satellite hamlets are also found to be attached to some villages in this case.

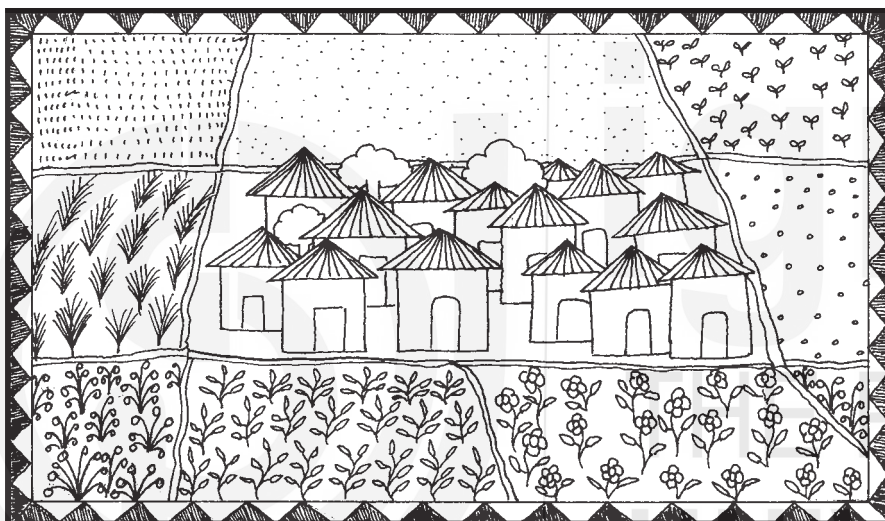


Fig. 2.1: Nucleated type of settlement pattern

- ii) Secondly, there are linear settlements in some parts of the country, e.g. in Kerala, in Konkan and in the delta lands of Bengal. In such settlements, houses are strung out, each surrounded by its own compound. However, there is little to physically demarcate where one village ends and another begins.
- iii) The third type of settlement is simply a scattering of homesteads or clusters of two or three houses. In this case also physical demarcation of villages is not clear. Such settlements are found in hill areas, in the Himalayan foothills, in the highlands of Gujarat and in the Satpura range of Maharashtra.

Further, we find that the size of village population is small and density of population low in comparison with towns and cities. India is rightly called a country of villages. According to 1981 Census, there were 4029 towns and 5,57,137 inhabited villages in the country. By the year 1991 this number increased to 4689 towns and 5,80,781 villages. According to 2001 census there are 5161 towns and 6,38,365 villages (including uninhabited villages) in

India (*Census of India* (provisional), 2001). Moreover, as per 2001 census figures about 72 percent of the total population live in villages. Further, rural life is characterised by direct relationship of people to nature i.e., land, animal and plant life. Agriculture is their main occupation. For example, in India agriculture provides livelihood to about 58 percent of the labour force.

Long enduring rural social institutions in India continue to be family, kinship, caste, class, and village. They have millennia old historical roots and structures. They encompass the entire field of life: social, economic, political and cultural-of the rural people. The complexity of social norms and values, statuses and roles, rights and obligations is reflected in them. Therefore, now we will discuss them separately in the subsequent sections.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Define, in four lines, the concept of social structure.

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- ii) According to the 2001 census, how many villages are there in India? Use one line for your answer.

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- iii) How many types of settlement patterns are there in rural areas? Describe one of them in about four lines.

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2.3 FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Family is the basic unit of almost all societies. It is especially true in India where the very identity of a person is dependent on the status and position of his or her family and its social status.

2.3.1 Family in Rural India

Family is one of the most important social institution which constitutes the rural society. It caters to needs and performs functions, which are essential for the continuity, integration and change in the social system, such as, reproduction, production and socialisation.

Broadly speaking there are two types of family: (a) nuclear family consisting of husband, wife and unmarried children, and (b) joint or extended family comprising a few more kins than the nuclear type. Important dimensions of

'jointness' of family are coresidentiality, commensality, coparcenary, generation depth (three), and fulfillment of obligation towards kin and sentimental aspect. Coresidentiality means that members of a family live under the same roof. Commensality implies that they eat together i.e., have a common kitchen. Coparcenary means that they have joint ownership of property. Further, generation depth encompasses three generations or more, i.e., grandfather, father and the son or more. Members of the family also have obligations toward their kin. Moreover, they have a sentimental attachment to the ideal of joint family.

Rural family works as the unit of economic, cultural, religious, and political activities. Collectivity of the family is emphasized in social life, and feelings of individualism and personal freedom are very limited. Marriage is considered an inter-familial matter rather than an inter-personal affair. It is governed by rules of kinship, which are discussed in sub-section 2.3.3 of this unit.

2.3.2 Changes in Family

Traditional joint family occupied a predominant position in rural areas in India. It was largely prevalent among the landed gentry and priestly caste. But nuclear family also existed in India. Lower caste families whose main occupation was agricultural labour were mostly nuclear. However, they appreciated the ideal of joint family.

Various studies have been conducted to diagnose the change taking place in family in India with increasing industrialisation and urbanisation, changes in economy, technology, politics, education and law in modern times. There are two approaches. The first assumes that the family structure in India has undergone the process of unilinear change from the joint to nuclear form as in the West.

Secondly, I.P.Desai (1964), S.C. Dube (1955), T.N.Madan (1965), and others argue that it is necessary to observe family as a process. They adopt **developmental cycle** approach to understand changes in the family structure in India. They advocate that the presence of nuclear family households should be viewed as units, which will be growing into joint families when the sons grow up and marry. The 'developmental cycle' approach implies that a family structure keeps expanding, with birth and marriage, and depleting with death and partition in a cyclical order during a period of time.

Further, empirical studies show inter-regional and intra-regional variations in the distribution of family types. This is evident from the study by Pauline Kolenda (1967) who has made a comparative study of family structures in thirteen regions of India on the basis of 32 publications. In Uttar Pradesh, among the Thakurs of Senapur, joint families constitute 74.4 percent and nuclear families only 25.5 percent; but untouchables have 34 percent joint families and 66 percent nuclear families. In the hilly region of the state of Uttar Pradesh in Sirkanda village, where most of the population is that of Rajputs, the joint families comprise only 39 percent and there are 61 percent nuclear families. In Maharashtra, Badlapur village has 14 percent joint and 86 percent nuclear families. In Andhra Pradesh, in Shamirpet village the proportion of joint families is 18.5 percent and that of nuclear is 81.5 percent. Table 2.1 shows a summarisation of these figures.

Table 2.1: Inter-regional and Intra-regional variations in the distributions of family types

State/Region	Village	Percent of Families	
		Joint	Nuclear
U.P. (Plains)	Senapur (Thakur)	74.5	25.5
“ (Hills)	(Lower Caste)	34	66
	Sirkanda (Rajput)	39	61
Maharashtra	Badalpur	14	86
Andhra Pradesh (Telangana)	Shamirpet	18.5	81.5

Here, Kolenda has made a few generalisations. She observes that between regions, the rural areas of the Gangetic plains have higher proportion of joint families than those in the Central India, Maharashtra, Andhra and Tamil Nadu. In the Gangetic plains itself, joint families are more common among the Rajputs and nuclear families predominate among the lower castes. For further details on the joint and the nuclear family see unit 6 of Block 2 of this course.

It has been observed that with the changes in the larger society, the structure and function of joint family in India are undergoing a reconciliatory pattern of change. The traditional world-view of the joint family still prevails.

Activity 1

Describe various stages of your own family in terms of its developmental cycle. Start with the stage when you were born and its development in terms of family it has so far had.

2.3.3 Lineage and Kinship

Within the village, a group of families tracing descent from a common ancestor with knowledge of all the links constitute a lineage; and the children of the same generation behave as brothers and sisters. They form a unit for celebrating major ritual events. Sometimes the word *Kul* is used to describe these units. Usually these families live in closeness and a guest of one (e.g. a son-in-law) could be treated as such in all these families. These bonds of families may go back to 3 to 7 generations. People do not marry within this group. Beyond the known links, there are further connections ? people know the common ancestor but are unable to trace every link. Such families use a more generic term like being “*bhai-bandh*” of one another. They are also exogamous. The word *Gotra* or clan may be used for them.

Adrian Mayer (1960) studied a village in Malwa and distinguished between the **kindred of cooperation** and **kindred of recognition**. The first of these is the smaller unit, where cooperation is offered and taken without formalities. The second one is a larger unit that comes together on specific occasions through information and invitation. These relations can be spread over several

villages for each caste. This is why Mayer studied them within a caste and its region, a point that we need to remember in order to understand the spread of a caste/subcaste across villages and towns. This is also known as horizontal spread of the caste.

With regard to rules of marriage there are some differences between the north and south India. These have been pointed out in unit 6, Block 2 of the first elective course in sociology and will be discussed again in units 8 and 9 of Block 2 of this course. Irawati Karve (1965) noted these differences. Later, an American anthropologist, David Mandelbaum, included them in his popular work on *Society in India* (1972). He reiterates the position “broadly put, in the South a family tries to strengthen existing kin ties through marriage, while in the North a family tends to affiliate with a separate set of people to whom it is not already linked”.

This is witnessed in the prevalence of the rules of **village exogamy and ‘gotra’ exogamy** in the North but not in the South. In the North, nobody is permitted to marry in his/her own village. Marriage alliances are concluded with the people from other villages belonging to similar caste. But no such proscriptions exist in the South. Further, in the North one cannot marry within his/her own *gotra*. On the contrary, cross cousin marriage i.e., marriage between the children of brother and sister, is preferred in the South. Thus, there is a centrifugal tendency in North India, i.e., the direction of marriage is outward or away from the group. In contrast in South India we find a centripetal tendency in making marriage alliances and building kinship ties. In other words, marriages take place inwardly or within the group.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) List some of the important dimensions of “jointness” of a family. Use about four lines.

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- ii) Define, in four lines, the concept of lineage.

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- iii) What is meant by the ‘developmental cycle’ approach to family in India? Describe it in about four lines.

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2.4 CASTE GROUPS

So far we have learnt about smaller units of social structure, groups within which marriage is avoided by tradition. These groups can be called exogamous ('gamy' refers to marriage, and 'exo' means outside); thus exogamy is the practice of marrying outside a group. When members of a group marry within a group, it is called endogamy (endo= within, inside). Thus, family, lineage and clan are exogamous groups. Sub-castes/castes are endogamous groups and we turn our attention to these groups.

2.4.1 Caste

People usually marry within the caste or sub-caste. Members of a caste trace their origin from a common ancestor — historical, mythical or divine. The properties of that ancestor are worthy of being remembered by people; and these are well known to such an extent that a mere mention of that name is enough to recognise the group to which a person belongs. Among various views on caste in India, according to the context discussed here, we mention six characteristics of caste, offered by G.S. Ghurye. In his thesis to Cambridge University on *Race and Caste in India*, which has been revised and published several times, G.S. Ghurye (1961) suggested that caste names could indicate six different possibilities. Brij Raj Chauhan used these categories to illustrate the situation in his study, *A Rajasthan Village*, (1968) as shown in table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Different possibilities for using caste names

Basis	Examples
1) Principle profession or crafts	Gadaria (shepherd), Nai (barber); Meghwal (leather worker), Suthar (carpenter), Dholi (drum beater)
2) Tribal/ethnic	Bhil
3) Religious movement	Sadhu- (Ramdasi, Kabirpanthi) (satnami in other parts)
4) Specific peculiarity or nick names	Bhangi, Kalal
5) Miscegenation (mixed descent)	Daroga

Here, we have identified two characteristics of caste so far: (i) it is an endogamous group; (ii) it has a common ancestor. As a part of this arrangement descendents of a common ancestor are divided into two groups, the smaller exogamous group, and the wider endogamous group. The first of these groups knows the stages of the links; the second treats it as given.

There are four other characteristics of caste as identified by Ghurye. Occupation is in some ways connected with caste, but not to the extent of prescribing it. Hence Ghurye used the phrase — lack of choice regarding occupation. It has been known for instance that agriculturists, soldiers and confectioners have come from different castes. In some ways however, occupational connection is a ready reference for other groups to identify a person. Each caste has its own social rules regarding things it can take or not take, use or not use. These

relate to dress, ornaments, and even place for living. In southern India, the ecology of the village reflects the caste divisions, the status going down as one moves from the north-east to the south or south-west. For example, in his study of a village in Tanjore district of Tamil Nadu, Beteille (1962) has shown that the Brahman live in an *agraharam* located in the north, non-Brahman somewhere in the middle, and at a distance to the south there is *cheri* or the colony for the lowest castes.

Some of the activities of the castes relate to the wider social setting which is based on the principle of ascription, birth determining the membership of a person and the status of the group. Each group in certain ways represents a segment of the society, and regulates its affairs. This has been called the segmental division of society. In case of the caste-based society as a whole, each group is assigned a particular place on the social ladder. This arrangement reflects the hierarchy of castes, and in that sense other writers, like Kingsley Davis, say that the caste system represents the extreme degree of 'institutionalised inequality' in the world.

2.4.2 Sub-caste

A sub-caste is considered a smaller unit within a caste. In the village setting usually we find that there is only one sub-caste living there. A larger number of sub-castes indicate the late arrivals to a village. Thus for all practical purposes a sub-caste represents the caste in the village. In the wider setting of a region, however, we find many sub-castes. One example from Maharashtra is of kumbhar (potters). There are several groups among them; those who tap the clay, those who use the large wheel, those who use the small wheel. All the three are endogamous groups. Should they be called castes or sub-castes? Ghurye favours the second use, Karve the first one.

Both agree that the groups are endogamous, the difference of opinion is about origin. If one group broke into three parts — sub-caste would be a proper usage, and Ghurye thought that was the way things happened. If the three groups had independent origin then they could be called castes — and that is how Karve thought things had occurred. She points out that even linguistic differences exist among the groups and to the extent physical characteristics could help, they show a variation.

In conclusion it can be said that sub-caste is the smallest endogamous group and it has some mechanisms like panchayats to regulate the behaviour of members in the traditional setting. In a village, the difference between caste and sub-caste does not come to the surface but in a region, the difference is visible. (The students are advised to study other units on caste and supplement their readings from them.)

This picture of castes and sub-castes relates to the traditional setting. New forces of change have begun to affect that picture at several points. Some of these points may now be looked in the next sub-section.

2.4.3 Changes in the Caste System

Studies by historians and sociologists, namely, Romila Thapar (1979), Burton Stein (1968), Ramkrishna Mukherjee (1957), A.R. Desai (1987) and M.N. Srinivas (1969 and 1978) have shown that Indian society was never static.

The main traditional avenues of social mobility were Sanskritisation, migration and religious conversion. Lower castes or tribes could move upward in the caste hierarchy through acquisition of wealth and political power. They could consequently claim higher caste status along with Sanskritising their way of life, i.e., emulating the life-style and customs of higher castes.

Some important changes have taken place in the caste system in rural areas in the contemporary period due to the new forces of industrialisation, urbanisation, politicisation, modern education and legal system, land reforms, development programmes and government policy of positive discrimination in favour of the lower castes.

Occupational association of caste has marginally changed in rural areas. Brahmins may still work as priests. In addition, they have taken to agriculture. Landowning dominant castes belonging to both upper and middle rung of caste hierarchy generally work as supervisory farmers. Other non-landowning lower castes, including small and marginal peasants, work as wage labourers in agriculture. Artisan castes, namely, carpenters and iron-smith continue with their traditional occupations. However, migration to urban areas has enabled individuals from all castes including untouchables to enter into non-traditional occupations in industry, trade and commerce, and services.

Further, inter-caste marriage is almost non-existent in rural areas. Inter-caste restrictions on food, drink and smoking continue but to a lesser degree because of the presence of tea stalls in villages which are patronised by nearly all castes. The hold of untouchability has lessened. Distinction in dress has become more a matter of income than caste affiliation. In traditional India, the upper castes were also upper classes but it is not absolutely true today because now new occupational opportunities to gain income have developed in villages. People migrate to cities and bring money back to their villages. This has changed the traditional social structure.

Caste has acquired an additional role of operating as interest groups and associations in politics with the introduction of representative parliamentary politics. This has been noted by M.N. Srinivas (1982), Rudolph and Rudolph (1967) and Paul Brass (1965). Various caste associations have been formed transcending sub-caste boundaries to articulate caste interests. Moreover, caste has also witnessed growth of intra-caste factions with differential support to political parties and personal interest of the factional leaders. Thus, caste has undergone both the processes of fusion (merging of different castes) and fission (breaking up of a caste into parts) in the arena of politics.

There is a change in rural power structure in the period since Independence, which has led to some changes in inter-caste relationship. The Brahmins have lost their traditional dominance in South India. Kamma and Reddi in Andhra, Lingayat and Okkaliga in Karnataka, and Ahir, Jat and Kurmi in North India have emerged as the new dominant castes at local and regional levels through acquisition of economic and political power. Some traditional backward castes e.g. Nadar, Vanniyar of Tamil Nadu and Mahar of Maharashtra also have improved their social status.

In his study of Sripuram village in Tanjore district, Andre Beteille (1971) noticed the phenomenon of status incongruence. Traditionally, the upper castes owned land and monopolised political power in the village. But now, due to various

institutional changes, they have lost control in political affairs to intermediate castes without losing their land to any substantial extent.

Thus, we find that caste has undergone adaptive changes. Its traditional basic features, i.e. connubial (matrimonial), commensal (eating together) and ritual, still prevail in rural areas. The core characteristics of the castes, which have affected the social relations, are still operative. However the status quo of the intermediate and low castes has changed due to their acquiring political and/or economic power. High caste, high class and more power went together in the traditional village setting. This hegemony of the high castes has given way to differentiation of these statuses in some regions in India (Beteille 1971 & 1986), so that now high caste does not necessarily occupy a higher class position or power. It can be shown in a diagram (figure 2.3) thus:

Table 2.3: Possible changes in caste positions

Earlier position		New Position	
		a	b
Castes	High	High	Medium
Class	High	Medium	High
Power	High	Low	High

(Source: Beteille 1971)

Check Your Progress 3

i) Name the title of the thesis in which G.S. Ghurye has described the six features of caste system in India. Use one line

.....

ii) What are the main features of caste system in India? Use five lines for your answer.

.....

iii) Fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

a) Exogamy means marriage one’s own group.

b) The members of a caste trace their origin from a common ancestor who might be historical, (or)

c) In Tamil Nadu villages the Brahmins reside in the area known as

2.5 AGRARIAN CLASS STRUCTURE

So far we have seen how social structure can be described through institutions based on birth, the family, lineage, sub-caste and caste. An alternate way of describing the structure is through class and here there are two views (i) class is a better spring board for describing structure and (ii) both caste and class are necessary to describe the structure. K.L. Sharma (1980) elaborates the second position, “caste incorporates the element of class and class has a cultural (caste) style, hence the two systems cannot be easily separated even analytically”.

In the modern period, the British land revenue system gave rise to a more or less similar agrarian class structure in villages in India. They were the three classes of the landowners (*zamindars*), the tenants and the agricultural labourers. The landowners (*zamindars*) were tax gatherers and non-cultivating owners of land. They belonged to the upper caste groups. The agricultural labourers were placed in a position of bondsmen and hereditarily attached labourers. They belonged to the lower caste groups.

The impact of land reforms and rural development programmes introduced after independence has been significant. Land reforms led to the eviction of smaller tenants on a large scale. But the intermediate castes of peasants, e.g., the Ahir, Kurmi etc. in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh benefited. Power of the feudal landed families started declining all over the country. The onset of the Green Revolution in the 1960s led to the emergence of commercially oriented landlords. Rich farmers belonging generally to upper and intermediate castes prospered. But the fortune of the poor peasantry and the agricultural labourers did not improve. This has led to accentuation of class conflicts and tensions. Agrarian unrest in India has now become a common feature in various parts of the country.

P.C. Joshi (1971) has summarised in the following manner the trends in the agrarian class structure and relationships. (i) It led to the decline of feudal and customary types of tenancies. It was replaced by a more exploitative and insecure lease arrangement. (ii) It gave rise to a new commercial based rich peasant class who were part owners and part tenants. They had resource and enterprise to carry out commercial agriculture. (iii) It led to the decline of feudal landlord class and another class of commercial farmers emerged for whom agriculture was a business. They used the non-customary type of tenancy.

The process of social mobility has been seen in two directions. In his study of six villages in Rajasthan, K.L. Sharma (1980) observed that in some villages, not only the agricultural labourers but quite a few of the ex-landlords have slid down in class status, almost getting proletarianised. On the contrary, the neo-rich peasantry has emerged as the new rural bourgeoisie replacing the older landlords. Ramkrishna Mukherjee (1957) in his work *Dynamics of a Rural Society* dealt with the changes in the agrarian structure suggesting that a number of classes (categories) were reduced, and that small cultivators were becoming landless workers.

Further, Kotovsky (1964) has noted the process of increasing **proletarianisation** of the peasantry in villages. According to him, “with the agriculture developing along capitalist lines the process of ruination and proletarianisation of the bulk

of the peasantry is growing more intensely all the time”. This is substantiated by the fact that in the two decades between 1961 and 1981 the share of cultivators came down from 52.3 percent to 41.5 percent while during the same period the share of agricultural labourers increased from 17.2 percent to 25.2 percent of the total labour force. During the two decades the proportion of peasants operating less than two hectare increased from 40 percent to 55 percent of the total. By the year 2001 the share of cultivators to the total work force further declined to 31.7 percent and the share of agricultural labourers became 26.7 percent (Census Report (provisional), 2001). The increase in proportion (and certainly numbers) of agricultural labourers has gone along with a general increase in wage labourers in the rural economy.

The process of social mobility and transformation in rural India has been explained by sociologists by the terms **embourgeoisement** and proletarianisation. Embourgeoisement refers to the phenomenon of upward mobility of the intermediate class peasantry i.e., their emergence as new landlords. Proletarianisation describes the process of downward mobility, i.e., depeasantisation of small and marginal peasants and a few landlords and their entry into the rank of the rural landless agricultural labourers.

Activity 2

If you live in a rural area, describe the changes in the methods of agriculture, in terms of its mechanisation, in your village. What do you think why farmers in your village have adopted mechanical devices in agriculture? Has this practice given them an increased income? Does this mean that such farmers have also gained in social status in the village?

Or

If you live in an urban area, read last one week’s national daily newspapers, one in English and one in Hindi. Underline the news items relating to poor peasantry and agricultural labourers. Describe the main theme of these news items. Compare your notes with other students at your study centre.

2.6 THE VILLAGE

We now come to the last of the six components of rural social structure. Here, we discuss the essential nature of Indian villages and mention some of the changes taking place in village power structure and leadership.

2.6.1 The Issue of Village Autonomy

In the beginning, the studies by Maine (1881), Metcalfe (1833), and Baden-Powell (1896) gave an exaggerated notion of village autonomy. The Indian village was portrayed as a ‘closed’ and ‘isolated’ system. In a report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, Charles Metcalfe (1833), a British administrator in India, depicted the Indian village as a monolithic, atomistic and unchanging entity. He observed, “The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything that they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations”. Further, he stated that wars pass over it,

regimes come and go, but the village as a society always emerges 'unchanged, unshaken, and self-sufficient'.

Recent historical, anthropological and sociological studies have however shown that Indian village was hardly ever a republic. It was never self-sufficient. It has links with the wider society (for further details on this point see unit 3 of this block). Migration, village exogamy, movement for work and trade, administrative connection, interregional market, inter-village economic and caste links and religious pilgrimage were prevalent in the past, connecting the village with the neighbouring villages and the wider society. Moreover, new forces of modernisation in the modern period augmented inter-village and rural-urban interaction. (See also units 4 and 5 of this block.)

But despite increasing external linkages village is still a fundamental social unit (Mandelbaum 1972, Orenstein 1965). People living in a village have a feeling of common identity. They have intra-village ties at familial, caste and class levels in social, economic, political and cultural domains. In fact, village life is characterised by reciprocity, cooperation, dominance and competition.

2.6.2 The Jajmani System

A very important feature of traditional village life in India is the '*jajmani*' system. It has been studied by various sociologists, viz., William Wiser (1936), S.C. Dube (1955), Opler and Singh (1986), K. Ishwaran (1967), Lewis and Barnouw (1956). The term '*jajman*' refers to the patron or recipient of specialised services and the term '*jajmani*' refers to the whole relationship. In fact, the *jajmani* system is a system of economic, social and ritual ties among different caste groups in a village. Under this system some castes are patrons and others are serving castes. The serving castes offer their services to the landowning upper and intermediate caste and in turn are paid both in cash and kind. The patron castes are the landowning dominant castes, e.g., Rajput, Bhumihar, Jat in the North, and Kamma, Lingayat and Reddi in Andhra Pradesh and Patel in Gujarat. The service castes comprise Brahmin (priest), barber, carpenter, blacksmith, water-carrier, leatherworker etc.

The *jajmani* relations essentially operate at family level (Mandelbaum 1972). A Rajput land-owning family has its *jajmani* ties with one family each from Brahmin, barber, carpenter etc., and a family of service caste offers its services to specific families of *jajmans*. However, *jajmani* rules are enforced by caste panchayats.

The *jajmani* relationship is supposed to be and often is durable, exclusive and multiple. *Jajmani* tie is inherited on both sides i.e. patron and client (the *Jajman* and the *Kamin*). The relationship is between specific families. Moreover, it is more than exchange of grain and money in lieu of service. On various ritual occasions, such as marriage, birth and death, the service-castes render their services to their *jajman* and get gifts in addition to customary payments. In factional contests each side tries to muster the support of its *jajmani* associates. Hence the *jajmani* system involves interdependence, reciprocity and cooperation between *jati* and families in villages.

But the *jajmani* system also possesses the elements of dominance, exploitation and conflict (Beidelman 1959 and Lewis and Barnouw 1956). There is a vast

difference in exercise of power between landowning dominant patrons and poor artisans and landless labourers who serve them. The rich and powerful *jajmans* exploit and coerce the poor '*kamins*' (client) to maintain their dominance. In fact, there is reciprocity as well as dominance in the *jajmani* system.

Further, it has been observed that the *jajmani* system has weakened over the years due to market forces, increased urban contact, migration, education and social and political awareness on the part of the service castes.

2.6.3 Changes in Village Power Structure and Leadership

Marginal changes of adaptive nature have occurred in power structure and leadership in villages after gaining independence due to various factors e.g. land reforms, panchayati raj, parliamentary politics, development programmes and agrarian movements. According to Singh (1986), upper castes now exercise power not by traditional legitimisation of their authority but through manipulation and cooption of lower caste people. The traditional power structure itself has not changed. New opportunities motivate the less powerful class to aspire for power. But their economic backwardness thwarts their desires. B.S. Cohn (1962), in his comparative study of twelve villages of India, found a close fit between land-ownership and degree of domination of groups. Now younger and literate people are found increasingly acquiring leadership role. Moreover, some regional variations also have been observed in the pattern of change in power structure in rural areas.

Check Your Progress 4

- i) Tick mark the correct answer in the following multiple choice questions.
 - a) Who popularised the concept of 'village autonomy' in India?
 - i) Lord Wellesley
 - ii) Charles Metcalf
 - iii) William Bentinck
 - iv) None of the above
 - b) Identify the important social institutions in rural India among the following.
 - i) Family
 - ii) Caste
 - iii) Village
 - iv) All of these
 - c) Family "jointness" in India is characterised by
 - i) coparcenary
 - ii) coresidentiality
 - iii) commensality
 - iv) all of these.

- d) Traditional cultural features of caste have radically changed in rural India with regard to
 - i) connubial dimension
 - ii) commensal dimension
 - iii) ritual dimension
 - iv) none of these.
- ii) Describe the '*jajmani* system' in about seven lines.

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2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have made an effort to understand rural social structure in India. We have begun with the concept of social structure and then identified the important institutions of rural social structure in India viz., family and kinship, caste, class and village. Further, important features and types of family in India have been discussed along with change in them. Important difference between the kinship patterns in North and South India has been noted. More over discussion on the caste system has begun with understanding the relations between '*Varna*' and Caste. Then salient features of the caste system have been discussed and the changes occurring especially in the modern period are analysed. Moreover the nature of agrarian structure has been described. Lastly, we have discussed the issue of village autonomy, prevalence of the *jajmani* system and changes in the village power structure and leadership.

2.8 KEYWORDS

Developmental cycle In terms of the forms of family, with birth, marriage and death of its members and division of property, each family goes through a cycle of development. For example, a joint family may, after partition, be divided into several nuclear families. After the death of persons in grand-parental generation, it may become an extended family. With the marriage of a child, if the newly married persons also reside with parents, a nuclear family may become an

extended family. Again, with the birth of a grandchild, the same unit may become a joint family. This constant process of change from one stage to another is given the name of developmental cycle.

Embourgeoisement Bourgeoisement refers to the phenomenon of upward social mobility of lower class people, e.g., entry of a working class individual into the elite class through acquisition of wealth or power.

Jointness of Family It refers to various dimensions of jointness in family structure, e.g., coresidentiality, commensality, coparcenary, obligation towards kin and sentiment of jointness.

Kindred of Cooperation The kindred of cooperation are that population, within a village, in which most economic and ritual activities take place without any formalities. This is a smaller unit, referring to the actual ties of kin.

Kindred of Recognition The kindred of recognition refer to that population in which cooperation in economic and ritual activities is through information and invitation. This is a larger unit, spread over several villages for each caste.

Proletarianisation Proletarianisation refers to the process of downward social mobility of upper class people, e.g., a landlord becoming landless labourer.

Social Structure It is the organised pattern of the inter-related rights and obligations of persons and groups in a system of interaction as seen in terms of statuses, roles, institutions governed by social norms and values.

'Jajmani' System It is an age-old social institution that refers to the inter-caste and inter-family social, economic, political and ritual ties prevalent in villages.

Varna The *Varna* distributes social groups into four categories, all over India. It is a model of social and ritual hierarchy of caste groups. These are four- Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The *Varna* provides a cultural idiom to the caste system.

Village Exogamy and 'Gotra' Exogamy Exogamy means marrying outside the group. Village exogamy refers to the tradition of prohibiting marriage within the village in North India. Similarly, '*gotra*' exogamy prohibits marriage within one's own *gotra* (clan).

2.9 FURTHER READING

Beteille, Andre 1986. *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*. Oxford University Press: Delhi

Chauhan, Brij Raj 1968. *A Rajasthan Village*. Vir Publishing House: Delhi 1988

Dube, S.C. 1955. *Indian Village*. Cornell University Press: New York

Madan, Vandana (ed.) 2002. *The Village in India*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi

Sharma.K.L. 1997. *Rural Society in India*. Mittal Publications: New Delhi

Srinivas, M.N. (ed.) 1978. *India's Villages*. Media Promoters: Bombay

2.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Social structure is the pattern of inter-related social statuses and roles found in a society. It is the organised pattern of the inter-related rights and obligations of persons and groups in an institutionalised form having social norms and values.
- ii) According to 2001 census, there are 6,38,365 villages (including uninhabited villages) in India.
- iii) There are three main types of settlement patterns in rural areas. The most common type is the nucleated village found in most areas. Here we find a tight cluster of houses, which are surrounded by the field of the villagers. Sometimes an outlying hamlet or satellite hamlet is also found situated around this type.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Some of the important dimensions of “jointness” of a family are: coresidentiality, commensality, coparcenary, depth of three generations at least, and fulfilment of obligations towards kin.
- ii) Lineage is a group of families, which trace descent from a common ancestor. They have full knowledge of the links, which they have with that common ancestor. The members of a lineage of a generation share a brother and sister relationship with each other.
- iii) Developmental cycle approach to the family in India implies that the family structure in India undergoes demographic change in a period of time. A nuclear family expands due to birth and marriage to form a joint or extended family and with death and partition again reverts back to a nuclear family.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) The title of the thesis written by G.S. Ghurye is Race and Caste in India.
- ii) Caste is an endogamous and hereditary social group. Each caste is traditionally associated with a hereditary occupation and members of a caste are bound by certain social rules and laws. Castes are placed in a hierarchical order. They have rules of commensality and the concept of purity and pollution is very important in caste relationships.
- iii)
 - a) outside
 - b) mythical, divine
 - c) agrapharam

Check Your Progress 4

- i)
 - a) (ii)
 - b) (iv)
 - c) (iv)
 - d) (iv)
- ii) The '*jajmani*' system is found in Indian villages. It is the relationship between patrons and clients, or *Jajman* and *Kamin* of different castes, generally within a village. It is a process of exchange of goods and services between castes. Some castes are patrons and some are clients. It is an inherited relationship. The *jajmani* rules are enforced by caste panchayats in rural India.

UNIT 3 VILLAGE AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Village and the Wider Economic System
 - 3.2.1 Economic Interdependence before World War-I
 - 3.2.2 Economic Integration in Modern Times
- 3.3 The Village and the Wider Caste and Kinship System
 - 3.3.1 Some Ethnographic Examples
 - 3.3.2 Spatial Expansion of Inter-caste Relations
- 3.4 The Village and the Wider Religious System
 - 3.4.1 Universalisation
 - 3.4.2 Parochialisation
 - 3.4.3 More Examples of Interaction between Great and Little Traditions
- 3.5 The Village and the Wider Political System
 - 3.5.1 The Village in Pre-British India
 - 3.5.2 The Village in British India
 - 3.5.3 The Village in Contemporary India
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Further Reading
- 3.8 Keywords
- 3.9 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you should be able to

- explain the nature of economic interdependence between the village and the outside world
- examine the role of caste and kinship in the villages
- describe the process of interaction between religious beliefs and practices of the villages and the wider Indian civilisation
- describe the political linkages between Indian villages and the outside world.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As you have seen in unit 2 of this course, though the village in India has a definable structure, it is not an isolated self-contained unit. In this unit, you will be able to identify how it is and has been traditionally a part of Indian society and civilisation. Here, you will see the village in relation to the outside world.

This unit deals in great length with the process of economic interaction, with special emphasis on the traditional *jajmani system*, and urbanisation and industrialisation in the post World War-I period. Role of caste and kinship in Indian villages has been focused in this unit with suitable illustrations from some village studies. In discussing the socio-cultural linkages we have talked about the process of **universalisation** and **parochialisation**. We have also discussed the process of interaction between the little and great traditions in Indian villages. The unit also shows the political linkages that Indian villages had in the pre-British period. It highlights the pattern of political linkages of the British and the political system of the contemporary period. This unit altogether provides you a broad view of the linkages of Indian villages with the outside world.

3.2 THE VILLAGE AND THE WIDER ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The impression that the village in pre-British India was economically self-sufficient was created by the existence of *jajmani* system (caste-wise division of labour), payment in grain (absence of monetisation), and the poor communications, which limited the flow of goods.

3.2.1 Economic Interdependence before World War-I

The fact that the weekly markets (see figure 3.1) in neighbouring villages existed in traditional India proves that there was dependence on towns for items not locally available such as, silver and gold which was essential for weddings. The institution of weekly markets still prevails in rural India although considerable improvements in transport and communication have made towns with regular markets accessible to villagers. These markets not only serve an economic purpose but also political, recreational and social purposes.

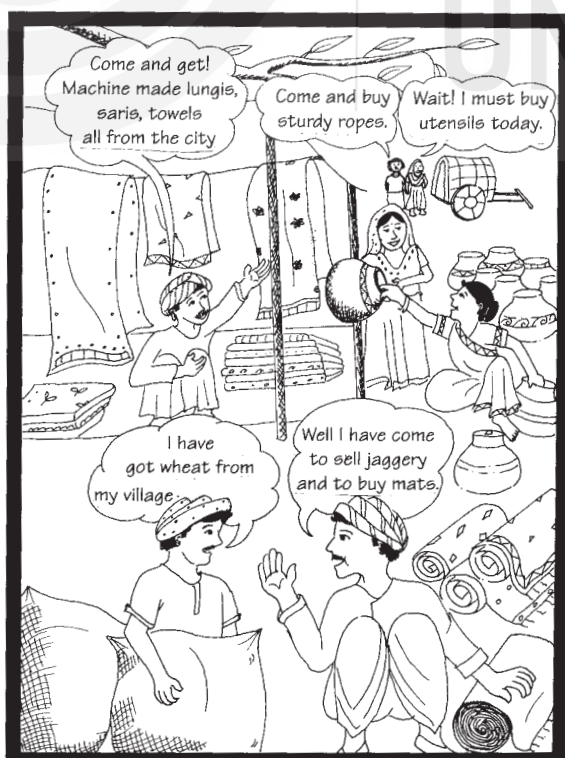


Fig. 3.1: Village and the wider economic system

Again not all the artisan and servicing castes live within a village, particularly in the case of the smaller settlements. The proportion of smaller settlements must have been very high during the pre-British period because it was during British rule that large irrigation projects at all India level were undertaken in different parts of the country. Irrigation enables a large number of people to be supported on a given area. Village studies have shown that certain castes provide services to a number of villages. Villages have always depended on villagers in nearby villages. The urban population depended on the village produce for its basic needs of food grain, raw materials for processed food, and handicrafts.

Activity 1

Have you ever noticed that in your house you have many things, which are produced or manufactured, in rural areas? Today, take a close look at them and list them alphabetically, with a few comments on their place of origin and their utility for you and your family.

3.2.2 Economic Integration in Modern Times

The extension of colonial economy to India brought the Indian villages to the world market for the products like jute and cotton. The availability of new economic opportunities during this century, especially after the World War-I, with industrialisation and urbanisation, has made the village a part of the wider economic system. The new economic opportunities differ in different villages. Taking some case studies we show you how this process occurred.

- i) The first full length study of an Indian Village by S.C. Dube (1955) devotes one full chapter to the nature of changes coming in rural life which include increasing economic ties of Shamirpet village with the city of Hyderabad, even for groups like the washerman.
- ii) McKim Marriott (1955) gives a graphic description of interaction between the people of different villages around Kishan Garhi in Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh. He writes “Brahman priests, Barbers, Potters, Carpenters, Washermen and Sweepers who live in Kishan Garhi go out to serve hereditary patrons in some fifteen other villages and derive about one half of their income from these outside patrons. Traders who live in Kishan Garhi regularly cover many miles of the county side on their trading trips. Wage workers who maintain homes in Kishan Garhi during the present generation have gone out to work in at least twenty five other places including ten cities. During one period of three months I counted forty four different specialists coming into Kishan Garhi”.
- iii) In the case of Rampura in Karnataka, studied by M.N. Srinivas (1955), World War-II brought increased cash for the dominant landowning Okkaliga caste with wartime rationing and shortages, which encouraged black marketeering. The wartime profits were used in different ways. When the village was electrified two rice mills were set up. Bus lines were also started which made contact with Mysore City much easier. They had “one foot in village and another in the city”.
- iv) In Kumbapettai village, which situated in the Tanjore district of Tamil Nadu and was studied by K. Gough (1955), the migration of members of

the dominant Brahmin group to towns for education and employment and the immigration in Kumbapettai of lower castes from the neighbouring and less fertile areas has been responsible for Kumbapettai coming into more interaction with the wider economic system.

- v) In the case of Yadavpur, a village situated on the fringe of Delhi, studied by M.S.A. Rao (1974), the growth of the metropolitan city of Delhi created diversified opportunities of market gardening, dairy and poultry farming, trader and transport and urban employment.

M.S.A. Rao (1974) identified three types of urban impact on the villages in India. Firstly, there are villages in which a sizable number of people have taken employment in Indian cities and even overseas towns. They send money regularly to their families, which are left behind in the villages. The money earned from the urban employment is used to build fashionable houses in their villages and invested in land and industry. Donations are also made to the establishment of educational institutions etc. All this increases the social prestige of their families. Thus the urban impact is felt by such villages even though they may not be physically situated near a city or town.

The second kind of urban impact is seen in villages, which are situated near an industrial town. Their lands are totally or partially acquired. They receive an influx of immigrant workers, which stimulates a demand for houses and a market inside the village.

The third type of impact on the village is the growth of metropolitan cities. As the city expands it sucks in the villages lying on the outskirts. Many villages lose their land, which is used for urban development. The villagers in these landless villages who get cash compensation may invest in land in far off places or in commerce or squander the money. The villagers generally seek urban employment. Those villages on the fringe of a city whose land has not yet been acquired or particularly acquired may engage in market gardening, dairy farming and poultry keeping. Some may seek employment in the city and start commuting.

To sum up, we can say that the Indian village was not economically self-sufficient even in the British times. Industrialisation and urbanisation, which began during British rule and gained momentum after independence, have made the village a part of the wider economic network. Planned development of the countryside has made further dent in the rural economy. Recent studies in sociology have concentrated on agrarian movements, *Bhoodan* movement, land reforms, community development and the green revolution. The organisation of these activities is carried out on a large scale covering several villages and involving many agencies.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Give, in four lines, three reasons for the myth of economic self-sufficiency of the Indian village.

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- ii) What are the two factors, responsible for better integration of Kumbapettai village into the wider economic system?

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3.3 THE VILLAGE AND THE WIDER CASTE AND KINSHIP SYSTEM

The village consists of a **vertical interdependence of castes**, i.e., relationships among different castes. It is reflected in the *jajmani* system. But these vertical ties are cut across by the **horizontal ties of caste** and kinship, i.e., the relationships within the caste, which extend beyond the village to other villages and even towns. One’s relatives live in different villages and one has to interact with them on different occasions like births, marriages and deaths. One may also have to depend on them for help in times of need. In north India where village exogamy exists along with caste endogamy, one has to look outside the village for a marriage partner for one’s son or daughter. In south India where village exogamy is not a rule and marriage between a woman and her mother’s brother or marrying one’s mother’s brother’s daughter is preferred, one may still have to look outside the village for a marriage partner.

3.3.1 Some Ethnographic Examples

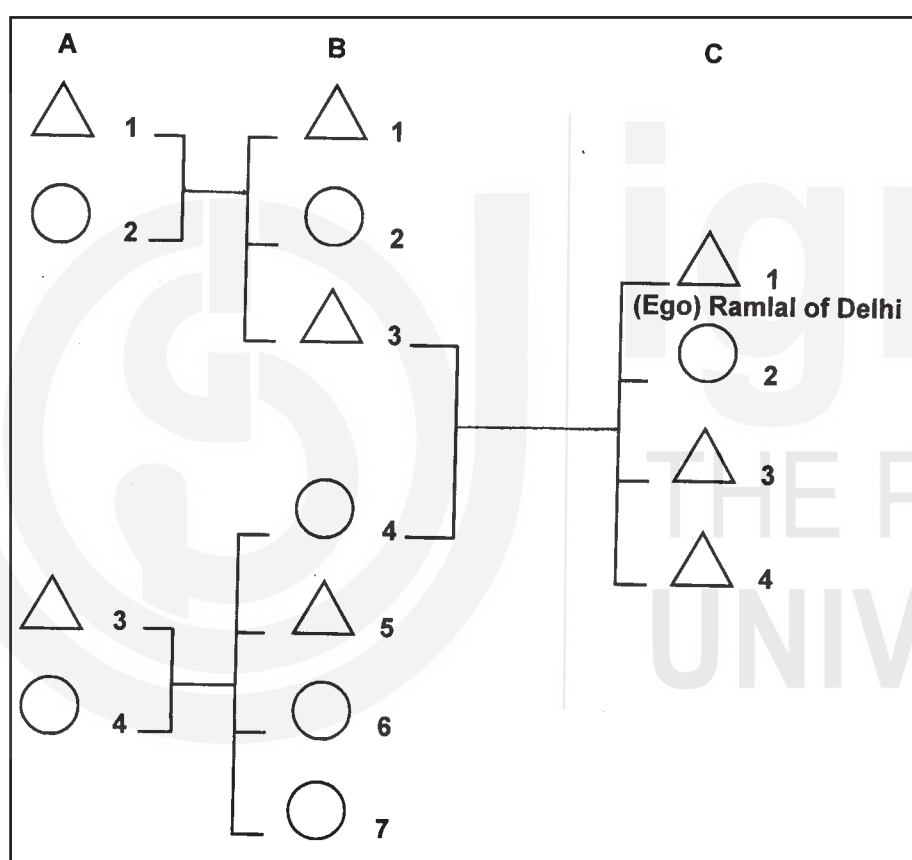
Sociologists, studying Indian villages, have described how the villages form an integral part of the wider caste and kinship system. Oscar Lewis (1955), who made a study of a north Indian village, points out that Rani Khera, like other villages in north India, is basically a part of a larger inter-village network based upon kinship ties. “Other villagers are very often relatives, and entire villages are classified by the kinship terminology as mother’s brother’s village, grandfather’s village, grandmother’s village, etc”.

Similarly in the case of a U.P. village Kishan Garhi, Mckim Marriott (1955) observed that there were forty six local lineage groups in Kishan Garhi, each wholly separate from every other in descent. There was no marriage inside the village within or among any of these groups. Daughters of the village moved out and wives of the village moved in at marriage, moving to and from more than three hundred other villages. At the time, he made the study, he found that fifty seven marriages connected Kishan Garhi with sixteen towns and cities. Half of the marriage ties of groups in Kishan Garhi connected them with places more than fourteen miles away, while 5 percent connected them with places more than forty miles distant.

Activity 2

Draw a genealogical diagram, starting with yourself and show the spread of your kin relationships by giving the place of residence of your relatives on both your father’s and mother’s side including their brothers and sisters. This will give you an idea of the horizontal spread of your kinship ties. To make a genealogical diagram you will have to make use of certain signs. These signs are: Δ = male; O = female;] = marriage; [siblingship; and —

= descent (generation). We are giving you here an example of a genealogical diagram to show you how to use these signs. Imagine there is a person called Ramlal (indicated here by C 1. We will trace his genealogy here, by showing three generations. A, B and C. 'A' generation is Ramlal's grandparent's generation on both his father's and mother's side. 'B' generation is his father and mother's generation and his uncles and aunts or both sides. 'C' generation is his own and his sibling's generation. In each generation the number of persons can be shown by serial numbers of 1,2,3, and so on. In this example, Ramlal's sister is shown in generation C, her number is C 2. Ramlal's brother's number is C 3 and another brother is C 4. Ramlal is C 1. In generation B, you see Ramlal's father, whose number is B 3. His mother's number is B 4. Similarly, Ramlal's mother's brother's number is B 5. In this manner you can go on drawing the actual number of relatives on your father's and mother's side.



Δ = male; O = female;] = marriage; [siblingship; and — = descent (generation)

3.3.2 Spatial Expansion of Intra-Caste Relations

Since caste endogamy is the rule (i.e., one has to marry within one's caste), one's kin normally belong to one's caste. Intra-caste relations and other caste matters are regulated by a caste panchayat whose members belong to different villages. In pre-British India, the horizontal expansion of caste ties was limited by the political boundaries of a number of small kingdoms as well as poor roads and communication. With the unification of the country brought about by the British and the introduction of better roads and railways, cheap postage and printing, there was a rapid spread in intra-caste relations because it was easier to keep in regular touch with each other.

Caste associations were formed which worked for the welfare of caste members. Educational institutions and hostels were set up and scholarships were provided to the needy members of the caste. Each caste also worked at regulating the lifestyle of its members so that the attempt at mobility of the caste, through **Sanskritisation** could be successful.

In the last sixty years or more, horizontal unity of the caste has increased and the strong walls erected between sub-castes have begun to crumble. This is primarily due to two factors. (i) Since numbers are important in a parliamentary democracy, horizontal unity of caste over a wide area provides a ‘vote bank’ that can ensure the election of a candidate from one’s caste. (ii) The need to find educated life partners for one’s children and the demand for dowry particularly among the higher castes has widened the endogamous circle and increased the horizontal spread of caste ties.

Thus, you can easily make out that the village has always had ties with other villages and towns for kinship and caste purposes. This was limited in pre-British India when communication was poor and small kingdoms existed whose boundaries acted as effective barriers. The horizontal spread of caste ties greatly increased during British rule and since Independence it linked the village to a much wider area.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) What were the limitations on the development of intra-caste relations over a wide area in pre-British India? Use about five lines for your answer.

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- ii) Account, in six lines, for the horizontal spread of caste-ties during the twentieth century?

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3.4 THE VILLAGE AND THE WIDER RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

A study of the religion of any Indian village shows a double process of interaction at work between the religious beliefs and practices of the village

and the wider Indian civilisation. McKim Marriott, taking the concepts of ‘great tradition’ and ‘little tradition’ from Robert Redfield (1955) points out that certain elements of ritual and belief are contributions from village life which spread upward to the formation of India’s great Sanskrit tradition, while other elements represent local modification of elements of the great tradition communicated downward to it. Marriott has given the terms universalisation and parochialisation respectively to refer to the two aspects of this double process of interaction between the little and great traditions. Taking the ethnographic details from Marriott’s work, we explain these terms further in the following section.

3.4.1 Universalisation

Marriott (1955) mentions the festival of *Raksha Bandhan* as an example of upward universalisation. This festival coincides and blends in Kishan Garhi with the festival known regionally as *Saluno*, a festival which marks the end of that annual fortnight during which most young wives return for a visit to their parents and siblings. On *Saluno* day many husbands arrive at their ‘wives’ villages to take them back. Before going back with their husbands, the wives as well as their unmarried sisters express their devotion to their brothers by placing young shoots of barley, the locally sacred grain, on the heads and ears of their brothers. Since brothers should accept nothing from their sisters as a free gift they reciprocate with some money. On the same day along with the ceremony of *Saluno*, the ceremony of *Charm Tying* (*Rakhi Bandhan*) is also held. The Brahman domestic priests of Kishan Garhi goes to each patron and ties a polychrome thread with tassels upon his wrist. He also utters a blessing and is rewarded by his patron with some cash because it is considered impious to accept anything free from a priest.

A close parallel can be seen between the Brahmanical festival of *Charm Tying* and the familial festival of *Saluno*. It may be possible that *Charm Tying* had its roots in some such ‘little tradition’ festival like *Saluno*. The thread *charms* of the priests are now factory made and are sold by a local caste group called *Jogis*. A few sisters in Kishan Garhi have now taken to tying these thread *charms* on their brothers’ wrists. These thread *charms* are also convenient for mailing in letters to brothers who are living far away in cities and towns.

3.4.2 Parochialisation

Parochialisation or the downward spread of elements from the ‘great tradition’ to the ‘little tradition’ and the transformation or modification it undergoes can be seen in the festival of Cow Nourisher Worship as it is celebrated in Kishan Garhi. This festival is explained by a story from the Sanskrit book *Bhagavata Purana* of the tenth century A.D. The story concerns Krishna’s adventures with his cowherd companions at a hill named *Gobardhan*. In this story Krishna directs the cowherds of *Braj* to worship the hill that is near at hand rather than such great but distant gods as *Indra*. *Indra*, the God of rain, gets angry over the defection of his worshippers and sends violent rainstorms to destroy the cowherds and their cows. Krishna lifts the hill on his finger to provide them shelter and all are saved. At the actual hill of *Gobardhan* in *Mathura District* a ceremony is performed annually.

In Kishan Garhi the celebration of this festival has taken on some homely details which have no mention in the Sanskrit myth. Instead of accepting the

meaning of 'Cow Nourisher' (*Go + vardhana*) they explain it as *Gobar + dhan* or 'Cow-dung Wealth'. Hence the women and children of each household construct a small 'hill' made of cowdung with straw and cotton on top to represent 'trees'. Little models of a cowboy and cows are made of dung and placed on the hill. In the evening all the agnates of each family worship it jointly by placing a lamp on it and winding thread around its 'trees' and shouting '*Gobardhan Baba ki jai*', 'Long Live Grandfather Cowdung Wealth'. The next morning, members of the Weaver caste are paid to sing a Cowdung Wealth Song, after which the hill and models are broken up for use as daily fuel. But a portion of the cowdung is kept aside, dried and preserved until the Holi festival when it is used for the annual village bonfire. This case is presented as an example of adding local details to Sanskrit festival.

Marriott admits that since universalisation and parochialisation have both proceeded for a very long time, we are ordinarily unable to trace the course of either process with certainty, or to decide whether a given present configuration of religious contents is the result of one and not also the result of the other of these two processes. But the important point to remember is that in matters relating to observance of festivals, there has been a give and take among the village traditions and the nationwide tradition-thereby showing how the village has not been self-sufficient in this manner.

3.4.3 More Examples of Interaction between Great and Little Traditions

M.N. Srinivas' (1950) concept of Sanskritisation also shows the interaction between religion at the local level and all India Hinduism which is Sanskritic. Sanskritic elements are spread from the higher castes to the lower castes. The spread of Sanskrit theological ideas increased during British rule and after, due to the development of communications and spread of literacy. Western technology - railways, printing press, radio, films and now, television have helped the spread of Sanskritisation. They have popularised the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata and other religious stories about the lives of Saints like Mira, Tulsidas etc. and made the village a part of the wider universe.

One important aspect of the process of Sanskritisation is the identification of a local god or goddess with some deity of the Hindu pantheon. Thus among the Coorgs, Ketrappa is identified with the vedic deity Kshetrapala while the local cobra deity is identified with Subramanya or Skanda, the warrior son of Shiva. This helped the Coorg religious community to become incorporated in the wider Hindu religious community.

Apart from festivals and deities, another important aspect of the religion of the village community is pilgrimage. Pilgrimage centres have attracted people from distant places in India. Thus in Kishan Garhi, Marriott (1955) recorded the names of more than fifty places to which the villagers had gone on pilgrimage. In traditional India, temple towns and sacred cities like Gaya, Mathura, Ajmer, Varanasi, Puri, Tirupathi and Amritsar attracted pilgrims even though roads were very poor and unsafe. Thus we see a continuous interaction between the little and great tradition in the religion of the village.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Define the processes of universalisation and parochialisation. Use about six lines for your answer.

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- ii) Give, in three lines, two examples of the incorporation of Coorg religious community in the wider Hindu religious community.

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3.5 THE VILLAGE AND THE WIDER POLITICAL SYSTEM

Indian villages had been described by British administrators in the early nineteenth century as **‘little republics’** with their simple form of self government and, almost no interference from the higher political authority except for claiming a share in the produce of the land and demanding young men to serve in the wars. The villages functioned normally, unconcerned about who sat on the throne in the kingdoms of which they were territorially a part. They were also described as being economically self-sufficient having nearly everything that they wanted within themselves. This description of Indian villages is an over-simplified one. Yet it influenced the views of important scholars like Karl Marx and Henry Maine and Indian nationalists like Mahatma Gandhi. It was only after gaining Independence that some social anthropologists who made intensive field studies of Indian villages began to question the conventional description of the Indian village. On the basis of their findings they demonstrated that the Indian village has been a part of the wider society and civilisation and not “little republics” as described by British administrators.

3.5.1 The Village in Pre-British India

To say that in pre-British India (i.e. roughly covering the period just before the consolidation of British rule in India) the village was politically autonomous except for paying tax to the local chieftain or the king and providing him young men for his wars is incorrect. The relation between the king and his subjects was a complex one. The king performed several duties towards his subjects. He built roads, tanks and canals for irrigation. He also built temples and gave gifts of land to pious and learned Brahmins. He was the head of all caste panchayats and disputes regarding mutual caste rank were ultimately

settled by him. This function was not confined to Hindu rulers, even the Mughal Kings and feudatory lords settled questions affecting a caste.

The villages in pre-British India were not passive in their relation to the State (mostly the princely states, also known as the Native States). They were certainly concerned about who sat on the throne. They would prefer a king who would protect them from thugs and marauding troops. If the king or chief belonged to a locally dominant caste, his caste fellows would come to his aid in a crisis.

The villages were not helpless in their relationship with rulers. Villagers could rebel and support a rival to the throne (see the example of the Dimasa ruler in Cachar, given in section 17.5 of unit 17 in Block 5 of the first elective course in sociology). Collective flight was another sanction available to villagers against oppression. The ruler was very often the loser when such collective flights occurred. Since land was available for settlement while labour was scarce a ruler would find it difficult to get his land tilled and would lose revenue.

Thus the relation between the village and the ruler was a complex one and it is wrong to describe the village in pre-British India as a 'little republic'. It must however be pointed out that due to the absence of roads and poor communication, the village did enjoy a considerable amount of autonomy as well as discreetness from the higher levels of the political system. The kings let the villagers govern themselves in day-to-day matter. The village panchayat formed mainly of the dominant caste exercised authority in local matters, settled inter-caste disputes and maintained law and order in the village.

3.5.2 The Village in British India

British rule changed the relationship between the village and the ruler. Political conquest was followed by the development of communications. This enabled the British to establish an effective administration. Government employees like the police, revenue official, and others, came to the village. The British established a system of law courts. Major disputes and criminal offences had to be settled in court. This greatly reduced the power of the village panchayat.

3.5.3 The Village in Contemporary India

Since Independence, the introduction of parliamentary democracy and **adult franchise** has made the village even more fully integrated with the wider political system. Villagers not only elect members of local bodies like the gram panchayat but also elect members of the state legislature and parliament. Regional and national political parties are active in the village doing propaganda and mobilising support for their parties. Government policies and programmes like the Community Development Schemes affect the village.

Although the village is a political unit with an elected panchayat to run the day-to-day administration, it is part of the district or *zilla*, which is part of the state. The state is part of the Indian Union. There is interaction between these different levels of the political system.

- i) Why was the village in pre-British India described as a ‘little republic’? Use about four lines for your answer.

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- ii) Explain why village is a ‘little republic’ was an over simplified statement. Use about six lines for your answer.

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3.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we discussed that although the village has a definable structure and is a clear entity for the villagers themselves, it is also a sub-system within the larger political, economic, social and religious system in which it exists. In pre-British India the absence of roads and poor communications limited interaction between villages, and between villages and towns. Nevertheless, the interaction was there. Even traditionally the village was not self-sufficient economically. Essential items like salt, kerosene, metals, sugarcane, etc., were not produced in most of the villages and they had to visit weekly markets and towns for them. Again every village did not have all the essential artisan and servicing caste and there was mutual dependence between villages for this purpose. Industrialisation and urbanisation during this century, particularly since Independence, have made the village a part of the wider economic network.

Socially too, the village has never been an isolated unit. Kinship and caste ties have extended beyond the village. This is more so in the north, where village exogamy is practised. With the unification of the country under the British rule the barriers to the horizontal spread of caste ties were removed. The building of roads and railways, cheap postage and printing press helped members of a caste spread over a large area to keep in touch. Since Independence, the importance of votes in getting one’s candidate elected has further increased the horizontal unity of the caste.

As far as the religion of the village is concerned, a continuous interaction between the localised little tradition and the great tradition of Indian civilisation takes place through the double process of universalisation and parochialisation.

Politically, although the king was willing to allow villagers to govern themselves in day-to-day matters, the payments of a substantial portion of the produce was a symbol of the village's dependence on the king. Besides, the king performed several duties towards the villagers. The British brought most of the country under their rule. The introduction of a uniform law and a centralised administration made the village a part of the wider political system of the country. The introduction of parliamentary democracy and adult franchise increased further the integration of the village with the different levels of the political system.

Thus we see an integration and a continuity between the village and the wider units of Indian society. This is very much visible today but it also existed in traditional India to a limited extent. To understand a village thoroughly, it is not enough to study its internal structure and organisation, but it is also necessary to study its relation to the wider Indian society. It is equally true that to understand the wider Indian society it is necessary to study its parts. Village communities form the major part of Indian society since an overwhelming majority of Indians live in villages.

3.7 KEYWORDS

Adult-franchise	Right to cast vote in the electoral process.
Great Tradition	Cultural trait or tradition, which is written and widely accepted by the elite of the society who are educated and learned.
Horizontal Ties of Caste	It is the ties of caste and sub-caste members who are spread beyond the boundaries of a single village.
Jajmani System	A traditional system of exchange of goods and services based on caste-wise division of labour.
Little Republic	A small political entity characterised by popular participation in its political process.
Little Tradition	Cultural trait or tradition, which is oral and operates at the village level.
Parochialisation	A process of downward spread of the elements of cultural tradition, which is written and widely accepted by elites of the society.
Sanskritisation	M.N. Srinivas used this concept for the first time to refer to a process of social change whereby a low Hindu caste or tribe adopts the customs ritual, ideology and life style of the higher caste with a view to improve its own caste status.
Universalisation	A process of spread and upward formation of some elements of little tradition, which come to have wider acceptance at the level of masses.

Vertical Interdependence of Caste

A pattern of interdependence among higher and lower castes of the same village or a cluster of villages.

3.8 FURTHER READING

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3.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) The impression that the village was economically self-sufficient was created by
- a) lack of monetisation of the economy;
 - b) existence of jajmani system; and
 - c) poor communication which limited the flow of goods. But the existence of weekly markets and the dependence on other villages for certain artisan and servicing castes show that the village was far from self-sufficient economically.
- ii) The two factors are:
- a) the migration of the Brahmin caste to towns and
 - b) the immigration of lower castes from neighbouring areas to Kumbapettai.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) The limitations on the development of intra-caste relations over a wide area in pre-British India were
 - a) the existence of many small kingdoms (Political cleavages resulted in social cleavages);
 - b) the very poor roads which made communication extremely difficult.
- ii) The unification of the country during twentieth century removed the political barriers to the horizontal spread of caste ties. The introduction of better roads and railways, cheap postage and printing enabled members of a caste scattered over a wide area to keep in touch. Finally the importance of votes to get the candidate from one's caste elected to the seats of power increased horizontal unity of the caste.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Universalisation refers to the process by which elements of ritual and belief, which form part of the localised little tradition, spread upwards to form part of the great tradition of Indian civilisation.

Parochialisation refers to the process of downward spread of elements of the great tradition to the little tradition. In both the processes the original elements undergo transformation.

- ii) The two examples are:
 - a) the Coorg deity Ketrappa is identified with the Vedic deity Kshetrpala
 - b) the Cobra deity among the Coorgs is identified with Subramanya or Skanda, the son of Shiva.

Check Your Progress 4

- i) The village enjoyed a considerable amount of autonomy as well as discreteness from the higher levels of the political system. The king let the villagers govern themselves in day-to-day matters. This situation was necessitated by the absence of roads and poor communications.
- ii) To consider the village as a 'little republic' is incorrect because the king performed a number of functions in relation to the village like building some roads and canals, providing protection from thugs and marauding troops and being the final authority for settling disputes regarding caste rank. The villagers were not passive and unconcerned as to who sat on the throne. They would rebel against a bad king and provide help to a ruler who belonged to their caste.

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Urbanisation: Definition
- 4.3 Urbanisation in India: A Historical Perspective
 - 4.3.1 Classification of Traditional Towns
 - 4.3.2 Some Features of Urbanisation in Ancient and Medieval India
 - 4.3.3 New Features of Urbanisation in Early Colonial Period
- 4.4 Pattern of Urbanisation in Contemporary India
 - 4.4.1 Definition of a Town or City
 - 4.4.2 Demographic Aspect
 - 4.4.3 Spatial Pattern
 - 4.4.4 Economic Dimension
 - 4.4.5 Socio-cultural Character
- 4.5 Problems Concerning the Current Process of Urbanisation
- 4.6 Impact of Urbanisation in Rural Areas
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Keywords
- 4.9 Further Reading
- 4.10 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit introduces the concept of urbanisation and the features of traditional and contemporary urbanisation in India. After going through this unit, you should be able to

- define urbanisation
- discuss the historical process of urbanisation in India
- explain the main features of modernisation in contemporary India
- assess the impact of urbanisation on Indian rural scene.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In units 2 and 3 we saw how the villages and their social structure form a significant facet of Indian social life. In the present unit on Patterns of Urbanisation we will see how the urban way of life is also a characteristic mode of living in India. This unit begins with the meaning of the concept of urbanisation. It provides a brief review of the historical process of urbanisation. While describing the pattern of contemporary urbanisation, we have talked about the basic **demographic**, spatial, economic and socio-cultural features in

detail. This section also gives a brief account of the emerging problems due to urbanisation in the towns and cities. Lastly, we have examined the impact of urbanisation in the rural areas.

4.2 URBANISATION: DEFINITION

Sociologists define urbanisation as the movement of people from villages to town/city where economic activities are centred around non-agricultural occupations such as trade, manufacturing industry and management. Broadly speaking, in order to explain the process of urbanisation we can discuss the following three aspects:

- i) The demographic and spatial aspects
- ii) Economic aspects and
- iii) Socio-cultural aspects

In section 4.4 of this unit we discuss each of these aspects in relation to the process of urbanisation in contemporary India. Here we tell you what each of these aspects generally deal with.

The demographic-spatial aspects of urbanisation deal with shift of people from rural to urban areas, population density in urban areas and change in the pattern of land use from agriculture to non-agricultural activities.

Economic aspects of urbanisation relate to the change from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations. As cities have been the centres of diverse economic opportunities, they attract people from rural areas. This attraction pulls a significant section of the rural population to the urban areas. Rural poverty, backwardness of agricultural economy and the destruction of cottage and small industries also push villagers to urban areas. These pull and push factors of **migration** play an important role in the process of urbanisation.

The socio-cultural aspects of urbanisation highlight the emerging heterogeneity in urban areas. The city has generally been the meeting point of races and cultures.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Give in three lines the definition of urbanisation.

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- ii) Mark the correct answer by ticking \checkmark sign in the following question.

The migration of people to the town due to new opportunities is known by which of the factors given below?

- a) Pull factor of migration
- b) Push factor of migration
- c) Poverty factor
- d) Population factor

4.3 URBANISATION IN INDIA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The archaeological findings from several parts of Indian sub-continent tend to suggest that the urban growth in India is as old as the history of her civilisation. While considering the early growth of cities and the development of urban areas in undivided India, one can trace their beginnings to about 5,500 years backwards. Around 2500 B.C. the cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa (since 1947 in Pakistan) were established in the valley of Indus river. Archaeologists and historians have pointed out that around 2000 B.C. urbanisation in the Harappan culture exhibited signs of high development in brick technology, geometry, agriculture and irrigation practices.

Another important phase of urbanisation is said to have begun somewhere around 600 B.C. in India culminating in the formation of early historical cities. During the ancient and medieval periods of Indian history, the kings established various capital regions which developed into towns. For example, Pataliputra (now Patna) and Vaishali developed as towns during the Magadh rule around B.C. 300. Kanauj was the capital town of Harshavardhana in Uttar Pradesh in A.D. 700. Mohammad Tughlaq is noted for shifting his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad (Devagiri) in the southern region in A.D. 1300.

The establishment of the East India Company and the onset of British colonial control of India from the seventeenth century led to the growth of urban centres of Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. These cities (except Delhi) developed along the seacoast in the respective regions where the British had established administrative system in terms of provinces.

4.3.1 Classification of Traditional Towns

There were several kinds of towns in ancient India. The *Vastusastra* (Treatise on Classical Indian Architecture) has differentiated between several kinds of towns based on their functional specificity such as trade, commerce, manufacturing, administration and military marches. However, the traditional towns can be broadly categorised on the basis of their functional specificities:

- i) **Trading and Manufacturing Towns:** Places termed as *nagar*, *pattana*, *dronamukha*, *kheta*, *nigama* etc. belonged to this category. A *nagar* was an ordinary fortified town with inland trade as an important activity. *Pattana* was a large commercial port situated on the bank of a river or sea. The special feature of the *pattana* was that it was a city of the trading castes (*Vaisya*) and was full of jewels, wealth, silk, perfumes and other articles. *Dronamukha*, *kheta* etc. were also small size trading centres. Again *nigama* was a market town consisting of the artisans and also serving as a resting place for “traders and caravans”.
- ii) **Political or Military Town:** *Rajdhani* was a distinctively planned political town. It was the royal capital. *Durga* was a fortified town equipped with an arsenal and well-stored with food stuffs. Similarly *senamukha* and *shaniya* were also the fortified towns of varied locations and importance.
- iii) **Educational or Pilgrim and Temple Towns:** *Matha* and *Vihara* were the towns based on educational and religious activities. A classic example

of this was Nalanda. Again, there were temple towns like Dwaraka, Tirupati, Puri etc. and pilgrim centres like Hardwar, Gaya etc.

Activity 1

Sketch a map of India and identify the places where the traditional urban centres were located.

4.3.2 Some Features of Urbanisation in Ancient and Medieval India

The process of urbanisation in various periods of Indian history had distinctive spatial, economic, religious, socio-cultural, political features. These features are described here under three broad headings.

1) Political, Demographic and Spatial Factors

The early processes of urbanisation had their close relationships with the rise and fall of sponsoring political regimes and cultural history of India. Indeed, cities emerged in those periods mainly based on political considerations. “The composition of these towns was built around the ruler and his kinsmen and followers, whose principal interests were centered on agricultural activities in their vicinity and the surplus they could extract from these” (Sabarwal 1977: 2).

Fortification in the form of a girdle of walls and defensive ditches was an important physical feature of the traditional towns. Town planning of ancient cities not only took note of the needs of defense but also of the settlement of various castes in separate wards, and the location of different activities connected with manufacturing, commerce, trade, religion, recreation, administration and justice.

2) Economic

In spite of the rise and fall of the political powers and shifting religious biases, the social and economic institutions of the traditional cities have shown certain stability.

Guild formation was an important feature of traditional towns. Merchants and craftsmen were organised into guilds called *shreni*. In those towns there were the guilds based on the occupation of one caste called *shreni* and also the guilds based on different castes and different occupations called *puga*. Rao (1974) points out that the guilds performed important function in the traditional towns in terms of banking, trading, manufacturing and to a limited extent judicial.

3) Religious and Socio-cultural

Authorities of the traditional urban centres patronised particular religion or sects. This had been delineated in the social organisation and culture of the towns. For example, Pataliputra reflected the Brahmanical Hindu civilisation under the rule of Chandra Gupta Maurya, while under Ashokan rule Buddhism nourished. Similarly the Islamic civilisation was concretised by the Muslim rule in the imperial capitals of Agra, Delhi, Lucknow, Hyderabad and in other places. The traditional towns were heterogeneous in terms of multiplicity of

religious, sectarian and caste groups. Certain specialist castes like florist, mason and tailor were to be found only in big towns. Each ethnic or religious group was governed by its own customary laws. The caste and the occupational guilds also had their own laws sanctioned by the political authority (Rao 1974).

4.3.3 New Features of Urbanisation in Early Colonial Period

With the coming of European colonial traders in India, the process of urbanisation entered into a new phase. Cities grew up in the coastal areas as ports-cum-trading centres. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries European trading posts were established initially for trading purposes. As the British power grew in the nineteenth century, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras became the political centres too. Indeed, in this period with the introduction and development of advanced technological knowledge, we find the emergence of new economic and political institutions, new modes of communication such as telegraph, railways, advanced system of roads and waterways. The process of urbanisation became smooth and widened the structure of economic opportunity and widened the social horizons of people.

In the nineteenth century, though the process of urbanisation grew in a modest way, the countryside suffered from the gradual process of the destruction of the cottage and small industries in the rural areas. In this situation, the new economic opportunity structure pulled a significant section of population to the urban areas. Many of the artisans became unemployed. Hence, the displaced rural artisans and labourers were also pushed to urban areas for employment. The late nineteenth century, however, witnessed a large-scale migration of the rural labour force especially from Bihar and eastern United Provinces towards the jute mills of Calcutta and other industrial destinations. To avail the new economic opportunities many people migrated either temporarily or permanently to the urban areas.

With the spread of education, the institutional arrangements of the urban centres also changed. The educated people joined the bureaucracy, and also took up jobs as teachers, journalists, lawyers and so on. They brought about a new worldview. The urban centres gradually grew up to be the centres of new social and political ideas, diverse economic activities and of heterogeneous populations. The new process of urbanisation presented various economic opportunities and scope for occupational and social mobility, it was only the upper caste and class people who were able to make use of these opportunities.

The new process of urbanisation, which began, with the advent of the British received a momentum at the beginning of twentieth century. The process of this urbanisation has some distinctive features. In the next section we shall describe the pattern of urbanisation during the twentieth century.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) What do you understand by Shreni? Answer in two lines.

- ii) Which of the words given in options a, b, c, and d can fill the blank space in the following sentence?

In the early colonial period, the volume of economic opportunities of people in the urban areas.

- a) enlarged
- b) remained the same
- c) minimised
- d) none of the above

4.4 PATTERN OF URBANISATION IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

India passed through a phase of rapid urbanisation in the twentieth century. The modern urban centres perform diversified functions in terms of economic, administrative, political, cultural and so on. Here, it is very difficult to classify the towns and cities in terms of a single activity. Generally, people classify urban areas on the basis of some prominent socio-economic and political features. For example, people mention that there are historical cities like Delhi, Kolkata, Varanasi, Lucknow etc., industrial cities like Ghaziabad, Modinagar, Kanpur, Jamshedpur, Bhilai etc., religious cities like Mathura, Hardwar, Madurai, Allahabad etc. Cities reputed for film making, like Mumbai and Chennai, have a special appeal for a villager or a small-town dweller. In sociology, we discuss the pattern of urbanisation in terms of its demographic, spatial, economic and socio-cultural aspects. But before we take up these aspects, let us also briefly explain how we define a town in the Indian context.

4.4.1 Definition of a Town or City

In India, the demographic and economic indexes are important in defining specific areas as town or city. The definitional parameters of an urban area in India have undergone several changes and modifications over the years. The following definition of town adopted in 1901 census was used until 1961.

- a) Every municipality, cantonment and all civil lines (not included in a municipality), and
- b) Every other continuous collection of houses permanently inhabited by not less than 5,000 persons, which the provincial superintendent of census may decide to treat as a town.

The main criterion for describing any area or settlement as urban was its administrative set-up and size and not the economic characteristics. As a consequence of this definition many of the towns in reality were considered only as overgrown villages.

In 1961 the 'urban area' was redefined taking into account the economic characteristics in addition to other administrative and demographic features. The definition adopted in 1961 census was also used in 1971 and 1981. And it remained unchanged in 1991 and 2001 also. According to this definition an urban area is:

- a) a place which is either a municipal corporation or a municipal area, or under a town committee or a notified area committee or cantonment board,
or

b) any place which satisfies the following criteria of:

- a minimum of 5,000 persons
- at least 75 percent of the working occupations are non-agricultural
- a density of not less than 1,000 persons per square mile, and
- a place should have certain pronounced urban characteristics and amenities such as newly found industrial areas, large housing settlements, places of tourist importance and civic amenities.

Apart from well defined towns and/or cities, the outgrowths of cities and towns have also been treated as urban agglomerations. At the 1961 census, the concept of 'town group' was adopted to obtain a broad picture relating to urban spread. This was refined in 1971 with the concept of urban agglomeration to obtain better feed back in regard to urban continuity, process and trends of urbanisation and other related matters. This concept without any change or modification has remained operative till 2001 census. An urban agglomeration forms a continuous urban spread and normally consists of a town and its adjoining urban outgrowth or two or more physically contiguous towns together with contiguous and well organised outgrowths, if any, of such town. (*Census Report 2001*)

While describing the urban places, the Indian census records consistently employ population size to classify the urban area into six classes as shown in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Classification of cities

Class I	with	1,00,000	and more	population	
Class II	with	50,000	to	99,999	population
Class III	with	20,000	....	49,999	population
Class IV	with	10,000	....	19,999	population
Class V	with	5,000	....	9,000	population
Class VI	with	less than	....	5,000	population

In India, urban places with less than 1,00,000 population are referred to as "towns", while urban places with 1,00,000 or more population are referred to as "cities". Urban centres with more than one million population are categorised as metropolitan cities. The metropolitan centres are a class by themselves characterised by large-scale consumption, and large quantum of inflow of people, goods, services and information (Prakasa Rao 1982: 17). Having described how urban area in India is classified into various categories of towns/cities, we now discuss some aspects of the pattern of urbanisation in India.

Activity 2

Identify the class of town/city you live in. Use the method of classification employed by the Indian census records.

Or

If you live in a rural area, give the class of the town/city nearest to your village.

4.4.2 Demographic Aspect

In India, population concentration has been one of the key features of urbanisation. The percentage of urban population has been little more than doubled from 10.8 percent in 1901 to 23.3 percent in 1981. And this has been almost tripled by 2001, when it has been recorded to be 27.8 percent. The urban population of India as per the 1991 census is 217,177,625 and this accounts for 25.72 percent of the total population. So far urban population of the country is concerned, only 25.85 million lived in towns in 1901 and by 1991 it increased by more than 8 times to 217.18 million. Out of the total population of 1027 million as on 1st March 2001, 285 million lived in urban areas. The net addition of population in urban areas during 1991-2001 has been to the tune of 68 million where as during the decade 1981-1991 it was 61 million.

Urban population has significantly increased in the post Independence period. For the forty years period from 1901 to 1941 the increase of urban population from 25.85 to 44.15 million has been quite modest compared to the 62.44 million of the next decade. There has been an increase of 115.05 million in urban population from 1941 to 1981. Note that 64.8 percent of this population has grown in the two decades between 1961 and 1981. Similarly the urban population has almost doubled in the decades 1971 (109.11 million) to 1991 (217.18 million).

There was a slow growth (and also decline in 1911) in the proportion of urban to total population in the early decades (1901-21). This is mostly because of natural disasters and slow rate of industrial and economic development. The rapid growth of urban population during 1941-51 has been mostly due to partition of the country and other political reasons, which led to refugee migration in the urban areas. The steady increase in the urban population in the decades prior to 1981 came about not so much because of planned economic development and industrialisation, but due to imbalanced agricultural development. The annual rate of growth of urban population declined from 3.83 percent during 1971-1981 to 3.09 percent during 1981-1991. During the decade 1971-1981 the level of urbanisation increased by 3.43 percent points. During 1981-1991 decade the increase has been only 2.38 percent. The increase in the urbanisation further declined to 2.1 percent points during the decade 1991-2001. As a consequence the annual rate of gain in percentage of urban population has also declined from 1.72 to 1.02 during the decade 1981-1991. This indicates that the tempo of urbanisation in India has slowed down since 1981.

4.4.3 Spatial Pattern

Spatial disparities have marked the Indian urban scenario. These disparities emerged mainly due to regional disparities, imbalanced population concentration and some times because of the change in the census definition of “urban areas”. In this context we need to mention about two concepts, namely over-urbanisation and sub-urbanisation.

Over-urbanisation

Towns or urban areas have certain limitations in accommodating population, providing civic amenities or catering to such needs as schooling, hospitals etc.

Beyond certain optimum capacities, it becomes difficult for the town administration to provide facilities for the increasing population. Mumbai and Kolkata are two such examples of cities (among others) which have urban population growth beyond their capacities to manage. This feature refers to over-urbanisation.

Sub-urbanisation

Closely related to over-urbanisation of a town is a feature called sub-urbanisation. When towns get over-crowded by population, it may result in sub-urbanisation. Delhi is a typical example (among others) where sub-urbanisation trend is taking place around it. Sub-urbanisation means urbanisation of rural areas around the towns characterised by the following features:

- a) a sharp increase in the 'urban (non-agricultural) uses' of land
- b) inclusion of surrounding areas of town within its municipal limits, and
- c) intensive communication of all types between town and its surrounding areas.

Now, we can also look at some of the variations in spatial disparities found in the pattern of urbanisation in India.

i) The Growth of Towns and Cities

The growth of urban towns did not show a unidirectional progress in India. Because of the variation in the census definition of 'urban' areas the number of urban centres declined. Only 1,430 towns out of a total of 1,914 towns existing in 1901 survived till 1961. About 480 areas considered as towns in 1901 lost their urban status because of the new definition of town in 1961 census. It is for this reason that one can see the decrease in the number of towns to 2700 in 1961 compared to 3060 in 1951. For example, in Rajasthan there were 227 towns in 1951, whereas this number declined to 201 in 1981. Similar decline has also been noticed in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. In the 1991 census 4,689 places were identified as towns as against 4,029 in 1981 census. Out of the 4,689 towns of 1991 as many as 2,996 were statutory towns and 1,693 were census or non-municipal towns as against 2,758 and 1,271 respectively in 1981. At the all India level, 93 of the 4029 towns of 1981 census were declassified and 103 towns were fully merged with other towns by statutory notifications of the concerned state/union territory administrations during 1981-1991. As many as 856 new towns were added to the urban frame of 1991. The maximum number of towns declassified were from the states of Punjab (21), Karnataka (19), and Andhra Pradesh (13) and the maximum number of the statutory towns added in 1991 census was from Madhya Pradesh (91).

ii) Variation in Urbanisation among the States

The pattern of urbanisation among different states in India shows an interesting feature of urban domination in some states. Five states namely Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh altogether accounted for 56 percent (in 1961) to 55 percent (in 1971) of the total urban population of India. In contrast the six states of Orissa, Haryana, Assam (including Meghalaya), Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland

account for 5 percent (in 1961) to 5.5 percent (in 1971) of the total urban population of India. In 1991 census some of the states having a higher proportion of urban population to the total population than the national average of 25.72 percent were Maharashtra (35.73 percent), Gujarat (34.40 percent), Tamil Nadu (34.20 percent) and West Bengal (27.39 percent). As per the Census 2001, Tamil Nadu (43.9 percent) is the most urbanized state followed by Maharashtra (42.4 percent) and Gujarat (37.4 percent). The proportion of the urban population is lowest in Bihar with 10.5 percent followed by Assam (12.7 percent) and Orissa (14.9 percent). Himachal Pradesh is the least urbanized state. These show that the urban domination in some states continues to exist even at the beginning of twenty first century.

Between 1961 and 1971 the pattern of **urban density** for Indian states shows somewhat similar trends. The states of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Assam and Kerala have densities higher than the all India average of 2948 persons per sq. km in 1961. A similar trend was found in 1971 also. States of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Nagaland, Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa, Bihar and Rajasthan had densities less than the all India average of 2,048 in 1961. The 1971 census reflected the same trend that was seen in 1961, with respect to the above mentioned states. Urban density for Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Assam lessened, during 1961-71 decade, possibly because of outward migration of people. In the year 1991, the urban density was highest in the state of West Bengal followed by Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana and Punjab. States of Tamil Nadu, Nagaland, Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa, Bihar and Rajasthan had densities less than the all India average of 3,370 in 1991 also. Thus when we look at the census figures we can see that the variation in terms of the urban density continued to the year 1991 almost unchanged.

iii) **Population concentration in the cities**

The population in the larger urban centres (with 1,00,000 or more) has constantly been growing in India. In 1981 more than 60 percent of the urban population in India lived in this category of cities. By 1991 their rate reached almost 65 percent. Out of the total number of towns, according to the 1991 census, in 300 the population exceeds 1,00,000 each. These 300 urban agglomeration/cities account for 64.89 percent of the urban population of the country. In the case of Maharashtra and West Bengal the share of Class I urban agglomerations/ cities in the urban population is high, being 77.85 percent and 81.71 percent respectively. Class I urban agglomeration/ cities contribute about two thirds of the urban population in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Meghalaya and Tamil Nadu.

iv) **Growth of Metropolitan Cities**

In India, Kolkata was the only city with a population of over a million in 1901. Mumbai crossed the one million mark by 1911. Till 1941 there were only these two cities in this category, i.e., with a population of over one million. Delhi, Chennai and Hyderabad entered into this category by 1951. Ahmedabad and Bangalore by 1961, and Kanpur and Pune by 1971. Lucknow, Nagpur and Jaipur by 1981 crossed the one million mark bringing the number of million-plus cities upto 12. At the time of 1991 census enumeration there were 23 metropolitan agglomerations/ cities with a population of more than a million each. The number almost doubled during the decade 1981-1991. Its number

has been increased to 35 at the time of 2001 census. At the time of 1981 census 25 percent of the total urban population was concentrated in the million-plus cities. By the year 1991 this has become 32.54 percent. That means that these cities in 1991 accounted for roughly one third of the country's urban population and one twelfth of the country's total population.

In 1981 barring Delhi which forms part of the Union Territory of Delhi, the remaining 11 cities are located in 8 states. In 1991, the 23 metropolitan cities were scattered among 13 states in India. But their concentration was more in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh, each having 3 such metropolitan cities. Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have two each and 7 were distributed among Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Delhi. In Kolkata the concentration of urban population was higher than other metropolitan cities for the decade 1971-81. This was followed by Bangalore, Chennai and Ahmedabad. The 23 metropolitan cities exhibited quite a diversified pattern of growth of population during 1981-1991. Of these metropolitan cities the highest growth of population was recorded in Visakhapatnam urban agglomeration (74.27 percent) followed by Hyderabad urban agglomeration (67.04 percent), both of which are in Andhra Pradesh. The lowest growth rate was recorded by Kolkata urban agglomeration (18.73 percent) followed by Patna urban agglomeration. Kolkata urban agglomeration which occupied the prime position since 1901 in terms of highest concentration of urban population relegated to the second position in 1991 and Greater Mumbai which occupied the second position since 1901 has been moved to the prime position in 1991. Kolkata was followed by Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. In 1988, while describing the glaring disparities that marked the Indian urban scene, the National Commission on Urbanisation stated two main aspects: (a) while the urban centres in India grew at an average rate of 46.2 percent during the 1970s, the million-plus metropolitan centres had an average growth rate of population only 29.6 percent during the same period, and (b) the significant regional variation in the nature of urbanisation process. Indeed, spatially the pattern of Indian urbanisation has been highly localised.

4.4.4 Economic Dimension

Urbanisation is a natural and inevitable consequence of economic development. Urbanisation accompanies economic development because economic development entails a massive shift of labour and other inputs from predominantly rural sectors to those predominantly urban (Mill and Becker 1986: 17). The National Commission on Urbanisation of India recognises the economic importance of the Indian cities and towns. It considers "urbanisation as a catalyst for economic development and that the towns and cities despite their problems are for the millions and millions of our people the road to a better future".

When we examine the various cities in India, we find that some cities have come up during twentieth century in places where there were nothing but forests earlier. One of the first steel cities in India, like Jamshedpur in Bihar, has provided employment to a large number of people including the Santals who are the local tribal inhabitants of this area. These tribals who were relatively isolated earlier have come into contact with a wide section of Indian population, coming from different regions, speaking different languages, and so on. Besides

Jamshedpur, three more steel towns have emerged after Independence. These are Bhilai in Madhya Pradesh, Rourkela in Orissa and Durgapur in West Bengal. Emergence of these steel factories has brought about not only prosperity but has led to the modification of the whole social scenario of this area. Areas that were socio-economically backward have now become prosperous and cosmopolitan (Srinivas 1986:88).

While talking about the economic features of urbanisation in contemporary India, occupational diversification and migration appear to be the key aspects. Let us briefly examine these aspects.

i) Occupation

The degree of urban-industrialisation and planned development through the Five-Year Plans could not bring about a significant shift in occupational structure in India till 1990. The percentage of Indian labour force in agriculture remained static between 1901 and 1971. In the said period 69.4 percent and 69.7 percent of the total labour force was in agriculture respectively. Though the percentage of urban population increased substantially during this period there have not been corresponding increase in the percentage of the labour force in the urban manufacturing, construction and service sector. Things have started improving slightly by 2001. In 1991 around 67 percent of the total workers were in the agricultural sector. In 2001 only 58 percent of the total workers have been recorded to be in the agricultural sector. The results from 2001 census clearly suggest a shift in the composition of labour force from a predominantly agricultural to moderately non-agricultural sector. (Census Report 2001)

The percentage of urban workers engaged in primary (comprising cultivation, household industry, mining quarrying, fishing), secondary (comprising manufacturing and processing) and tertiary (comprising commerce and service) sectors during 1993-94 is 16.8, 31 and 52.1 percent, respectively (see table 4.2). Whereas the total workforce engaged in these three sectors during the same period is 67.5, 12.0 and 20.5, respectively.

Table 4.2: Percentage of Urban Workers by Sectors, 1993-94

Sector	Male	Female	Total
Primary	9.0	24.7	16.8
Secondary	33.0	29.1	31.0
Tertiary	57.9	46.3	52.1

Source: NSSO 1996

There is widespread unemployment among the unskilled and other marginal workers in most of the cities. Again, unemployment among educated classes in urban areas is a peculiar feature in Indian society. It is estimated that 46 percent of the total educated unemployed are reported to be concentrated in the four major metropolitan cities in India (Sarikwal 1978). During the period 1983 to 1999-2000, the percentage of persons in the labour force at the national declined from 66.5 percent in 1983 to 61.8 percent in 1999-2000. The growth in employment for persons employed in the age group 15 years and above on

the usual principal and subsidiary status has declined significantly in the nineties vis-à-vis the eighties. And this has led to the increased incidence of unemployment. There was an increase in the incidence of unemployment both for males and females on the whole and in particular for rural areas. In the case of urban areas, however, there was a sharp decline between 1983 and 1993-94 from 5.1 percent to 4.6 percent, which has been somewhat eroded by a subsequent increase to 4.8 percent in 1999-2000 (National Human Development Report 2001).

ii) Migration

In the process of urbanisation in India, migration of the rural people to the urban areas has been continuous and is an important feature. The Urban Commission of India viewed rural urban migration to be “of vital importance for the development of rural areas”. The Commission again points out that besides releasing the surplus labour from the rural areas, for the landless labourers, *harijans* and *adivasis* these cities provide the opportunities, which are enshrined in our constitution. For these millions, our urban centres will continue to be havens of hope, where they can forge a new future (Mehta 1984: 1178).

In India, this increase in urban-ward migration is of fairly recent origin which began in the late 1930s. Of the total migrants in urban areas 20 percent persons are displaced from Pakistan, 51 percent from rural areas of the same state and 2.5 percent from the rural areas of other states. An important feature of the immigrant stream in urban areas is its predominantly male character (Sarikwal 1978: 25).

Due to the increase of unemployment in the rural areas, surplus rural labour force gets pushed to urban centres with the hope of getting employment. The other factors, which have pulled sections of the rural population (including the affluent sections) toward the city, have been the expectation of a variety of glamorous jobs, good housing, medical, educational and communication facilities.

Here it is significant to note that industrialisation should not be taken as prerequisite for urbanisation, as the process of migration from village starts when a relative saturation point is reached in the field of agriculture. This is a result of an imbalanced land/man ratio in the countryside.

Activity 3

If you live in a rural area find out how many of your relatives in the village have migrated to the urban areas. After making this survey, write a note on the cause(s) of their migration.

Or

If you live in an urban area, visit a slum and write a short note on the causes of migration of about twenty families in that area.

4.4.5 Socio-cultural Character

In the process of urbanisation the towns and cities of India have achieved heterogeneous character in terms of ethnicity, caste, race, class and culture. In

the urban areas there has always been coexistence of different cultures. Studies show that though various ethnic and/or caste groups have adjusted themselves with each other in the city, they have also tried to maintain their traditional identity. The migrants have maintained distinctive cultural traditions in the towns. Various migrant groups have maintained their own cultural identity. N.K. Bose (1968: 66) points out that the migrants tend to cluster around people with whom they have linguistic, local, regional, caste and ethnic ties. A study by Jagannathan and Haldar (1989: 315) on the pavement-dwellers in Calcutta shows that they retain close ties with kinship and caste groups for socialising and transmitting or receiving information from the village. Thus cultural-pluralism has been an important socio-cultural dimension of the urbanites.

Many of the Indian towns have a “mixed” character, i.e., they are the capital cities, centres of trade and commerce, important railway junctions etc. In these types of cities we find a “core” area which consists of the old inhabitants (Srinivas 1986). This area is the oldest in the city and on its fringe we find the new immigrants. The pattern of residence of this “core” population shows a close relation to language, caste and religion. Bombay is cited as an example of this type of city.

Lynch (1974) also points out that in many Indian cities, especially in the traditional cities like Agra, neighbourhoods have remained homogeneous in terms of caste and religious groups. There the untouchable Jatavs caste is concentrated in particular areas called *mohallas* (ward). But changes have taken place mostly because of politicisation, spread of education, and occupational diversification. But D’Souza (1974) noticed that in the planned city like Chandigarh neighbourhood has not been developed on the basis of ethnicity, common interest and other similarities. In this city the religious activities, friendship and educational ties are often outside one’s own neighbourhood.

Social stratification has taken a new form in the urban society. It is assumed that with urbanisation caste transforms itself into class in the urban areas. But caste systems do exist in the cities though with significant organisational differences. Ramkrishna Mukherjee demonstrates that people in Kolkata rank themselves in terms of caste-hierarchy. Stratification has also taken place on the basis of occupational categories. For example, Harold Gould (1965) points out that the *rikshawalas* of Lucknow belonging to several religious and caste groups exhibit uniformity in the pattern of interaction and attitudes in respect to their common occupation. Again it has been found that caste has not played a significant role in determining the choice of occupation in the urban areas. But it is important to note that both the caste and the class have their respective importance based on time and space and situational focus (Rao 1974: 275).

Marriage and family are two important aspects of social life. In the urban areas caste norms have been flexible with regard to the selection of mates. There have been increasing opportunities for the free mixing of young men and women. Again the voluntary associations have encouraged inter-caste marriages. As a result there have been more inter-caste and inter-religious marriage in the urban areas than earlier. Though it has been pointed out that joint families are breaking down in the urban areas, studies conducted in several parts of the country also suggest that joint families do exist in the cities among certain castes like Khatri of Delhi and Chettiars of Madras (for details see Kapoor 1965, Singer 1968).

Cities of India have to be studied in the context of cultural heritage. In the cities many little traditions have been brought in by the migrants and the great traditions have also achieved dimensional change. It has been pointed out that many forms of the great traditions are modified in the modern cities. Milton Singer (1968) shows that “the intellectual and ritualistic approaches to God are being discarded in favour of the devotional approach, which is more catholic and suited to urban conditions in Madras city. Technological innovations like microphone, cinema, automobile, etc. are used in promoting religious activities. Religious activities are not on decline in the metropolitan city of Madras but are being modernised”.

4.5 PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE CURRENT PROCESS OF URBANISATION

The current process of urbanisation has faced many problems in different parts of India. The most important of these has been the development of slums, in the urban areas. Slum population accounts for a substantial share of urban population in all types of cities in India. Even a planned city like Chandigarh has not escaped slums. The percentages of the slum population in Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai are 32,25 and 24, respectively. Slums are characterised by substandard housing, over crowding and lack of electrification, ventilation, sanitation, roads and drinking water facilities. Slums have been the breeding ground of diseases, environmental pollution, demoralisation, and many social tensions. Crimes, like juvenile delinquency, gambling, have also increased in number in slum areas. Signs of poverty are most visible in these places. A graphical representation of a slum is shown in figure 4.1.

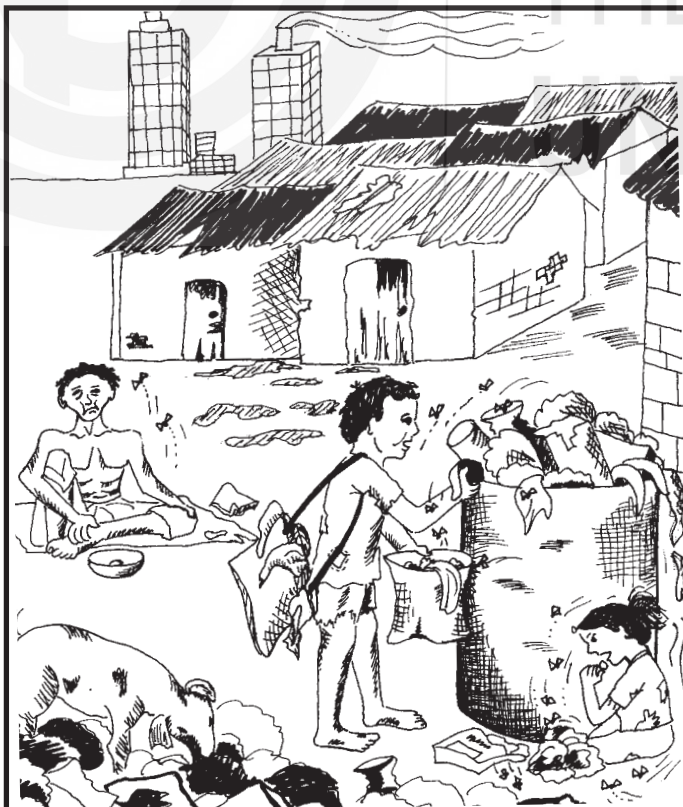


Fig. 4.1: Poverty and slums

Lack of housing has been another important problem in the process of urbanisation in India. This problem has been acute in cities with over a million population. Related to housing there have been problems on the planned use of urban land. The lack of adequate housing has been very marked especially for the lower income group and for the urban poor. In the light of the gravity of this problem, the government has passed the Urban Land Ceiling Act, Rent Control Act etc. The National Council on Urbanisation has also recommended that at least 15 percent of all new developments should be earmarked for the use of the economically weaker sections of the urban population.

Absence of planned and adequate arrangements for traffic and transport is another important problem in majority of urban centres in India. Though various new modes of transport and advanced technology have been used in our metropolitan cities to facilitate the movement of the people, these have remained insufficient to cope with the growing population there. Similarly, the extent of facilities medical, sanitation, drinking water, power-supply have remained insufficient in a majority of the urban centres in India.

After examining the extent of availability of facilities like housing, transport and traffic, medical, sanitation, electricity etc. in the urban areas, and the growth of urban population, one may say that there has been a tendency of over-urbanisation in India. The process of urbanisation in India has also been accompanied by sub-urbanisation. The development of modern modes of transport, and increasing demands on housing have led to the growth of sub-urbanisation. The sub-urban areas are growing at a faster rate in the metropolitan cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi and in all big cities of India.

The Urban Development Policy of India has been formulated to ensure that the urban centres play a positive role in national and regional development, to promote the **rural-urban continuum** and to replace the regional disparities. The Five Year Plans of the government of India have included various programmes pertaining to housing, slum clearance, slum improvement, land acquisitions and development.

The Sixth Plan placed special emphasis on development of National Capital Region (NCR) to de-concentrate economic activity from the core of Delhi into regional towns (Rao 1983). The concept of NCR aims to bring better regional parities in the process of economic development and social change in a vast area around Delhi. It has been formulated in order to meet the growth and expansion needs of the capital. The plan covers integrated development of about 30,000 sq. km in the Union Territory of Delhi and parts of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. A statutory body has been constituted through an enactment of Parliament in 1985 and a draft regional plan has since been prepared for the development of NCR (Government of India 1987: 597). The resource base of the National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB) includes budgetary allocation through plan provision and institution borrowing in the form of line of credit, priority sector loans from financial institutions and market borrowings in the form of taxable and tax-free bonds as extra budgetary resources. The Ninth plan provision for NCRPB was Rs.200 crore and during the Ninth plan the board has envisaged Internal and External Budgetary resources of Rs.3120 crore, to be mobilised from the capital market. The NCRPB has facilitated the development of infrastructure facilities in

different cities of the region including roads, bridges, water supply, sewerage disposal facilities etc.

4.6 IMPACT OF URBANISATION IN THE RURAL AREAS

In India, urbanisation along with westernisation and modernisation has furthered the process of rapid social change both in the rural and in the urban areas. One of the important results of urbanisation is the rural to urban migration. Migration has become a continuous process affecting the social, economic and cultural lives of the villagers widely. Rao (1974) distinguishes three different situations of urban impact in the rural areas. In the villages from where large numbers of people migrate to the far off cities, urban employment becomes a symbol of higher social prestige. Villages, which are located near the towns, receive influx of immigrant workers and face the problems of housing, marketing and social ordering. Lastly, in the process of the growth of metropolitan cities some villages become the rural-pockets in the city areas. Hence the villagers directly participate in the economic, political, social and cultural life of the city.

Srinivas pointed out that urbanisation in southern India has a caste component and that, it was the Brahmin who first left the village for the towns and took advantage of western education and modern professions. At the same time as they retained their ancestral lands they continued to be at the top of the rural socio-economic hierarchy. Again, in the urban areas they had a near monopoly of all non-manual posts.

However, the anti-Brahmin movement and the economic depression of the nineteen thirties led to the migration of Brahmins from the south and rural areas to metropolitan cities (Srinivas 1974: 468).

As a result of migration there has been a flow of urban money into the rural areas. Emigrants regularly send money to their native villages. Such money facilitates the dependants to clear off loans, build houses and educate children.

The urban centres of India have become the centres of national and international linkages. At present, many cultural traits are diffused from cities to the rural areas. For example, dress patterns like pants, shirts, ties, skirts, jeans etc. diffuse from cities to the rural areas. Besides these, new thoughts, ideologies are also diffused from the cities to the rural areas due to increase in communication via radio, television, newspaper, computer, the Internet and telephone. The urbanism, which emerges in the cities gradually, reaches to the rural areas, depending on their proximity to the cities.

The process of urbanisation has not been an isolated phenomenon. At present, along with the whole gamut of occupational diversification, spread of literacy, education, mass communication etc., continuity between rural and urban areas has increased. Urban jobs and other amenities of living have become status symbols in the rural areas. Many modern techniques of agricultural development and many of the institutional frameworks for rural development also generate from the urban centres. The large-scale commercialisation of agriculture has also been facilitated by the process of urbanisation. Similarly, agricultural

requirements for machinery have generated the growth of manufacturing units in urban areas.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) What is the trend in the flow of urban population in India? Tick mark the correct answer.
 - a) A steady increase
 - b) A state of stagnation
 - c) Both of the above
 - d) None of the above

- ii) Fill in the blank space in the following sentence by selecting one of the option given below.

The spatial feature of urbanisation in India has been

- a) localised
- b) balanced
- c) localised and balanced
- d) neither localised nor balanced

- iii) Explain, in four lines, the concept of National Capital Region.

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have defined urbanisation and taken a historical perspective to understand its patterns in India. We have then examined the spatial, demographic, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of urbanisation in contemporary India. We have also pointed out some of the problems which have arisen as a result of current process of urbanisation in India. Lastly, we have discussed the impact of urbanisation on the rural way of life.

Having looked at various facets of the patterns of urbanisation in India, we may conclude that it has been marked by regional and inter-state diversities, large scale rural to urban migration, insufficient infrastructure facilities, growth of slums and other allied problems. As we mentioned in section 4.6 some steps to solve some of the problems have been taken by the Government of India.

4.8 KEY WORDS

Demographic	Related to age, sex, density and overall structure of population
Migration	Movement of people either temporarily or permanently from one part of the country to another
Rural-Urban Continuum	A process of socio-economic interaction between the villages and the towns or cities
Urban Density	It refers to the number of people in an urban area per square kilometer
Urbanism	Urban way of life.

4.9 FURTHER READING

Jayapalan, N. 2002. *Urban Sociology*. Atlantic: New Delhi

Rao, M.S.A.(ed.) 1974. *Urban Sociology in India*. Orient Longman: New Delhi

Saberwal, S. (ed.) 1978. *Process and Institutions in Urban India: Sociological Studies*. Vikas Publishing House: New Delhi

4.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) In a specific sense urbanisation refers to the movement of people from village to the towns or cities where economic activities are centred around trade, commerce, industry, manufacturing, management and so on.
- ii) a

Check Your Progress 2

- i) “Shreni” was the caste-based occupational association of traditional Indian towns. This kind of guild formation was an important feature of towns in ancient India.
- ii) a

Check Your Progress 3

- i) a
- ii) a
- iii) The concept of National Capital Region has been formulated to meet the growth and expansion needs of the capital city of Delhi. For integrated development of Delhi, the region includes 30,000sq. km. of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

UNIT 5 URBAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Meaning and Definition of Urban Social Structure
- 5.3 Main Features of Urban Life
 - 5.3.1 Formality and Impersonality of Human Relationships
 - 5.3.2 Rationality
 - 5.3.3 Secularism
 - 5.3.4 Increased Specialisation and Division of Labour
 - 5.3.5 Decline in the Functions of Family
- 5.4 Organisational and Socio-Cultural Aspects of Indian Urban Communities
 - 5.4.1 Family, Marriage and Kinship in Urban India
 - 5.4.2 Caste
- 5.5 Urban Politics
- 5.6 Urban Social Issues
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 Keywords
- 5.9 Further Reading
- 5.10 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you should be able to

- discuss the meaning and definition of urban social structure
- explain the urban social structure in terms of kinship, religion, caste, and politics from a sociological point of view
- examine the changes in the urban social structure
- describe issues involved in the study of urban social structure in India.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

You have already studied the characteristic features of rural social structure and patterns of urbanisation in units 2 and 4 respectively. Unit 5 deals with the main features of urban social structures in India. In this respect, the unit explains another significant aspect of Indian social life and highlights the theme of continuity of basic social institutions in urban India.

The unit first gives the meaning and definition of urban social structure and then describes the main features of urban life. These features have been identified in the context of urban life found in industrialised societies. It next

describes the organisational and socio-cultural aspects of urban communities in India.

Here it becomes quite apparent that the features of urban life, discussed in section 5.3 are not exactly features found in Indian urban life. Instead the institutions of family, kinship and caste are dominant features of our urban life.

A brief discussion of politics in urban areas is given to show how the family, kinship and caste network figure prominently in political processes. Finally, we examine some of the issues involved in the study of Indian urban social structure.

5.2 MEANING AND DEFINITION OF URBAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

When we think of the term “urban” we immediately associate it with the term “city” and also with a distinct way of life. Both the terms “urban” and “city” are frequently used by us to denote the same thing. However, in the ancient civilisations like Greek, Mesopotamian, Sumerian, the term “civitas” was used for the religious and political association of families and tribes while “urbs” was the place of assembly, the dwelling, place where the association of families lived.

During the seventeenth century and ever since then, the term city has come to be understood as a kind of place while urban is understood as a quality of life which is found typically in the cities. It is the size of population and degree of complexity of organisation which differentiates a village from a town, a town from a city, and a city from a metropolis.

According to various social scientists, like Gordon Childe, Max Weber, the crucial feature of a city is the presence of a market and a specialised class of traders in it. Other religious, political, economic, technological institutions, complex administrative structures, religious centres, which complement the trade and commerce networks, find a place in the city. Thus, it is the factor of market economy and commerce, which brings together in a city the people of diverse origins, socio-cultural backgrounds. They all learn to live together. Out of the necessity to fulfil their needs and interests, the people of urban areas learn to organise themselves in relatively complex organisational arrangements. These organisations are based on indirectness of relationships and **rationality** of procedure in their functioning, for example, a hospital organisation, a super market, the court, etc. The rural social structure can be easily separated from the urban social structure in terms of these organisational arrangements, which are the basic ingredients of urban life. Other major features are complexity of outlook and behaviour, heterogeneity of population, anonymity, and impersonality. We will discuss some of these features in section 5.3.

The simplest definition of urban social structure has been given by geographers in terms of demographic criteria such as the size and density of population. The easiest way is to count heads. In the Indian context, for example, the 1961 census defined an urban place as a fixed community with a population of at least 5,000. The definition continued to be the same till 2001 census.

The second view which may be called ecological approach used for defining urban social structure has its origins in biology and botany in particular. Like the botanist who studies how particular plant species exist in nature, the sociologist taking the ecological perspective focuses on the spatial distribution of urban activities such as the residence pattern, markets, political institutions, business centres, etc. and on the processes and forms of urban growth.

Although the demographic and ecological factors are important to study urban social structure, it is essential to relate these factors to the socio-cultural dimensions of society. Only then they become more meaningful for sociological understanding of urban social structure.

The third view, which we may call the socio-cultural approach, emphasises the importance of cultural, psychological and other social dimensions of urban life. It focuses on the distinctive orientations, attitudes, and values of urban dwellers and on the distinctive patterns of human relationships found in urban settings. While it is relatively easy to identify large population concentrations, commonly referred to as urban areas, it is more difficult to characterise the style of life and social interaction patterns within these areas.

The degree of urbanism (urban way of life) of any given community is indicated by its size, density and heterogeneity of population. By heterogeneity, we mean the presence of a large number of people belonging to different socio-cultural castes and communities, having different languages, food habits, etc. For example in Delhi, we find people from all over India living in one colony speaking different languages, wearing different styles of clothes, eating different kinds of foods and so on. In rural society we do not find this kind of diversity. The larger, denser and more heterogeneous a population, the more we expect it to display a distinctly urban-character. Each one of the three indicators is capable of exerting an independent effect on social structure and individual attitudes.

5.3 MAIN FEATURES OF URBAN LIFE

A close examination of the dominant features of urban life shows that there are significant differences between those who live in cities and those in rural areas. Louis Wirth (1938: 1-24) has described the principal features of urban life. Urban values discussed by Louis Wirth and other sociologists in their studies of urbanism in western countries are not yet completely predominant in India. We can say that they are beginning to take roots in Indian cities. Thus, in the Indian context, the following description is not wholly relevant. It is being given here for the purpose of familiarising you with the following features generally associated with urban life. Another purpose is to urge you to find out for yourself to what extent you can observe these features in Indian city-life.

5.3.1 Formality and Impersonality of Human Relationships

Large size of urban areas prevents intimate and face-to-face contacts among all the members in the community. In urban communities, people interact with each other for limited and specialised purposes, for example, teachers and

students in a classroom, buyers and sellers in a store and doctors and patients in clinics. Urbanites do not usually come to know each other as 'whole persons', i.e., they are not usually concerned with all aspects of a person's life. Apart from their family members and friends they do not normally interact with others, except for limited or specialised purposes. This feature among the urban dwellers results in formal, impersonal, superficial, transitory, segmental and secondary contacts. This is in contrast to the primary contacts of people in villages who share personal, face-to-face, intimate, longstanding relationships with each other.

5.3.2 Rationality

With the impersonal nature of urban relationships, the urban orientations tend to be utilitarian. That is, people then enter into relationships, after calculating potential gains from these associations rather than for the intrinsic satisfaction of association. Here relationships are generally of contractual kind where profit and loss are carefully evaluated. Once the contract is over, the relationship between the people tends to end, as for example, in having the services of a trained nurse for a sick person, or entering into a contract with an agency to advertise your product, etc. This should however not give you an impression that all relationships between individuals in urban areas are only utilitarian. Always, there exists a wide range of variety in individual relationships. Here, we are only pointing out the general character of urban relationships.

5.3.3 Secularism

Heterogeneity of physical such as racial, social and cultural elements in urban life results in routine exposure to divergent life styles and values. People become more tolerant of differences as they become accustomed to seeing others very different from themselves. This rational and tolerant attitude produces secular orientations in life. Even though it is very difficult to measure concepts such as rationality and secularism, it is assumed that secular as opposed to religious orientations have often been thought to be associated with urban social structure. However this feature is not always present since we do find communal riots taking place in Indian cities more often than in rural areas. But generally, in a relative sense, we can say that secular values are associated with urban areas.

5.3.4 Increased Specialisation and Division of Labour

Population growth leads to a higher ratio of people to land, called '**material density**' by Emile Durkheim. He differentiated two types of density, namely (i) material density, that is, simple ratio of people to land and (ii) **dynamic or moral density**, that is, the rate of interaction, or communication within a population. In his theory of social development, Durkheim viewed tribes or families as the basic social units in pre-industrial or pre-urban societies. When they grow in size both their material and dynamic densities also increase simultaneously. This results in greater interaction between formerly separated social units.

Trade and commerce between units serve as stimulus to the **division of labour**. In other words, when similar but separated social units are fused by increased interaction into a larger and denser settlement, the new and larger units exhibit more specialisation in terms of the division of labour than that found in some of the previously separate units.

5.3.5 Decline in the Functions of Family

Many of the educational, recreational and other functions, performed within a rural joint family context, are taken over by other institutions such as schools, clubs and other voluntary organisations in the urban social context. In urban society there is generally a clear demarcation between the home and place of work, which is not always found in rural society. Correspondingly, at a psychological level urban dwellers' identities are not necessarily bound with their family roles. And also because, of' greater geographical mobility, regular contact between kin is often difficult if not impossible in these families. This however does not suggest that families are not vital in urban societies.

Having discussed the general features of urban social structure, it is not out of place to mention that the dichotomy emphasising rural-urban contrasts used by many western scholars is of little value for understanding urban social structure in India. Many studies completed during the fifties and sixties questioned the usual assumption that the process of urbanisation led to decline of family size, weakening of family ties, especially joint family and **secularisation** of caste and religious values, deeply rooted in Indian culture. We are now going to discuss these issues in the next section, dealing with organisational and socio-cultural aspects of urban communities in India.

Check Your Progress 1

i) List three approaches for defining urban social structure. Use two lines for your answer.

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ii) List three indicators of the degree of urbanisation. Use two lines for your answer.

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iii) Tick among the following options those features, which you think characterise urban social relations.

- a) Face to face contact
- b) Secondary contact
- c) Impersonality
- d) Informality
- e) Formality
- f) Superficiality

iv) Distinguish, in two lines, between material density and moral density.

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5.4 ORGANISATIONAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF INDIAN URBAN COMMUNITIES

Urbanisation has been viewed as an important force of social change. In India, this process has, on the one hand, meant economic growth, political change, new values and new attitudes. It reflects also the elements of continuity between rural and urban social structures. That is why, our discussion of the elements of urban social structure in India is in terms of the basic social institutions of Indian society, namely, family, marriage, kinship and caste. We show how in some respects, basic values and attitudes continue to dominate and how new ideas are gradually taking roots in the urban population.

5.4.1 Family, Marriage and Kinship in Urban India

It is usually assumed that the process of urbanisation leads to a decline in family size, weakening of family ties and break up of joint family system into nuclear families. This assumption presupposes that joint family, as it is found in India, is an institution of rural India associated with agrarian economy.

But as a matter of fact joint families are found in urban areas as well. The correlation of “joint” family with rural areas and “nuclear” family with urban is not tenable. Sociologists have gathered ample proof that joint families are as common in urban areas as in rural and that in both rural and urban areas a family may undergo a process of cyclical change from nuclear to joint and back to nuclear within a period of time.

When we observe the household dimension of family in urban India, the studies by K.M. Kapadia (1956) I. P. Desai (1964), A.M. Shah (1973), R. Mukherjee (1965) indicate that there is no correlation between urbanisation and ‘separate’ nuclear households. Assumption that Indian urbanites live in nuclear households and that urbanisation leads to breaking up of joint families cannot be sustained. Some studies show that not only kinship is an important principle of social organisation in cities but also that there is structural congruity between joint family on one hand and requirements of industrial and urban life on the other. From a detailed case study of nineteen families of outstanding business leaders in Chennai city, Milton Singer (1968) argues that a modified version of traditional Indian joint family is consistent with urban and industrial setting.

The role of wider family relationships is brought out by I.P. Desai. He points out that when there is some serious illness and people need to utilise the hospital facilities not available locally, members of the family and close kin residing in the bigger cities are called in for help (see figure 5.1). Likewise when a person in rural areas needs educational or economic advancement, he calls upon his urban counterparts for help. Recent studies show the important role of family and kinship ‘networks’ for the rural based boys seeking new avenues in the urban setting. They also show how the elders negotiating with urban institutions like banks, the administration, or the polity, ask for the help of their young relatives in cities.

This does not however suggest that there have been no changes in the family structure. Some of the changes, which call attention to the gradual modification of the family structure in urban India, are:

- i) diminishing size of the family, owing to the increasing awareness of family planning measures,
- ii) reduction in functions of family as a result of relegation of certain educational, recreational and other functions previously performed by families to other institutions, and
- iii) relative equality in regard to status and rights of women, as a consequence of more and more women seeking employment resulting in economic independence of women.

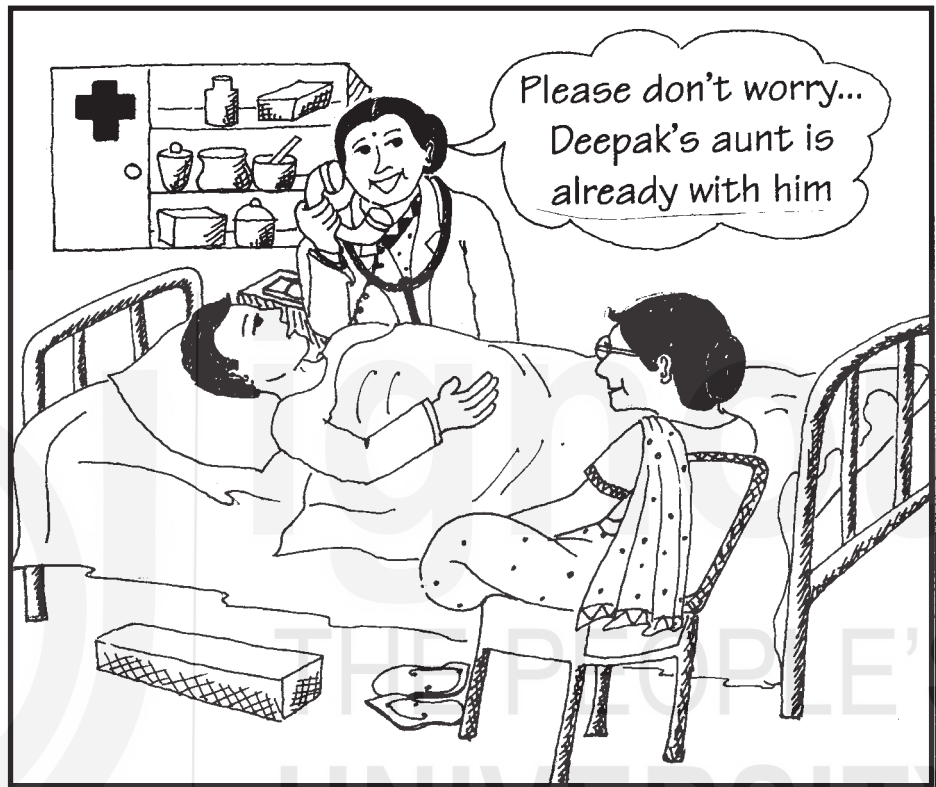


Fig. 5.1: Dependence on close kin is important also in urban areas

The phenomenon of inter-caste, inter-communal and inter-regional marriage, no matter how infrequent, in cities points to the changing attitudes of the urban individual. Similarly one can see the change in the selection pattern too. In selection for their bride, a higher proportion of men from urban middle class background tends to favour urban educated, preferably working girls. Thus, the non-traditionality as regards bride selection is found largely in urban areas. The evidence also suggests that the new concept of wifhood, i.e., emphasis on conjugal relationship, in India is associated with urban living. There has also been some evidence of increase in age at marriage in urban areas. Simplification of rituals at marriages and incidence of court marriages in the cities reveal a gradual separation of the institution of marriage from its sacred religious complex. Attitude of Indian urban youth towards marriage reflects willingness to depart from the traditional practices but often they are not able to put it in practice due to traditional sanctions and moral pressure which have retained their rigours to an appreciable degree in cities.

Still there is a general preference for arranged marriages, marriages within one's caste group and dowry. The increasing incidence of bride burning or

dowry deaths as they are called, clearly shows the increasing emphasis on dowry both in terms of cash and goods like coloured television sets, cars etc. In this regard, value of the college-educated urban youth of India has increased in the matrimonial 'market'.

Activity 1

Describe the nature of at least ten marriages in your own and wider family, in terms of

- i) Age at marriage for the boy and girl
- ii) Education level of the boy and girl
- iii) Occupation of the boy and the girl
- iv) if the marriage is within the caste, inter-caste, inter-communal, interregional
- v) the place of marriage ceremonies (e.g. bride's house, court, temple etc.)
- vi) the traditional gift-exchange (bride-price, dowry, any other form of giving and taking of gifts) at the marriages.

5.4.2 Caste

Generally caste is thought to be a phenomenon of rural India mainly associated with agrarian economy. Caste system has been viewed as a system, which has restricted the development of non-agrarian economy. It is assumed that urbanisation along with industrialisation would induce certain essential changes in the caste-based system of stratification.

Sociologists, like Ghurye (1962), Gore (1970), D'Souza (1974), Rao (1974), have conducted studies in urban areas. Their studies have shown that caste system continues to play an important role in urban areas. Opinions are, however, divided regarding the degree of persistence or degree of flexibility in the caste system found in urban setting. In this section we will discuss how the caste system has continued to persist and exert its influence in some sectors of urban social life while it has changed its form in some other sectors. For this purpose, we take examples from sociological studies of urban life in India.

When it comes to every day reality caste plays a significant role. Harold Gould's (1974) study of the *rickshawallas* of Lucknow shows that, as far as their occupation is concerned, they (i.e. the *rickshawallas*) follow secular rules but when it comes to personal, family matters, such as marriage, the caste identities are all important. Thus, a dichotomy exists between workplace and domestic situation.

To take another example, M.S.A. Rao (1974) has shown that caste system exists in cities. But he points out some significant organisational changes in the way it exists in cities. He says that due to the introduction of modern industry, growth of professions and the emergence of new occupational categories there has emerged a new class structure along with new status groups. Due to the impact of democracy and the electoral system adopted by India,

the power axis, i.e. distribution of power and the formation of different kinds of elites, has changed from the traditional system.

In respect of the change in the distribution of power, we find that in pre-British India, upper caste was also the upper class. It would seem that now with education and new types of occupations this correlation of caste and class is no longer the case. A. Beteille (1971) has pointed out that higher caste does not always imply higher class. This disharmony is most often found in the Indian cities where new job opportunities have developed.

In spite of these changes caste has not disappeared and in the process of establishing social identities it is still widely used in all parts of India. In fact, some sociologists say that it is not necessary at all that with the process of urbanisation it will give way to class system of stratification in urban areas.

The establishment of caste association in order to help their caste fellows in terms of educational and occupational opportunities, political power, etc. again reveals the vitality of caste system. The most powerful role that caste identity is playing in contemporary period is in politics which governs the power dimension. The need to gain power through the modern political System has forced leaders to mobilise people of not only one's immediate sub caste but also the wider caste group itself. Caste provides a ready made identity and people align themselves along with the caste lines. In India we have at all levels a parliamentary democracy where the number of votes become very important. Therefore, in today's India, horizontal unity of caste over a wide area, in both rural and urban sectors, provides a vote 'bank' that can ensure the election of a candidate from one's own caste.

Caste seems to have also become a basis for organising trade union like associations. These trade unions are nothing but interest groups which protect the rights and interest of its caste members, such as the, Gujarat Bania *Sabha*; the Kshatriya *Mahasabha* (Gujarat), Jatava *Mahasabha* of Agra (U.P.); etc. These are caste associations, which perform the functions of a trade union for its caste members. On the one hand, this can be viewed as the strength of a caste; on the other, as pointed out by Leach (1960) once a caste becomes a trade union-like organisation, it becomes competitive and therefore it becomes a class group.

Certain aspects of behaviour associated with caste ideology have now almost disappeared in the urban context. The rules of commensality have very little meaning in the urban context where one may not know or may ignore the caste identity of one's neighbours, friends, servants, etc. Though in family and marriage matters, caste is still quite important but other factors such as, education, occupation etc. of the partners are also just as important as caste. The frequency of inter-caste, inter-region marriages have increased with the young people coming more in contact with each other in urban areas. It is clear that caste is still significant in urban areas, although its functions have changed and become modified. We may say that it has lost some of its earlier rigidities and has become more flexible.

In the Indian context, there have been very scant sociological studies relating to neighbourhood relations in urban settlements. M.S. Gore (1970) has studied the relationships among immigrant groups in neighbourhoods of Mumbai. He tends to suggest that neighbourhood interaction is marked by a high degree of

informality and that caste, kinship and other traditional collectivities are the major basis of such participation. In this sense the concept of urban neighbourhood does not appear to be a significant feature of urban life in India.

Sylvia Vatuk (1972) has shown that there has not been any marked change in the traditional family and kinship system in the urban areas. Neither does the Indian urbanite suddenly become an anonymous, city-bred person who is totally isolated from primary contacts outside the nuclear family. She found that the kinship organisation in the old wards (*mohalla*) of Meerut city in the past, and amongst the poorer section of the population in the city even today, follows the same pattern as in the rural districts of this region. The persistence of the similar pattern of kinship organisation, as found in the villages, in the older and poorer sections of the city goes to show that there is no sharp cultural discontinuity between the masses of the pre-industrial towns and the peasants of the countryside.

Let us now go back to the discussion of the relevance of caste in politics and the nature of politics in urban area.

5.5 URBAN POLITICS

Urban areas were places where the first experiments in political representation were tried in India during the British rule. Long before state (provincial) governments were democratised, almost a hundred years ago some form of elections based on limited franchise had been introduced in the Indian cities. With only municipal governments opened for public participation, some of the most qualified persons entered public life through the municipal institutions. Even Subhas Chandra Bose had taken active interest in Kolkata municipal affairs. Mumbai had its sherifs, and the municipality at Mussoorie ran a post graduate college on its own; some others maintained hospitals. A number of princely states too had begun to associate peoples' representatives with activities like inspection of public transport systems, running of schools, and primary health service in 'capital' cities. From the point of view of the then rulers, these were half way measures to meet the demand for local government and initial training in democracy.

The independence movement had its counterparts in urban setting in the nature of promotion of the Swadeshi movement and organisation of the trade unions, the two elements of the independence movement were widely supported by urbanities of many cities. Gandhiji advocated the idea of the entrepreneurs becoming the trustees of the labour class and succeeded in organising the trade union in Ahmedabad. Trade unions, which started as political wings of political activities, have shown their relevance for elections and for acting as pressure groups.

The city government in independent India shows the nature of urban politics first in the elections to the municipal bodies, second in the working of these institutions, and thirdly in relation to state and national elections. We may ask the question- is the new political system transforming the existing socio-cultural system into new forms and are new political institutions adapted to the existing social structure? Many authors studying various aspects of urban politics

indicate the resistance of the traditional social structure in the face of democratic politics. Rosenthal's (1970: 71) study of municipal politics in Agra and Poona and Khadija A. Gupta's (1971) study of political process in Uttar Pradesh suggest that wealth, communal, sectarian and caste factors prevail over secular factors in politics and that political processes are by and large the same everywhere in urban India.

Evidence also suggests that during elections, the traditional element of caste plays a dominant role. Adrian Mayer (1958) studied municipal elections in the town of Dewas in Madhya Pradesh, and found that political party and its units were main bases of support for one of the candidates, and the management of local leaders and their kinsmen for the other. A weak political structure makes the ad-hoc arrangements based on caste kinship and neighbourhood more important for political activities. Mayer calls these ad-hoc arrangements, which may no longer be activated after elections as 'action-sets'. Robert G. Wirsing (1981) has on the other hand observed a proliferation of diverse types of voluntary organisations in urban areas. These organisations serve as major means of the democratisation of urban politics. During recent years the bodies such as Citizens for Democracy, People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Sampurna Kranti Manch, Samprdayikta Virodhi Samiti, Common Cause etc. may be seen as important non-party organisations playing an important role in the process of democratisation, politicisation, and secularisation in urban areas.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Which of the following statements is correct?
 - a) Joint family is an institution of rural India associated with agrarian economy.
 - b) There is no direct correlation between urbanisation and separate nuclear households.
 - c) There is a direct correlation between urbanisation and secularisation.
 - d) The traditional correlation between caste and occupation has weakened in urban areas.

ii) How is the institution of marriage in the cities gradually separated from its sacred religious complex today? Use three lines for your answer.

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iii) How does the city government in independent India show the nature of urban politics? Use four lines for your answer.

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5.6 URBAN SOCIAL ISSUES

The process of urbanisation brings in its wake a host of problems, which were discussed in section 4.5 of unit 4 on Patterns of Urbanisation. The general problems of population and urban growth present the social issues which most of the developing countries are facing at the present time. In this section we will discuss how in the context of urban India, certain features of urban social structure, specially the persistence of social relationships pertaining to rural areas, give rise to the particular issues.

The pattern of social relationships and interaction among various sections of Indian cities show that both caste and religion cut across the lines of class. This gives caste and the religious affiliations a significant meaning for the emerging pattern of social mobility in urban areas. The new opportunities for jobs, available in cities and the presence of caste groups besides various religious and ethnic groups among the Indian urbanites widen the scope of inter-caste/religious/ethnic competition. Hostilities and opposition to those in profession, industry, commerce and government jobs characterise the pattern of conflict or cooperation among various groups for their share in power structure. The role of these new urban groups and their ideologies become the subject of research for sociologists interested in urban issues.

Along with the persistence of kinship and caste structures in urban areas, we also witness the co-existence of areas with a markedly rural social make-up and highly urbanised sections in Indian cities. Then, there are immigrants who live between rural and urban cultures. The interaction among these elements of urban life and emerging social relationships bring before us the issues peculiar to our urban social structure. For example, in every city we have the proliferation of slums inhabited by migrants from rural areas. The slum-dwellers provide essential services to the urban population. But they do not share the civic amenities available to citizens.

In addition, the new values of equality, autonomy and individual freedom and attitudes associated with economic growth, technological and political changes are gradually taking roots in urban populations. Often the conflict between new values and attitudes and those of caste/religion/ethnicity is felt at different levels- individual, family and the nation. To take the example of the first two levels, we find that generally in the city women have more freedom of movement and more access to education and jobs in organised sector. This is sometimes not appreciated by the older generation. Then, women in paid employment need to be away from their homes. With the wife at a full-time job outside the home, the husband may have to undertake some domestic chores, like cooking, washing, cleaning. He may have to take leave from his work if the child is sick. The traditional pattern of male-female roles within and outside the family does not provide a framework for these kinds of changes taking place in urban areas. As a result, we come across many instances of familial conflicts and role strains.

To take the example of conflict at wider levels, let us look at the norm of equal opportunity for jobs and other civic amenities. With better opportunities available to only those with higher socio-economic status, there is a growing conflict between what is believed to be possible in terms of equal opportunities

for jobs, education and other means of improving one's socio-economic status and to what actually happens in real life. In actuality, often we find caste or kinship being used as a criterion for allotting seats or selecting people for jobs rather than merit.

Activity 2

1) Do you live in an urban area?

If yes, then carry out the following activity on the basis of your actual observation. If no, then take up this activity on the basis of your visit to a town or city. Go to a slum-area, look around and talk to the people before answering the following questions:

- a) How many people (approximately) live in the slum, visited by you?
- b) Give the number of water taps, electricity poles, primary schools, dispensaries (homoeopathic, allopathic and Ayurvedic) and public parks in that area.
- c) Is the area served by garbage - removalists?
- d) Does the area have sewage - system?
- e) Are there any public conveniences?
- f) Are those public conveniences regularly cleaned?

5.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you studied the meaning and definition of urban social structure. You also learnt about main features of urban life as identified by scholars of urban areas in developed societies. In the Indian setting, it was pointed out that the basic institutions of family, marriage, kinship and caste continue to form the important elements of urban social structure. Then you briefly looked at the nature of politics in urban areas and finally at some of the urban issues in India.

5.8 KEYWORDS

Division of Labour

A concept referring to different people performing different functions according to the criteria of age, sex, knowledge, skill, etc.

Material Density

It is the density of population as described by Emile Durkheim. It refers to simple ratio of people to land.

Dynamic or Moral Density

It is the density of interaction between people of a society as described by Emile Durkheim.

Rationality

It is the practice of treating reason as the basis of belief and knowledge.

Urban Social Structure**Secularisation**

The process by which religions or sacred values are replaced by scientific and rational values.

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5.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i)
 - a) Demographic approach,
 - b) Ecological approach,
 - c) Socio-cultural approach.
- ii)
 - a) Size of population,
 - b) Density of population,
 - c) Heterogeneity of population.
- iii) b, c, e, f
- iv) Material density refers to the simple ratio of people to land and moral density refers to the rate of interaction or communication within a population.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) b, d
- ii) Simplification of rituals at marriage and incidence of court marriage in the cities show a gradual separation of the institution of marriage from its sacred religious complex.
- iii) The nature of urban politics is shown in the city government in Independent India in
 - a) the election process of the municipal bodies,
 - b) the working of these institutions, and
 - c) the links between city politics and state and national elections.

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