
UNIT 20 CASTE - STRUCTURE AND REGIONAL PATTERNS

Structure

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20.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you will be able to

- define the structure of caste in India
- describe the dimensions of regional variation of caste
- explain the relationship between caste structure and kinship, caste structure and occupation, and caste structure and power.

20.1 INTRODUCTION

The importance of caste in determining the nature of human groups and human relationships in India should be very evident to you from your study of earlier units of ESO-12. Caste can be identified as the single most important factor in the understanding of rural and urban India and its social, economic and political institutions.

In the previous Block, Block 4 of ESO-12, you learnt about the major religious communities and their social organisation. In this context you learnt about the significance of caste as a system of stratification found in nearly all the communities, especially amongst the Hindus. In this unit, we will tell you more about this system of stratification.

This unit will discuss the structure of caste as a regional reality. It will emphasise and denote the nature of caste groups as they exist in different parts of India. To be precise, a regional perspective of the caste system will be provided in this unit.

We begin by defining the caste structure in section 20.2. Then we have described the dimensions of regional variations of caste structure in India in section 20.3. In the process of presenting this regional profile of caste system in India we have explained to you the relationship between caste structure and kinship in section 20.3.1, caste structure and occupation in section 20.3.2; and caste structure and power in section 20.3.3. Finally, in section 20.4 we have given the summary of this unit.

20.2 DEFINITION OF CASTE STRUCTURE

Caste is a system of social stratification, which lies at the very root of social structure of most social groups in India. By social structure, we mean the persistent pattern of social interaction existing within and among social groups. These patterns of interaction are guided by the **normative system** of the society.

Caste structure is thus a pattern of social behaviour in which groups and individuals are guided by prescribed set of norms, values and sanctions. The groups and individuals occupy specific statuses within and in relation to other groups. In this system individuals are born into a certain caste and thereby acquire the role and status associated with that caste identity.

Sociologists have defined caste or (as locally referred to) '*jati*' as a "hereditary, endogamous, group which is usually localised. It has a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things by the concepts of pollution and purity, and generally maximum commensality i.e. interdining occurs within the caste" (Srinivas 1962:3). This definition describes the ideal form of caste system. However in real life there are innumerable variations and **permutations** in terms of structure and functioning of caste system.

Being a dynamic reality, which is highly flexible, it has shown tremendous variations from one region to another. But then we must ask, what is it that enables us to identify a caste? For this we must understand the relationship between the *varna* and *jati* or caste.

20.2.1 *Varna* and Caste

In theory, the caste system is interlinked with the '*Varna*' model which divides the Hindu society into four orders, viz., Brahmana, (Brahman, traditionally, priest and scholar), Kshatriya (ruler and soldier), Vaishya (merchant) and Shudra (peasant, labourer and servant). The first three castes are '**twice-born**' or '*dvija*' since the men from these castes are entitled to don the sacred thread at the Vedic rite of *upanayana*, which the Shudras were not allowed to perform. The untouchable castes are outside the *varna* scheme.

The term '*varna*' literally means colour and it was originally used to refer to the distinction between *Arya* and *Dasa*, in ancient India. According to the Rig-Veda, it was not applied to any classes, such as Brahman, Kshatriya, etc. However, the classes which existed at that time later came to be described as *varna* and the original distinction between *Arya* and *Dasa* gave place to the distinction between *Arya* and Shudra (Ghurye 1950: 52).

The caste system is an all-India phenomenon of which the *varna* model provides an all-India macro-structural scheme. In other words, the *varna* model only provides a framework within which the innumerable variations of castes throughout India are found. According to Srinivas (1962: 65) the *varna*-scheme is a 'hierarchy' in the literal sense of the term because the criteria of ritual **purity and pollution** are at the basis of this differentiation. Generally speaking, the higher castes are also the better off castes, and the lower castes are generally, the lower classes. However, this association between caste and class is not always true. A caste can be ritually high but ranked lower in the local caste hierarchy because this hierarchy is determined by secular factors like economic, political, educational status also. Thus, one of the most striking feature of caste system, as an actual reality has been the vagueness in the hierarchy, especially in the middle rungs.

According to the *varna* scheme there are only four categories. This scheme excludes the untouchables and its number is same throughout India. But this is not true in reality since even during the vedic period, occupational groups existed which were not subsumed by *varna*, although one cannot be sure whether these groups can be called castes or not. According to Ghurye, in each linguistic region, there are about 200 caste groups which are further subdivided into about 3,000 smaller units each of which is endogamous and provides the area of effective social life for the individual. Therefore, one can say that the *varna* scheme refers at the most only to the broad categories of the society and not to the actually existing effective units (Srinivas 1962: 65).

Srinivas states that the *Varna* scheme has certainly distorted the picture of caste but it has also enabled ordinary men and women to understand and assess the general place of a caste within this framework throughout India. It has provided a common social language, which holds good in all parts of India. This sense of familiarity, even when not based on real facts leads to a sense of unity amongst the people (Srinivas 1962: 69). Thus, the Indian society (by which we basically mean the Hindu society) has been full of changes and improvisations. But these changes have been against the background of the *varna* hierarchy. It is the *varna* frame which remains more or less constant while castes vary from region to region. Figure 20.1 shows that a *varna* may include different castes and these castes may divided into different subcastes.

Activity 1

Talk to any five adult persons in your neighbourhood about the relationship between caste, family and occupation. Ask them?

1) What is their occupation?

What is their father's occupation?

What is /was their grandfather's occupation?

2) If they are following their father's or grandfather's occupation what has been the changes in terms of skill and technology?

3) If they are not following their caste occupation, then what is the reason for this departure

Write a note of about two pages and compare it, if possible, with the reports of the other students at your Study Centre.

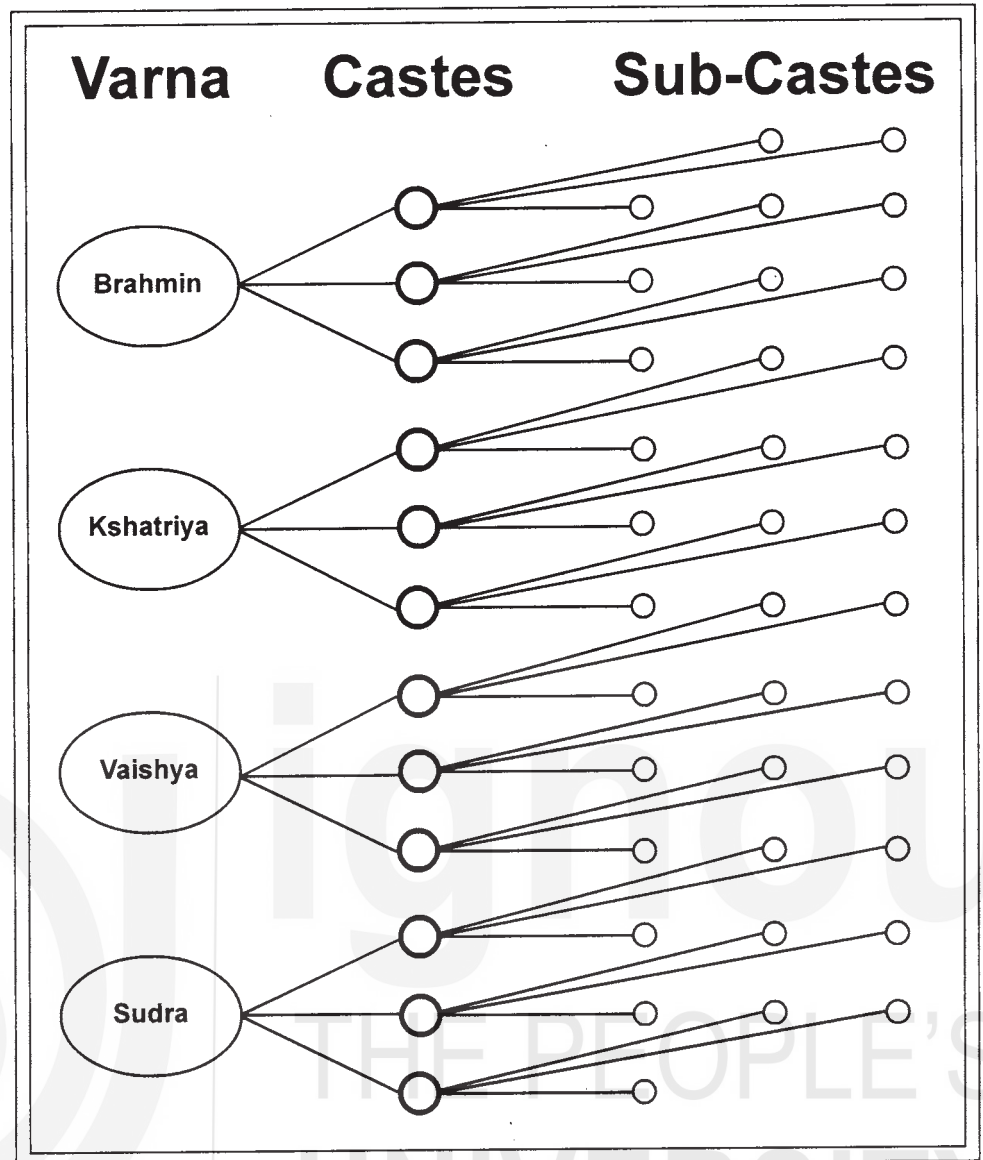


Fig. 20.1: The Varna model of caste system

20.2.2 Features of the Caste System

The main features of caste system are

- i) hierarchy,
- ii) endogamy,
- iii) association with a **hereditary** occupation,
- iv) restrictions on food and social intercourse,
- v) distinction in custom, dress and speech, and
- vi) civil and religious disabilities and privileges enjoyed by different sections of the society (Ghurye 1950: 50).

The Hindu society is divided into segmental divisions of caste. Caste is an ascribed status since caste membership is acquired by birth. The hereditary caste groups are arranged into a social and ritual hierarchy, with Brahmins at

the top, next the Kshatriyas, then Vaishyas followed by the Shudras. In the social hierarchy the lowest rung of the caste society is of the untouchables who are ritually the most impure. Thus, the concept of hierarchy forms the crux of the caste society. Each caste is considered to be more pure or impure than the other in the ritual sense of the term. The very shadow of some castes was once considered polluting. For example, in Tamil Nadu, the Shanar or toddy tappers were to keep 24 paces away from a Brahman. In Kerala, a Nayar could approach a Nambudiri Brahman but could not touch him, and a member of Tiyyan caste was supposed to keep himself at a distance of 36 steps from a Brahman (Ghurye 1950). Therefore traditionally the castes considered to be untouchable were forbidden entry into the upper-caste houses. In South India, even till the British period, certain parts of the town and cities were inaccessible to the untouchable castes.

Endogamy or marriage within one's own caste or sub-caste group is an essential feature of caste system. It is one of the main reasons for the persistence of caste system. People generally married within one's own caste group.

Traditionally, each caste was associated with an occupation. *Jajmani* system, about which you have already learnt in previous units, found in rural India enabled each caste to have a near monopoly over their hereditary occupation. Each caste was also ranked higher or lower on the basis of the ritual purity or pollution of their associated occupations. Thus, the Chamar castes of north India were considered untouchables since their occupation involved use of leather.

Each caste had its own caste council or panchayat where the grievances of its caste members were heard. These caste-councils headed, generally by the elder members of that caste, had the power to excommunicate a member from his or her caste if they did not accept caste restrictions. Caste restrictions operate in marriage, commensality or inter-dining and general social intercourse, as well.

In this section we have given an outline of the essential features of caste system. However caste structure has several variations. These variations are made clear when we examine its functioning in different regions of India. There are basically three dimensions in which we can examine the variations in the caste system. Therefore, in the next section we will begin by discussing the dimensions of regional variations under which we will describe the relationship between caste structure and kinship; caste structure and occupation; and finally caste structure and power.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Define the concept of caste in about four lines.

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ii) List some of the features of caste system in India. Use about four lines.

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iii) Fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

- a) Caste status is an status.
- b) Ritual and determines the place of a caste in the caste hierarchy.
- c) The term literally means colour.
- d) *Varna* is an all India category while varies from one region to another.

20.3 DIMENSIONS OF REGIONAL VARIATIONS

Caste as a regional reality can be seen in the different patterns of caste-ranking, customs and behaviours, marriage rules and caste dominance found in various parts of India. For the sake of clarity, we are going to explain the dimensions of regional variations in terms of three aspects: caste structure and kinship; caste structure and occupation; and caste structure and power. However, these are only a few of the regional variations that are outlined here in this unit. In reality great diversity exists between regions as well as within regions.

20.3.1 Caste Structure and Kinship

Caste structure is intimately related to the kinship system amongst the Hindus in India. The sole reason for this relationship lies in the endogamous nature of caste system. Caste is basically a closed system of stratification, since members are recruited on the criteria of ascribed status. In other words, an individual becomes a member of a caste in which he or she is born. Thus it is an ascribed status. Even if there is social mobility in the caste system through the process of Sanskritisation, urbanisation, etc., it is only a positional change rather than a structural change.

A person remains the member of his/her caste irrespective of his/her individual status. Any movement in the structure occurs in the social mobility of the caste group in the local hierarchy of the society, which is only a shifting of its position from one level to another.

Kinship is a method or a system by which individuals as members of society relate themselves with other individuals of that society. There are two types of kinship bonds. One is consanguinal and the other is affinal. Consanguinal ties are ties of blood such as, between mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, etc. Affinal ties are ties through marriage, such as, between husband and wife, man and his wife's brother, etc. (For further details refer back to unit 8, Block 2, ESO-12).

Kinship in India is largely an analysis of the internal structure of the sub-caste. Sub-caste is the largest segment of a caste and it performs nearly all the functions of caste like **endogamy**, social control, etc. For example, (the Brahman caste has several sub-castes like, the Gaur Brahmans, the Kanyakubjis, the Saraswat Brahmans, etc. It is these segments of the main caste of Brahmans, which form the effective functioning group within which social interaction, marriage etc. takes place. However, these segments are also subdivided and have a regional connotation too, like the Sarjupari Brahmans of North India are those who originally lived beyond the river Saryu or Ghaghara.

The effective caste group is the caste population of a single village while the effective sub-caste group within which marriage and kinship takes place is composed of the people belonging to the region around the village having several scores of settlements. Due to the practice of endogamy and restriction in social intercourse a person marries within the sub-caste group, or at the most caste group in India, which extends generally, beyond the village to a larger region.

Kinship system found in various parts of India differs from each other in many respects. However, generally speaking, we can distinguish between the kinship system in the Northern region, the Central region and the Southern region.

North India is in itself a very large region, having innumerable types of kinship systems. This region includes the region between the Himalayas in the North and the Vindhyas in the South. In this region a person marries outside the village since all the members of one's caste in a village are considered to be brothers and sisters, or uncles and aunts. Marriage with a person inside the village is forbidden. In fact, an exogamous circle with a radius of four miles can be drawn around a man's village (Srinivas 1955: 12).

Hypergamy is practised in this region according to which a man takes a wife from a clan which is lower in status to his own clan. That is, a girl goes in marriage from a lower status group to a higher status group within a sub-caste. The effect of this **hypergamy** and village exogamy is that it spatially widens the range of ties. Several villages become linked to each other through affinal and matrilineal links.

In his study of the Ramkheri village in Madhya Pradesh, Adrian Mayer (1960) not only described the Rajput caste and other sub-castes of the village but also the region around it as well.

The clans, lineages, and *kutumbs* are all part of the internal structure of the caste at the same time being part of the kinship organisation. These groups are all the time increasing and branching off with time.

The organisation of family in the northern region is mainly patriarchal and patrilocal. The lineage is traced through the male, i.e. patrilineal system is followed in this region. It is patriarchal because authority lies with the male head of the family and it is patrilocal because after marriage the bride is brought to reside in the house of the bridegroom's father.

Generally, in most of the castes in the north such as the Jats, an agricultural caste of South Punjab, Delhi and Haryana the “four-clan” rule of marriage is followed. According to this rule,

- i) a man cannot marry in the clan to which his father (and he himself) belongs;
- ii) to which his mother belongs;
- iii) to which his father’s mother belongs; and
- iv) to which his mother’s mother belongs (Karve 1953).

In this region a person avoids marriage with kins who are related to him or her five generations on the mother’s side and seven generations on the father’s side ideally. However, in reality as discovered by Mayer in his study, these rules can be broken in some cases (for further details see unit 8, Block 2, ESO-12).

In the northern region, therefore, marriage with cousins, removed even by two or three degrees is viewed as an incestuous union. In most parts of this region, as mentioned earlier, village exogamy is practised by most of the castes, especially the Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaishya castes. This rule is known in Delhi, Haryana and Punjab, as the rule of *Sassan*.

In Central India which includes Rajputana, the Vindhya, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Orissa we find the general practice of caste endogamy. Hypergamy is most characteristic of the Rajputs of this region and village exogamy is also found in this region. However, in this region especially in Gujarat and Maharashtra amongst some caste communities we find cross-cousin marriages being practised. Here there is a tendency for a man to marry his mother’s brother’s daughter. But marriage with the father’s sister’s daughter is taboo. The preference for a single type of cross-cousin marriage seems to move away from the taboo of marrying cousins of any class in the northern region. Thus, in many ways this preference suggests a closer contact with the practices of the southern region.

The Southern region comprises the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala where the Dravidian languages are spoken. This region is distinct from the northern and central regions of India in the sense that here we find basically preferential rules of marriage. Here a man knows whom he has to marry while in most areas in the north a man knows whom he cannot marry.

Most of the parts of the Southern region except some, like the Malabar, follow the patrilineal family system. Here also we find exogamous social groups called *gotras*. The difference between the exogamous clans in the north is that a caste in a village is held to be of one patrician and therefore, no marriage is allowed within a village. Sometimes even a group of villages are supposed to be settled by one patrilineage and marriage between them is prohibited.

In the South, there is no identification of a *gotra* with one village or territory. More than one inter-marrying clans may live in one village territory and practise inter-marriage for generations. Thus, the social groups, which are formed due to this kind of marriage pattern in the South shows a centripetal tendency (of moving towards a centre) as against the centrifugal (of moving away from the

centre) tendency of social groups found in north Indian villages. In the South, a caste is divided into a number of gotras. The first marriage creates obligations about giving and receiving daughters. Hence, within exogamous clans, small endogamous circles are found to meet inter-family obligations and a number of reciprocal alliances are found in South Indian villages.

Apart from castes, which are patrilineal in the southern region, we also find some castes, such as the Nayars of Malabar district who follow matrilineal system of kinship. A typical Nayar household is made up of a woman, her sisters and brothers, her daughters and sons and her daughter's daughters and sons. Amongst the Nayars, property passes from the mother to the daughter. But the authority even in this system lies with the brother, who manages the property and takes care of his sister's children. Husbands only visit their wives in this system. The Nayar matrilineal house is called a *Tharavad* (see figure 20.2). Nayar is a broad category of castes of which not all of them follow the same kinship system (Dube 1974: 26)

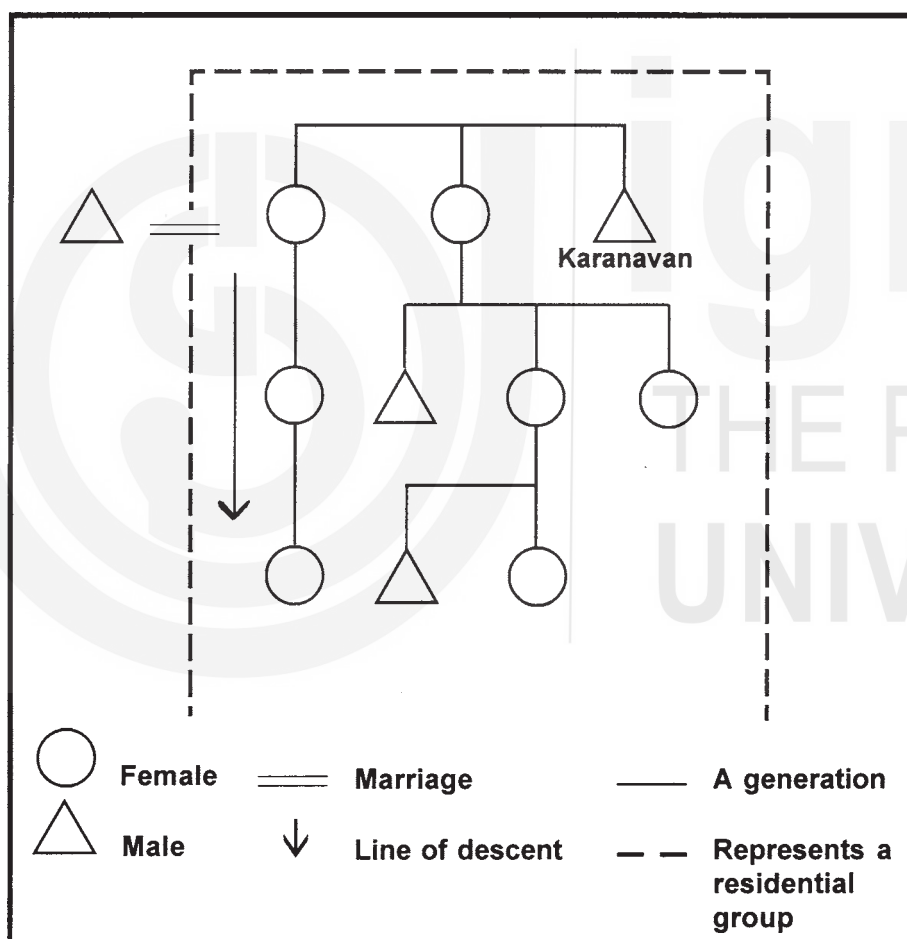


Fig. 20.2: A Tharavad

The relationship between the caste structure and the kinship system is so intertwined that we cannot understand one without understanding the details of the other. In this section we have explained the regional variations found in the relationship between the caste structure and the related kinship pattern. Now let us see the way in which caste is related to occupation.

20.3.2 Caste Structure and Occupation

All over India today we find that caste restrictions are not as meticulously observed as they were some decades ago. The hereditary association of caste with an occupation used to be a very striking feature of the caste system. It was so much a part of the caste system that some sociologists even argued that “caste is nothing more than a systematisation of occupational differentiation” (Srinivas 1965: 1-77). In fact, it can be said that caste was a system, which ensured an occupation to everyone, and therefore it was a method to control competition between social groups in the economic sphere.

However, as Srinivas says, the occupational aspect of the caste system would have broken down completely in the context of a growing population, if not for the surplus population in all occupational categories like artisans, traders, servicing castes falling back on agriculture. Traditionally agriculture was a common occupation for all castes and Brahmans, Kshatriyas and even Vaishyas have been dependent on agriculture.

A caste is considered to be high if its characteristic way of life is high and pure and it is considered to be low if its way of life is low and polluting. By the term ‘way of life’ we mean whether its traditional occupation is ritually pure or polluting. For example, the occupation of the Brahman Priest is ritually pure while the traditional occupation of a leather working caste like the Chamar of U.P. is considered to be ritually polluting. But the remarkable aspect of caste system is that the presumed hierarchy of ‘way of life’, which includes diet, occupation, etc. does not often correlate with the observed order of caste ranking found in several regions of India. For example, in spite of the trader castes being vegetarian (which is considered to be ritually higher) in Rampura, a village of Mysore, they are ranked ritually lower than the non-vegetarian peasant castes of the same village (Srinivas: 1955).

Another discrepancy between caste occupation and ritual ranking is that washing, sweeping and such other activities are done by everyone but when the members of the caste whose traditional occupation is to perform those activities do it, then it is considered to be polluting. Thus, it is the traditional association of a caste with an occupation, which determines its rank in the local caste hierarchy (Mckim Marriot 1959).

In the association of caste structure with a hereditary occupation the “*jajmani* system” forms the framework. The *jajmani* system, as you have already read in unit 2, Block 1 of ESO-12 is a system of economic, social and ritual ties between different caste groups in the villages. Under this system some castes are patrons and others are service castes. The service castes offer their services to the landowning upper and intermediate castes and in turn are paid both in cash and kind. The patron castes differ from one region to another depending on the socio-economic and political status of the castes. For example, the Rajput, Bhumihaar and Jat are the patron castes in the North and Kamma, Reddi and Lingayat in the South. The service castes comprise Brahman (Priest), Barber, Carpenter, Blacksmith, Water-carrier, Leather-worker, etc.

Thus, to understand regional variations we have to know something about the ownership of land, the land tenure status and adherence to the *jajmani* system. These economic organisations depend a lot on the caste structure and regional topography and vice versa.

There is a congruence between high caste status and land ownership. At the top of occupational hierarchy stands a group of families, which control and own most land rights in the village/region. They also belong to the caste occupying the highest rank. Next in the hierarchy would be estate managers, landowners of relatively smaller size who are drawn from the castes who occupy a position next to the highest ranking castes. Smaller tenants and sub-tenants occupy the middle ranking caste groups. Finally, labourers are drawn from the lowest ranking caste (Such association between caste and class rank and traditional occupation has been mentioned by such sociologists as Ramkrishna Mookherji and Andre Beteille 1966).

The tendency of land ownership by the high castes serves to maintain and reimpose the existing caste hierarchy. However, with the changing times, impact of colonial rule and the consequent introduction of western education, this general association of higher caste with higher class (in terms of ownership of land, wealth and power) has been disturbed (Beteille 1966:3).

However, in spite of these changes the ritual criteria of caste ranking remain important. Although even in the ancient times it was not all-important, as secular criteria of wealth and power of which land ownership is an important aspect did determine the status of a caste. The early nineteenth century account of Abbe Dubois, a famous French philosopher, who travelled extensively in South India, exemplifies this aspect very clearly when Dubois (1928: 23) stated, “thus the caste to which the ruler of a country belongs, however low it may be considered elsewhere, ranks amongst the highest in the ruler’s own dominions, and every member of it derives some reflection of dignity from its chief”.

When we observe the regional patterns, we find that in the plains of Uttar Pradesh, two or more cultivating castes coexist. There is also the presence of a large number of scheduled caste groups, which have a numerical preponderance in the population. They generally constitute the labour force in this region. Caste groups are many and are heterogeneous in nature. There is a lack of uniformity in ranking and therefore, the caste structure is not well defined as is found in the southern regions.

In Bengal, as Andre Beteille reports, the Hindu population did not have the Kshatriya and Vaishya *Varna*. There was a large assortment of groups at the bottom known collectively as *Chandala* or *Asprishya*, who were technically exterior to the four-fold *varna* scheme. Traditional Bengal had five categories of Brahmans—Saptasati, Madhya deshi, Rarhi, Barendra, and Baidik. Of these the last three have had a recognisable and significant identity and an eminent position in the social hierarchy of Bengal. At the other end of the caste ladder (the only two which were found in Bengal) were the sudras. Sudras were also in turn divided into ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ castes based on their hereditary occupation (Beteille 1977).

In Orissa, as reported by Bailey, in his study of Bisipara, an Oriya hill village, the Warrior castes owned most of the land and combined soldiering with farm management. The outcastes, referred to as ‘*praja*’, were their servants. The other castes, including the Brahmans were in a position of economic dependence and political subordination to them (Bailey 1966:122-127).

Turning our attention to regions that are clearly dominated by the presence of one agricultural caste we find the case of Haryana and Punjab. In these states we find the dominance of a single agricultural caste referred to as the 'Jats'.

As compared to the north, in the district of Tanjore, we find a clear-cut hierarchy existing in the caste system with Brahmans as land-owners. The Hindu social structure is clearly demarcated between the Brahmans, the non-Brahmans and the Adi-Dravidas. The Brahmans are the landowners; the non-Brahmans are the tenants, sub-tenants service giving castes while the Adi-Dravidas generally constitute the category of landless agricultural labourers (Gough 1966:90)

These are only a few of the regional variations. We have outlined its general pattern to reveal the relationship between caste-structure and occupation. Now in the next section we will examine the relation between caste structure and power.

Activity 2

Recount some incidents in which you overcame your caste restrictions. Write a note of about a page. Compare it, if possible, with the notes written by other students at your Study Centre.

20.3.3 Caste Structure and Power

Central to caste system are caste panchayats and leadership. These power structures are highly formalised in certain caste groups and informal in others. The panchayat literally means a group or council of five. In a village it refers to a group that presides over, and resolves conflict, punishes people transgressing customs and launches group enterprises. It must be remembered that the village panchayat is quite different from the legislative use of the term panchayat. The usage, after the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act 1922, refers to a statutory local body, formed through elections, vested with legal powers and charged with certain governmental responsibilities. In certain villages traditional caste panchayats and leaders are still a powerful means of control. The democratic panchayat with legislative powers and traditional panchayat may overlap in certain regions.

Regional caste structures, in part, account for variations in their respective power structure. It is important to know what qualifies caste for regional dominance. According to Srinivas (1966), a caste is said to be dominant when it is numerically the strongest in the village or local area and economically and politically exercises a preponderating influence. The status of a dominant caste appears to rest on such criteria as

- i) the control of land and economic resources;
- ii) numerical strength;
- iii) a relatively high ritual status in the caste hierarchy; and
- iv) educational status of its members.

The above factors combine to place a particular caste group in a position of political dominance. A near monopoly of management rights in local resources (usually agricultural land) and control of the same gives the group an ability to

control the lives of the others. Numerical strength alone may not place a group in a bargaining position. It needs an economic power base to backup its strength. Once economic rights are in possession, however the size of a group does become important. The control of resources by members of a dominant caste lead in turn, to making decisions for others, which constitutes real dominance.

Regional variations that account for dominant caste can be explained by

- i) the degree to which a single large land holding caste controls a set of dependent castes,
- ii) rigidity of caste ranking,
- iii) the existence of two or more dominant caste groups in a region.

Studies from various parts of India suggest that dominant castes do not exist everywhere. Areas where a landowning group has been able to establish itself in proportionally large numbers, and yet maintain distinctive character (by strictly regulating marriage and descent) that dominance has been possible. Local power flows mainly from land, which is the main source of wealth. Power is safeguarded if it is confined to a unified and numerically preponderant caste group. Numbers alone do not guarantee power. Caste groups numerically preponderant, but with divided loyalties, creating disunity, may not wield power. It is only when a caste group becomes politically united that it becomes a political force. This is very important because in the new democratic political system where every vote counts the numerical preponderance of a caste group gains an additional meaning. Power may also accrue to a *jati*, when its members have effective connections with the power of the village panchayats.

In regions where religious groups and tribals are intermixed and no single caste possesses enough land, power or numerical strength, in such a condition, there is bound to be dual or multiple domination in a region.

The Regional Dimension of Power

After a discussion about the features of dominant caste, let us see how they present themselves in the regional context.

Let us illustrate with examples, the correlation between caste and power structures. Karve (1953), in her study of the Malabar Coast has pointed out certain distinct features present in a region.

The order of dominance among castes parallels the order of caste rank. The exclusive nature of high-ranking castes is further reinforced by ritual notions of purity and pollution. High ranking Brahman castes of this region possess landed wealth, power and control, besides the traditional right to perform rituals; they also have right to religious learning and worship at temples. Subordinate castes are obliged to worship according to their ritual prescriptions and they do not have the right to religious texts like, the Veda, Upanishad, etc. Their economic and political subordination further enhances the dominant position of high-ranking castes. Organisation of ritual and temple services, concentration of land holdings correlates caste rank with secular power and promotes consistency in the total hierarchy of inter-caste relations. In regions where caste and power hierarchy overlap there is a definite concentration of power,

wealth and land invested with high ranking caste groups. Correspondingly ritual sanctions reinforced the superordinate status of upper caste groups and subordinate status of the lower caste groups. Thus, this correlation leads to the minimising of disputes.

Regions, which do not reveal a major correlation between caste and power structures, are characterised by certain features very different from the earlier example. Caste ranking may not be clear-cut and may promote disputes about caste ranking and status within the hierarchy. Caste groups of equal rank may be constantly disputing over their mutual positions in the hierarchy, resulting in dissent and dispute over ranking. Such conflicts get consolidated over a period of time resulting in formalised factions within the caste groups. Factions may promote disputes between them. Lack of clarity in caste ranking results in a diffused power structure, with no single caste group wielding economic, political and ritual clout. The Coromandal region of South East coastal India validates the above arguments.

In the districts of Punjab, Haryana and parts of U.P., especially in the upper Ganges districts, middle ranking castes such as the Jat, Ahir, Kurmi, etc. wield substantial amount of power and hold positions of dominance. The agricultural castes wield substantial power, and are numerically preponderant in some of these regions.

Political and economic interaction among castes in this region, however, forms a somewhat imperfect hierarchy as political and economic power is diffused. Ritual and secular power may not coincide everywhere. The region is marked by a lack of rigid stratification of castes, lack of concentration of political and economic power in a single caste group, resulting in the diffusion of political power.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Describe the relation between caste and kinship in about five lines.
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- ii) Discuss one of the ways in which we find a discrepancy between occupational status and the caste ranking. Give an example. Use about six lines.
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iii) Define the concept of dominant caste in about three lines.

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20.4 LET US SUM UP

This unit has introduced you to the aspects of regional variations evident in caste structures. This was done by first defining caste structure. Then we have explained the dimensions of regional variations. This we did by relating caste to kinship, occupational and power structures. We have examined the intimate link between caste and kinship system in India. Then we have explained the correlation of caste and occupational structure. Here, we have described the discrepancies between ritual hierarchy and the secular hierarchy relating to the occupation and land ownership pattern of different castes.

Lastly, we have discussed the features of dominant caste, in relation to caste and power structure. A combination of essential features served to make caste groups of varying statuses prevails in a dominant position. We also noted how certain areas show a correlation between the ritual and secular power of caste groups while diffused political and economic powers result in the rise of more than one caste group into positions of power in some other areas.

20.5 KEYWORDS

- Endogamy** It is the custom of marrying within one’s own social group such as the caste group.
- Hereditary** Anything, like name, status or property, which has been transmitted from one generation to the other genealogically.
- Hierarchy** It is one of the most essential aspects of caste stratification in India. It seeks to place one caste above or below another caste on the criteria of ritual purity and pollution.
- Hypergamy** The practice of giving a woman in marriage to a clan, which is higher in social status than the status of the clan to which the woman belongs, within the same caste group.
- Normative System** It is the body of norms, values, beliefs and ideas, which guide social behaviour in a society.
- Permutations** The number of ways in which a social group, like a caste group, can be arranged.
- Purity and Pollution** It is an abstract notion which considers certain activities, objects and occupations ritually pure or polluting in the caste society. For example,

vegetarianism is considered ritually purer than non-vegetarianism. Both these concepts are necessarily relative to each other.

Twice-Born

The castes belonging to the first three *varna*, i.e., Brahmans, Kshatriya and Vaishya, whose male members undergo the thread ceremony called the “*Upanayan samskara*” are called the twice-born or ‘*dvija*’.

20.6 FURTHER READING

Dass, Aravind and Sita Deulkar 2002. *Caste System: A Holistic View*. Dominant: New Delhi

Karve, Irawati 1953. *Kinship Organisation in India*. Deccan College Monograph Seven No II: Poona

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Srinivas, M.N. (ed.) 1960. *India's Villages*. Asia Publishing House: Bombay

Srinivas, M.N. 1961. *The Dominant Caste and other Essays*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi

Srinivas, M.N. (ed.) 1996. *Caste, its Twentieth Century Avatar*. Penguin Books: New Delhi

20.7 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Caste is a form of social stratification, which divides the society into various social groups, which are placed in a hierarchical order on the criteria of mainly ritual purity and pollution. It is hereditary and endogamous. It has a traditional association with an occupation and observes maximum commensality.
- ii) The main features of caste system are
 - a) hierarchy
 - b) endogamy
 - c) association with a hereditary occupation.
- iii)
 - a) ascribed
 - b) purity, pollution
 - c) *varna*
 - d) caste

Check Your Progress 2

Caste Structure and Regional Patterns

- i) Caste is an ascribed status i.e. its members are born in a caste group. Every person has his or her consanguines and affines in the same caste group since caste is endogamous by nature. Thus, it has been said that the kinship organisation which includes the family, lineage, clan are part of the internal structure of a caste. Thus, caste and kinship are inter-twined with each other.
- ii) In some regions we find that caste might be following ritually purer habits in diet, customs, dress, etc. but still it is placed lower than a caste which follows ritually polluting customs, in the local caste hierarchy. The reasons for this could be secular criteria of wealth and power and so on. For example, in a Mysore village the trader castes who were vegetarians were placed lower than the locally dominant peasant castes who were non-vegetarians.
- iii) Dominant caste is that caste which is relatively high in ritual rank and whose members are numerically the strongest in the village/ region and economically and politically most powerful in the area.



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UNIT 21 CASTE - CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Structure

21.0 Objectives

21.1 Introduction

21.2 Caste and Continuity

21.2.1 Caste and Social Mobility

21.2.2 Caste and the Ritual Sphere

21.2.3 Caste and the Economic Sphere

21.2.4 Caste and Politics

21.3 Caste and Change

21.3.1 From a Closed System to an Open System

21.3.2 Caste in Modern Polity

21.3.3 Caste Associations

21.3.4 Can Castes Exist in the India of Tomorrow?

21.4 Let Us Sum Up

21.5 Key Words

21.6 Further Reading

21.7 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

21.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you will be able to

- describe the social spheres in which caste continues to exist, such as, the ritual, economic and political sphere of life
- state the changes that have occurred in the functions of caste system
- explain the new functions of caste in the socio-political system
- describe the nature of caste associations.

21.1 INTRODUCTION

With the help of your study of earlier units in Blocks 1, 2, 3 and 4, and particularly unit 20 of this Block in ESO-12, you are in a position to define caste system, identify its structure and functions. You are familiar with the predominant features of caste system and its regional pattern. So far we have attempted to understand caste with reference to its nature and attributes and how it governs human behaviour in a multitude of situations. In this unit, we shall look into the dynamics of the caste system. We shall seek reasons as to how and why the system has continued to exist and what are the changes that have occurred and are occurring in the system.

In this unit, section 21.2 describes the continuity aspect of caste system in India and section 21.3 describes the aspect of change in caste system in India. Section 21.4 provides the summary of the unit.

21.2 CASTE AND CONTINUITY

Caste, as you already know, is by definition a closed social system whose membership is acquired by virtue of birth. Rules of endogamy and restrictions on social intercourse between castes help to maintain the insularity of such groups. From a purely *Brahmanic* or Sanskrit view, it appears as if this system is rigid and closed. However, when we examine historical data ranging back to the Vedic period we find that in reality there existed a lot of flexibility. Social mobility with the gain of economic and political power was always present. Historian, K.M. Pannikar (1955) believes that in Indian history, the Nandas were the last true Kshatriyas (around 5th Century B.C.), and since then all the so called Kshatriyas have come into being by usurpation of power by the lower castes who acquired the Kshatriya role and social position.

Caste system is, therefore, a dynamic reality with a great degree of flexibility in terms of internal structure and functions. To examine the continuity of caste system and its reasons, we need to keep in mind this high degree of flexibility of the system. Social mobility has been an important feature of caste system. We will proceed to understand the flexibility aspect in section 21.2.1. Then we will discuss caste and the ritual sphere in section 21.2.2; caste and economic sphere in section 21.2.3; and finally caste and politics in section 21.2.4.

21.2.1 Caste and Social Mobility

Before discussing the caste and social mobility, let us understand what is meant by social mobility. Social mobility refers to the process by which individuals or groups move from one social status to another in the social hierarchy. Social mobility can be either upward or downward. Upward social mobility is one where the individual or group moves from a lower status in the hierarchy to the upper. Downward mobility is when a person or group moves from a higher status to a lower one in the hierarchy (for more details see the unit 22 of this Block in ESO-12). Caste has been considered to be a closed system of stratification. However, in reality no system can be absolutely closed. In fact, social mobility has always been present within the caste system.

When we talk about caste and social mobility we are essentially dealing with the processes of social change in Indian society. Sociologists observe that in spite of the closed nature of caste system, there have been changes in caste hierarchy and its norms from time to time. For example, the culturally accepted practices during the Vedic period of Hinduism became a taboo in the periods that followed. Some of these practices were that Vedic Hinduism was magico-animistic, Vedic Brahmans drank soma (liquor), offered animal sacrifice and ate beef. These practices were prohibited later but they continued amongst the lower castes (Singh 1973: 6).

Caste mobility as a process of social and cultural change has been explained by Srinivas in his concept of Sanskritisation. The widespread social and cultural process called Sanskritisation is a process where a low Hindu caste changes

its customs, rites, rituals ideology and way of life in the direction of high and frequently twice-born castes. This has paved the way for mobility to occur within the caste system. With the advent of the British, the opening up of frontiers by means of roads, and railways and economic opportunities cutting across caste barriers increased the process of caste mobility.

Besides Sanskritisation, another major agent of social change was Westernisation. Westernisation includes the influences, which swept over India during the British rule bringing in the ideologies of secularism, egalitarianism and democracy. The new opportunities in education, economy and polity were in theory caste free and open to all. No one could be denied access to them by reason of birth in a particular caste, sect or religion. However, no social change can bring about total change of a society. Therefore, we find that the traditional social organisation exemplified by the caste system has undergone several changes yet continues to exist in Indian society performing some old and some new functions. Now let us examine caste and the ritual sphere.

21.2.2 Caste and the Ritual Sphere

The notions of hierarchical gradation of caste groups drawing legitimacy from religion and the concept of purity and pollution have changed with the passing of time. The structural distance between various castes, as you are already aware of, has been defined in terms of purity and pollution. Corresponding to the caste hierarchy are hierarchies in food, traditional caste occupation, and styles of life. Endogamy and social restraints regarding commensality and free interaction between different castes in the local caste hierarchy were clearly defined and ritualised. As Mckim Marriot (1955) noted in his study of the Kishan Garhi village in U.P., the exchange of food and drink between different castes was patterned within the framework of the *jajmani* system. The pattern related to who will eat with whom, who will give *kaccha* food (i.e. food cooked in water) to whom, and who will receive it, who will give only *pacca* food to whom, and so on. Thus, interaction between castes was highly ritualised prior to the impact of Westernisation.

During the last few decades, as a result of the forces of modernisation, the ideology of caste has become less pervasive in an individual's day to day life. Caste rituals have become increasingly a personal affair, rather than public due to changed circumstances of living, forces of industrialisation, and urbanisation. Place of residence and food habits are influenced more by an individual's workplace and occupation than by his or her caste or religion. In a city a person generally does not ask the caste of a cook who serves in a restaurant. A person who might be a Brahman by caste may work in a shoe factory, and so on. Figure 21.1 shows how the people in a city may respond when they find an upper caste man doing a job which is traditionally considered as done by low caste people.

Harold Gould in his study of the *rickshawallahs* of Lucknow (1974) observed that the rickshawpullers whom he studied belonged to different castes. While working they interacted with each other without observing any caste restrictions. However, when these rickshawpullers went back to their homes in the evening they observed all the ritual practices of their caste. Their kins belonged to their own caste and they married within their own caste. This example illustrates the point that in workplace the caste norm are set aside but

in personal family life the caste norms exerts itself. In this sense, out of the two main features of caste system identified by Max Weber (1948), namely, commensality and **connubium**, the commensality aspect has disappeared but the connubium, i.e. caste and kinship and marriage link, yet survives in spite of all other changes (for a better understanding of the term connubium see section 21.5, Key Words). The ritual aspect of caste is confined to the personal sphere. Now, let us see the nature of caste in the economic sphere.

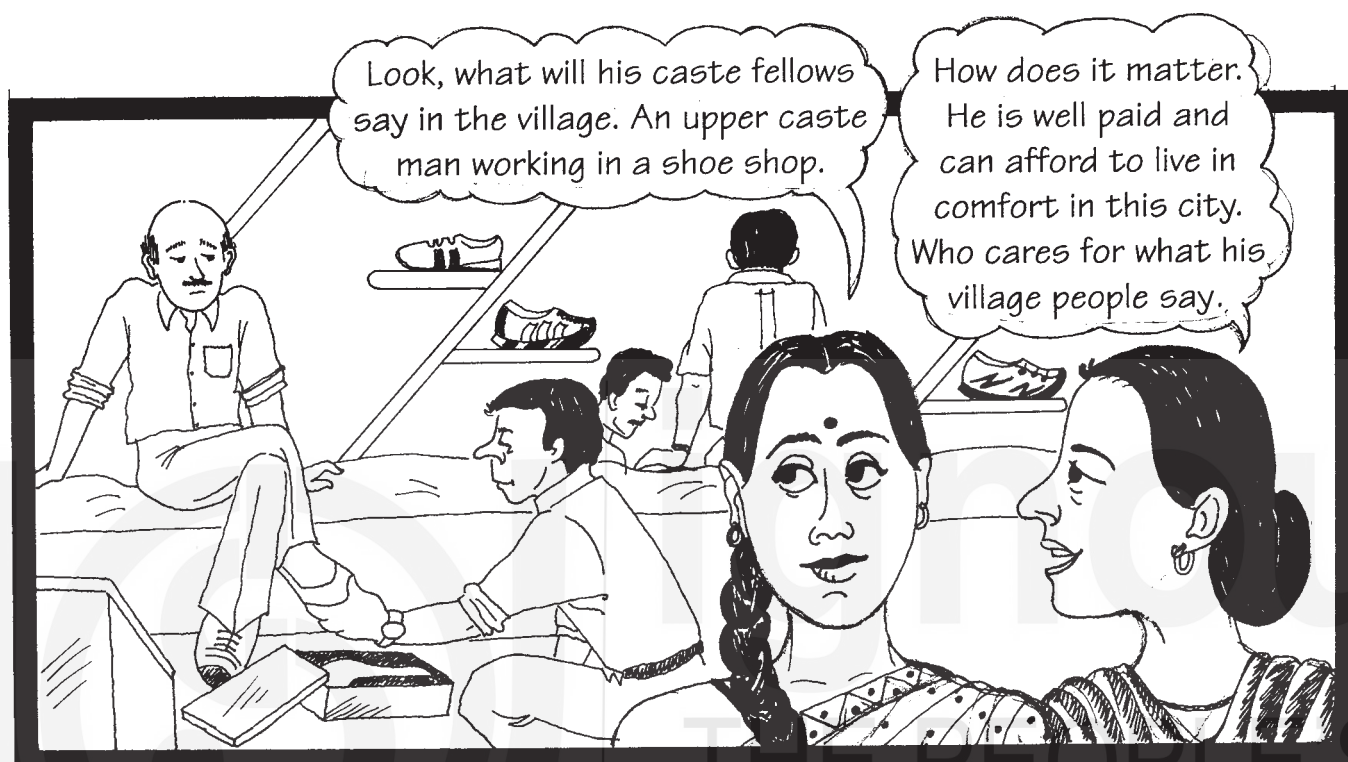


Fig. 21.1: Changes in the traditional caste occupation

Activity 1

Take the latest issue of the Sunday newspaper, which carries advertisements for brides or bridegrooms. Take the first 100 cases and categorise these into (i) those which ask for spouse of a specific caste, (ii) those which say “caste no bar”; and (iii) those which do not mention caste.

From the statistics i.e. the number of cases in each category you have got, state whether the significance of caste in marriage relations has remained important or declined. Compare your answer, if possible, with the answers of other students at your Study Centre.

21.2.3 Caste and the Economic Sphere

In this section we will discuss the continuity in the nature and function of caste in terms of its economic and occupational sphere of influence. The ideology of caste prescribed specific occupations for specific caste groups, which had a specific place in the social hierarchy. The vocations of the upper castes were considered to be the most prestigious while the occupations of the lower castes, especially the untouchables were considered to be polluting and defiling.

The advent of the British saw new economic opportunities flowing out, and reaching the masses. The opening up of plantations, development of towns and cities laid the basis for economic development, which intruded into the functioning of the caste system. The growth of money economy enabled economic relations to be governed by market conditions as opposed to inherited status. Certain caste groups flourishing in the wake of new business opportunities invested their profits in land. Because of land reforms like, Permanent Settlement, introduced during the British rule, land came into the market and thus ceased to be tied to caste.

The stability of caste monopolies over land, which was enforced by family inheritance, came under attack. Ownership of land provided principles governing wealth and a yardstick by which the local prestige system was measured. The low castes were thus able to surmount the obstacles posed by tradition and began to participate in the economic process.

The breakdown of the traditional economic system and the emergence of lower caste groups in economic rivalry rather than cooperation undermined the Brahman dominance found in Tanjore, Tamil Nadu. This has been attributed to the changing village structure from a closed stationary system to that of a relatively open system. The closed system was characteristic of **feudal economy** resulting in cooperation between ranked castes in ways ordained by religious ideas. An open system is one, which is governed by secular law under the influence of **market economy**.

The *Jajmani* system, which was a hereditary patron-client relationship, with the worker traditionally tied to his master, lost most of its insularity. Market economy, daily wages, and hired labour eroded steadily into the functioning of the traditional *jajmani* system.

Let us look at the changes that have occurred in the traditional, subsistence village economy which due to the impact of mercantilism becomes part of the larger national economy with an example from a village study conducted by F.G. Bailey (1955) of an Oriya village called Bisipara. The village Bisipara in Orissa witnessed changes due to the coming of land into the market as a result of certain economic forces set in motion by the British rule. The progressive extension of the economic frontier by which we mean the increasing contact of the villages with the cities due to the introduction of better means of transport and mass media, the impact of outside influences that have reached the villages as a result of market economy, brought migrant labour and factories to bear upon the village economy and sources of income were not confined to land and agriculture alone. A person participated as an individual in commercial economy. The village witnessed a breakdown of the traditional, economic organisation in which there was division of labour and division of wealth according to caste.

Bailey noted that the changed political atmosphere under the British disturbed the traditional caste hierarchy and the power structure of the village. He wrote, “the ultimate seat of political power moved outside the village. At the same time, redistribution of wealth upset the political structure inside the village. Division of wealth no longer followed the same lines as caste division” (Bailey 1955: 146). However, Bailey also maintains that although there was an internal reshuffle of positions, the caste system continued to order political relations

between the groups concerned and to reflect their economic status. Thus, in this sense, in spite of the tremendous changes that caste had undergone, it continued to exist.

Another important way in which we can see the continuity of caste is that when the new forces of socio-economic, political and educational changes came, it was the already powerful, wealthy upper castes, such as the Brahmans, Rajputs and the Vaishyas who benefited initially from these changes. The Brahman sections responded first to English education and therefore, benefited from political and administrative power (Kothari 1970: 9). The same pattern is visible in the commercial sector too. The great business houses like Birlas, Dalmias, etc., belonged to the traditional commercial castes. In banking the castes like the Chettiars of South established themselves in the modern systems of banking and commerce which was an extension of their traditional occupation.

21.2.4 Caste and Politics

A system of **social stratification** such as the caste rests upon the unequal distribution of power between status groups having definite positions in the prestige hierarchy. In any social strata the upper echelons face the problem of how to maintain their positions which they and their ancestors at one time achieved against the more socially disabled segments of the population. To maintain their position of superiority the higher strata must be able to control the mechanism of coercion. How was this possible?

The political system of the pre-British India was characterised by clear territorial changes marking off the territory of one chieftain or *Raja* from the territories of the other. These boundaries constituted effective barriers between people living under different chieftains. At the village level caste panchayats and caste councils functioned as the local governing bodies and provided a self-sufficient image to the Indian village. Such a political system imposed severe limits on extension of caste ties. Here the cultural and political boundaries overlapped with each other.

The British rule set the castes free from the territorial limitations inherent in the pre-British political system. It is widely held that civil and penal codes introduced by the British over the sub-continent of India in 1860 took away the power exercised by caste panchayats. The British had also introduced a new principle of justice wherein all men were equal before law and that the nature of wrong is not affected by the caste of the person who is committing it and by the caste of the person against whom it is committed.

Many sociologists undertook political analysis in terms of caste and traced the political development of caste through time, and the alliances of certain castes against certain others to gain political power. According to them, the advent of democracy and decentralised politics in the form of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system saw politics carried down to the grassroots level. Caste became a prominent variable in electoral politics. The demands of organised party system in politics have brought about a coalition of castes. Sub-castes and sub-divisions in sub-castes can find an active field of engagement in village politics. The introduction of democratic **decentralisation** and universal suffrage protected the interests of the backward classes (which include the scheduled castes,

scheduled tribes and other backward classes) in education, employment and political life, against the dominance of the traditionally powerful castes.

The dominant caste was a factor to reckon with in village India. Not all the dominant castes were ritually superior (for further details refer back to unit 20 of this Block of ESO-12). Dominance in a sense could be combined with land-ownership, political power, numerical strength, and so on. In some regions of Western and Northern India one encounters dominant peasant castes combining land-ownership and political power.

The coming of market economy, the decline of the traditional economic systems (a good example is that of the decline of Brahman hegemony in Tanjore), caste-free occupations and mobilisation of caste groups have all resulted in the decline of the traditional political role of castes. Yet, we find that caste retains its political significance. This is evident, for example, in the case of the **political mobilisation** of caste groups in Madhopur, U.P. In this village, the ranks of Noniyas, the salt-makers and Chamars, the leather-makers joined hands in opposing the locally dominant upper caste Thakurs. Thakurs were the Rajput landlords and the traditional dispensers of justice of erstwhile masters of the lower castes of this village. Thus, caste, which was a dividing factor, reshaped itself in the new circumstances to form a unifying factor. Not only for political gains but for material welfare and social status also, **caste alliances** came to be established.

It is very clear now that caste as a dynamic reality of Indian society has accompanied changes and in the process has continued to survive the onslaught of time. The characteristic of adaptability to forces of change has been a feature of the caste in the past and it continues to remain its main characteristic even today. This pattern of change therefore, constitutes an element of continuity of this system.

The changes introduced during the British period and post-independent India have witnessed the changing functions of caste and how it has continued to exist as a social institution unique to India. In this section we discussed how in spite of accommodating to social change through a long period of Indian history, especially during and after the British rule, caste has continued to exist.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Fill in the blanks in the following sentences.
 - a) Social mobility is the process by which individuals or groups move from one to another.
 - b) Mobility in the caste system resulted in the process called
 - c) According to Max Weber the two main features of caste system are commensality and
- ii) Write in about five lines on the opening of the economic frontier in Bisipara, Orissa.

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21.3 CASTE AND CHANGE

We have already discussed the continuity aspect of caste system in India. We discovered that in spite of the varied forces of change, caste has continued to adapt itself to the new circumstances and remain a significant part of Indian society. Here we are going to examine the changes that have come about in the caste system itself.

In the section on caste and rituals we have mentioned how some major aspects like the notions of purity and pollution, commensality, the *jajmani* system and rituals connected with it have declined. Untouchability has been legally abolished and declared a punishable crime under the Constitution of India. Thus, change has come about in caste system and its practices at the ideological level. But besides the ideological level, it is at the structural i.e. organisational level, as well as at the level of its functions, that major changes have come about. In the following sections we are going to examine some of these changes in caste system.

21.3.1 From a Closed System to an Open System

Indian society has undergone tremendous social change, as mentioned earlier, due to the impact of the British rule. Caste being part of the Indian society too has, therefore, experienced change. Society has moved from a relatively closed system to an open system. A closed system has been described as one in which elements like caste, class and power are combined together. In other words, this system is based on “cumulative inequalities” where higher caste implies higher class and consequently higher power.

An open system is one in which inequalities of caste, class and power are dispersed. In this case a person can be of lower caste but belong to upper class. This system has more avenues for social mobility open for the lower castes and classes in terms of employment, education, economic enterprise, politics, etc.

The caste system as a closed system of stratification in pre-British India does not mean that there was no social mobility possible at that time. We have already clarified that change was always an aspect of the continuity of this system. Another point is that no system can be either absolutely closed or absolutely open. So, in what way can we talk about change now? The change in the caste system today is due to the forces of modernisation set free by the British. Another force of change is our adoption of parliamentary democracy and giving ourselves a constitution which seeks to secure to all its citizens justice, liberty, equality and fraternity (Preamble of the Constitution of India). One of the major consequences of introducing parliamentary democracy was that every Indian adult above the age of 21 (and since the Elections in 1989 voting age has been reduced to 18 years) has the right to vote his or her leader

to power. Since, every individual vote counts it is imperative for a leader to get the allegiance of the people. In this sense numerical power and caste identity has become very important.

The modern political system, new market forces, development of science and technology has had several repercussions on the traditional caste structure. The association between elements of different kinds of land-ownership, political power and status based on caste is slowly giving way to status achieved through education, new occupations available due to the opening up of new economic opportunities, higher income, and so on. In his study of *Caste, Class and Power Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*, Andre Beteille (1966) wrote that earlier (i.e. in pre-British period) education was a virtual monopoly of the Brahmans who dominated this area. But at the time of his study, the educational system had become far more open, both in principle and in practice. Many non-Brahman and even untouchable boys attended the schools at Sripuram (the village studied by Beteille) and the adjacent town of Thiruvaiyur. Because of this education the non-Brahmans and the Adi-Dravidas (the lowest castes) could compete on more equal terms with the Brahmans for white-collar jobs. It helped them to participate in the political affairs more equally with the Brahmans.

According to Beteille in the towns and cities white-collar jobs were relatively caste-free. Non-Brahmans from Sripuram could work as clerks or accountants in offices at Thiruvaiyur and Tanjore along with the Brahmans. Within the village land had come into the market since, due to several factors, some of the Brahmans had to sell their land. This enabled the, non-Brahmans and even a few Adi-Dravidas to buy it. Thus, as land came into the market, the productive organisation of the village tended to become free from the structure of caste (Beteille 1966: 3). Beteille had come to the conclusion that in a way changes in the distribution of power was the most radical change in the traditional social structure. He said that the traditional elites of Sripuram, comprising the Brahman landowners, had lost its grip over the village and the new leaders of the village depend for power on many factors in addition to caste. There had come into being new organisations and institutions, which provided new bases of power. These organisations and institutions were at least formally free of caste. All these changes in effect altered, if not weakened, the role of caste in the political arena (Beteille 1966: 16). Keeping in mind this perspective, let us now examine the relation or link between the institution of caste and modern politics in India at a wider level than the village.

21.3.2 Caste in Modern Polity

Unlike the European experience, political democracy in India did not emerge as a natural development of ideas, values and technologies. In fact, the notion of political democracy was adopted by the national leaders to serve the people of India in the best way possible. Thus, the values and attitudes, which went with this form of polity, had to be inculcated in its people. We see that the new political order is universal in constitution and in principle rejects the demands of caste. However, in practice it has accommodated a variety of interests, in addition to those of caste. Caste has, in fact, come to terms with the democratic political process.

Political conflicts can almost be seen as conflicts between caste groups or caste alliances. The beginning of political consciousness on caste lines is evident

in references made to caste *sabhas* or caste associations. We will discuss this aspect later. The reason for this development can be seen in the fact that politics being a competitive enterprise, its purpose is the acquisition of power for realisation of certain goals. This is possible through identifying and manipulating the existing, as well as emerging alliances.

Politics has drawn caste into its web for organising support and in articulating the needs of the masses. The organisation of support is done through the same organisation in which the masses are found, namely the caste groups. In making politics their sphere of activity, caste and kin groups attest their identity to strive for positions of power.

Different parties and movements mobilise different social status groups as resources for their political objectives. Thus, even today we often hear of candidates being selected for political parties on the basis of caste.

The caste provided for organised party politics a ready made system of segments, which could be used to marshall support. Liberal education, government patronage, and an expanding franchise have been major factors that have penetrated the caste system. Discontent and exploitation prevailing within the caste groups provided a basis for organising caste factions and alliances. Thus modern politics found an on going vertical network of caste and made the structure of caste a political vehicle.

According to Rudolph and Rudolph (1967: 11), caste has in its transformed state, helped the Indian masses (of which nearly 70 percent live in the villages) make a success of representative democracy. It has fostered the growth of equality by making Indians less separate and more alike. Indians are becoming less separate in the sense that due to the electoral system numerical strength i.e., the number of votes, as mentioned earlier, makes a lot of difference in power. Thus, it is in the interest of large majority of castes to come together to achieve their political goals. In this process, caste associations and caste federations are formed.

Formation of caste federations refers to a grouping together of members of distinct endogamous groups into a single organisation for common objectives. One of the most active caste federation is the Kshatriya *Sabha* of Gujarat. It dates from 1946 and includes several *jati*-clusters of the region, notably the Rajputs, Bariyas and Bhils. It was not only a caste community but was also a political community. The *Sabha* had made use of new avenues of politics and promoted Rajput leaders. The federation welcomed all *jatis* who followed the Rajput model in their life style. Even the poor landless and Muslim Rajputs (Rajputs who converted to Islam) were taken into their fold.

The founder of the *sabha* believed that Kshatriyas were a 'class' and not just a caste. To prove this point many of the rich, aristocratic Rajputs would even go to the extent of having a common meal with the Bariyas and Bhils. With numerical strength they gained political importance and influence (Kothari 1970: 30-70).

The relationship that caste bears to politics can be best understood in terms of three types of political mobilisation discussed by Rudolph and Rudolph (1967) which exemplify different phases of political development in India. These three types of political mobilisation are i) vertical, ii) horizontal and iii) differential.

i) **Vertical mobilisation:** This is a process in which political support is acquired by the traditional notables, such as the erstwhile *Rajas*, feudatory landlords, locally dominant caste elites and so on. This is possible in a society organised and integrated along caste lines having mutual dependence and where legitimacy of traditional authority still survives. Due to their traditional authority the notables are able to get the support of their dependents, socially inferior groups in the traditional manner where the local *Raja* or landlord used to protect and promote the interests of his '*praja*' i.e., the subjects and in return gained their loyalty and deference. Rudolph and Rudolph (1967: 24) maintain that vertical mobilisation remains a viable strategy for dominant classes and castes until dependents, tenants, and clients become politicised enough to be mobilised by ideological appeals to class or community interests and sentiments.

ii) **Horizontal mobilisation:** This is a process in which popular political support is marshalled by class or community leaders and their specialised organisations. As the term horizontal indicates, the solidarity among classes and caste groups such as provided by the caste federations introduces a new pattern of cleavage by challenging the vertical solidarities and structures of traditional societies.

The major difference between this form of mobilisation and vertical mobilisation is that here the agent of mobilisation is the political party rather than the local notable. Here political parties appeal to voters directly as individuals or indirectly through the organised groups to which they belong. Direct appeals to individual voters may emphasise ideology or issues, on the one hand, or community identification through caste, on the other. This mobilisation is possible only as long as internal differentiation has not developed and caste communities are by and large homogeneous, cohesive and their interests are still diffuse and varied.

iii) **Differential mobilisation:** This process takes place when the changes that caste has and is undergoing carries it beyond the traditional ascriptive definition. These changes include internal differentiation or fission, and integration of several caste groups in caste federations and associations i.e. fusion which express the shared interests, symbols and norms of these castes.

It also brings out the caste from its village home that it does not remain rooted to the village social structure alone.

We can explain the differential mobilisation through the example of the Rajputs of Rajasthan. The Rajputs were the rulers, feudal lords, court retainers of princely states before Independence. At that time they formed an association called the Kshatriya *Mahasabha* which initially represented all ranks within the community.

In 1954 a new caste association was formed called the *Bhooswami Sangh*. This new association brought into open the conflict between the "small" Rajputs whose modest landholdings had to be supplemented by income from service under the princes and *jagirdars*. These princes and *jagirdars*, however, had in most cases dismissed them from service with the advent of the land reforms after Independence. Thus, when the rich and powerful Rajputs refused to protect the interests of the "small" Rajputs, they formed

the *Bhooswami Sangh*. This *sangh* took up the task of protecting the interests of the “small” Rajputs. Political parties, at this time, were quick to capitalise on these class and ideological differences within the Rajput community. This example illustrates the process of differentiation that occurs within the caste community and is used by the political parties.

We have so far understood the role played by caste in modern polity. In this discussion we have also discussed the significance of caste associations and caste federations in the context of politics. Let now us understand the nature of caste associations.

21.3.3 Caste Associations

Caste associations are defined as “paracomunities which enable members of castes to pursue social mobility, political power, and economic advantage” (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967: 29). Caste associations resemble in many ways the voluntary associations or interest groups found in industrially advanced societies. However, caste associations or paracomunities are distinct in many respects from voluntary associations; as well as from natural associations like caste out of which they have developed.

The caste associations are more like the voluntary associations at the organisational level than the traditional caste structures. It has offices, membership, incipient bureaucratisation and legislative process that can be seen through conferences, delegates, and resolutions. But, unlike the voluntary associations, caste associations are characterised by a shared sense of culture, character and status, which gives it solidarity not found in voluntary associations.

The functions of caste associations are diverse. It serves the Indian society by both levelling the sacred and hierarchical caste order and also replacing it. It initiates and manages the efforts of the lower castes to become twice-born, to don the sacred thread which symbolises higher ritual rank and culture. This is clear from the case of the Nadars of Tamil Nadu, a low caste of toddy tappers, who through the efforts of their association, the Nadar *Mahajana Sangam* formed in 1910, acquired not only higher status but a modern organisation to serve their needs.

According to Kothari (1970: 115), some of the objectives of this association are

- i) To promote the social, material and general welfare of the Nadars
- ii) To take practical measures for the social, moral, and intellectual advancement of the Nadars
- iii) To start schools and colleges for imparting western education to Nadar children and to help poor but deserving pupils belonging to the community with scholarships, books, fees, etc.
- iv) To encourage and promote commercial and industrial enterprise among the members of the community

These and several other objectives of this caste association and caste associations in general, reveal the significant contribution that these organisations provided to their communities.

We see that the paracomunities or caste associations contribute to fundamental structural and cultural change in Indian society by providing an adaptive institution in which both the traditional as well as modern features of society can meet and fuse.

In the final analysis we see that caste is losing the functions, norms, and structures it once had and acquiring new ones to suit the new demands and condition of the people. It is today serving the ritual and occupational goals of traditional society more as well as it is helping Indian society to transform itself from an ascriptive, hierarchical and closed system to one which is achievement oriented, relatively egalitarian and open (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967: 103). In the next section therefore, we will answer the crucial question - can caste exist in the India of tomorrow?

Activity 2

Find out about one of the major caste associations found in your area. If possible, go and meet one of their office bearers. If not meet one of the members of this caste association or write to the caste association. Ask them to give you their written constitution and some information regarding the foundation of this association. From the written constitution, write down a short note of about two pages on the establishment, aims and objectives of this caste association. Compare, if possible, your note with those written by other students at your Study Centre.

21.3.4 Can Caste Exist in the India of Tomorrow?

A small section of Indian population, comprising the educated elites, probably powerful but numerically insignificant, desires that caste system ought to go. For a vast majority of the Indian population, especially the Hindus envisaging a social system without caste is impossible. Caste is part of their social identity and existence.

The joint family and caste system provide the individual in our society some of the benefits, which a welfare state provides in the industrially advanced countries. Caste stands for a certain amount of cultural homogeneity. However, it has its evil and exploitative side which has not been perceived by the majority of the people, especially the upper castes.

It is essential to remember that nothing effective can be achieved unless and until the people themselves are made to realise the unjust nature of caste system. The principle of caste is so firmly entrenched in our political and social life that everyone including the political leader appears to have accepted tacitly these very principles.

The coming of modern means of communication has increased the 'horizontal stretch of caste'. Far-flung caste groups are able to interact and communicate with each other and find commonalties and shared interests to form clusters and this has resulted in the increase of caste solidarity within a region. One effect of universal adult franchise is the strengthening of caste consciousness. Political parties are at pains to select candidates who have a social base, usually drawn from the locally dominant caste groups.

It is obvious that the eradication of caste is a distant reality, despite the indications to the contrary.

As long as caste performs the functions of a welfare state in India and provides for the common bonds of kinship ties, political groups and alliances, it can be assured of a continued existence in modern India.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Fill in the blanks in the following sentences.
 - a) In a closed system different components of caste, class and power are together.
 - b) Caste has become the most important variable in the process.
 - c) In horizontal mobilisation the agent of mobilisation is the rather than the local notable found in the case of vertical mobilisation.
- ii) Define caste association and mention at least two functions of caste associations using about seven lines.

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21.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have described the social spheres in which caste system continues to exist. We described that social mobility has always been part of caste system. The flexibility and accommodative nature of caste is one of the essential aspects, which has led to its continuity. We have discussed how the divisive role of caste has declined in the society. Concept of purity and pollution, the *Jajmani* system, and the commensality aspect of caste have declined. However, caste as an endogamous social group and its link with the kinship system still persists.

We explained in this unit how in spite of this continuity of caste system the structure and role of caste have changed. We have discussed the role of caste in modern politics and also the phases of development in political mobilisation of caste groups from vertical, horizontal to differential mobilisations. We have defined caste associations and explained in what ways these are similar or different from both voluntary associations of industrially advanced societies and the traditional caste structure. Finally, we have explained how and under what conditions caste can continue to exist in future India.

21.5 KEYWORDS

Caste Alliance	People belonging to different groups of castes or sub-castes coming together to achieve certain goals. For example, a caste alliance can decide to support a particular leader in elections.
Connubium	It refers to the right and obligation of members of a category of men to choose their wives from a prescribed category of women. The two groups are said to have or maintain connubium.
Decentralisation	Distribution of power to the grassroots level of the village.
Feudal Economy	Traditional ties of landowner, intermediaries and agricultural labourers. This economy is characterised by ties of patron client relationships, bonded labour and payment of wages in kind rather than cash.
Market Economy	This economy is characterised by forces of supply and demand. Wage labour and money are the principal means of exchange.
Political Mobilisation of Castes	Caste groups are manipulated to meet certain political goals.
Social Stratification	It is the process of differential ranking where a society is divided in segments and these segments are hierarchically ranked.

21.6 FURTHER READING

- Bailey, F.G. 1957. *Caste and the Economic Frontier*. The University Press: Manchester.
- Beteille, A. 1966. *Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*. Oxford University Press: Bombay
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- Kothari, R. 1970. *Caste in Indian Politics*. Orient Longman: New Delhi
- Rudolph (L.I.) and (S.H.) Rudolph, 1967. *The Modernity of Tradition Political Development in India*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago
- Srinivas. M.N. 1962. *Caste in Modern India and other Essays*. Asia Publishing House: Bombay
- Srinivas. M.N., (ed.), 1996. *Caste its Twentieth Century Avatar*. Penguin Book: New Delhi

21.7 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i)
 - a) Social status
 - b) Sanskritisation
 - c) Connubium
- ii) Certain administrative changes introduced by the British saw the low castes of Bisipara, a village in Orissa, making use of the new business opportunities. They broke free from the caste-bound traditions and economic organisations. With money they bought land which came into the market. This disturbed the traditional equation of higher caste, higher land-ownership and higher power.

Check Your Progress 2

- i)
 - a) Combined
 - b) Political
 - c) Political party
- ii) Caste associations have been defined as paracommunities that help their members to pursue social mobility. It attempts to improve the social, material and political condition of its members. It provides a modern rational organisation to carry out its objectives. Amongst its functions one very important function is that it provides schools and college facilities for the education of the children of its members. It provides a unified strength to fight for political goals.

UNIT 22 THE SCHEDULED CASTES

Structure

- 22.0 Objectives
- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 The Scheduled Castes
 - 22.2.1 Castes Deemed as the Scheduled Castes
 - 22.2.2 Characteristics, Disabilities and Deprivations
- 22.3 Social Mobility during Pre-Independence Period
 - 22.3.1 Social Mobility
 - 22.3.2 Social Mobility during the Ancient period
 - 22.3.3 Social Mobility during the Medieval Period
- 22.4 Social Mobility during the British Rule
 - 22.4.1 Differential Impact of the British Rule
 - 22.4.2 Social Mobility through Sanskritisation
 - 22.4.3 Social Mobility through Westernisation
 - 22.4.4 Social Mobility through Conversion
 - 22.4.5 Ambedkar and Gandhi
- 22.5 Scheduled Castes in Post-Independent India
 - 22.5.1 Policy of Protective Discrimination
 - 22.5.2 Vertical Mobilisation
 - 22.5.3 Horizontal Mobilisation
 - 22.5.4 Sanskritisation
 - 22.5.5 Urbanisation
 - 22.5.6 Present Situation
- 22.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 22.7 Key Words
- 22.8 Further Reading
- 22.9 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

22.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you should be able to

- describe the status of the scheduled castes both at scriptural, legal and existential levels in a historical perspective
- discuss their traditional social, ritual disabilities and deprivations
- analyse the various aspects of their social mobility through various processes during ancient, medieval and modern period
- examine the present and developing situation in respect of the scheduled castes.

22.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous two units of this Block you learnt about caste and its regional patterns and its continuity and change in Indian society. In this unit you will learn about the scheduled castes, their social status and condition in Indian society in a historical perspective.

The scheduled castes constitute the most deprived and oppressed section of Indian society. The history of their suffering is very old. Under the traditional set-up, they were placed at the bottom of the Hindu social hierarchy. But enactment of the Constitution in 1950 sought to place them at equal footing with other sections of the population. In reality, however, they continue to suffer from various social, economic, political and cultural deprivations.

For understanding the status of the scheduled castes, section 22.2 of this unit deals with the meaning, characteristics and various traditional disabilities and deprivations they have to suffer. But, Indian society has never been static. Individuals and groups belonging to the scheduled castes under certain conditions could achieve some measure of **social mobility** from the very beginning. This process is described in section 22.3, which discusses the concept of social mobility, and the process of social mobility among the scheduled castes during the ancient and medieval period.

During British rule, India experienced important changes in almost all spheres of life. The scheduled castes also were not left untouched. Colonial rule had differential impact on different sections of the scheduled castes which is discussed in section 22.4. Social mobility among them during this period, because of **Sanskritisation**, **Westernisation**, Conversion, and contributions of Ambedkar and Gandhi have been explained in this section. Section 22.5 discusses constitutional-legal provisions pertaining to the scheduled castes, government policy of **‘protective discrimination’** in their favour, their mobility through the processes of Sanskritisation and urbanisation, and the phenomena of their vertical and horizontal mobilisation during the post-Independence period. Lastly, section 22.6 presents a summary of this unit.

22.2 THE SCHEDULED CASTES

The term ‘scheduled caste’ was coined by the Simon Commission (1927). The expressions, ‘Depressed Classes’, ‘Exterior Castes’ and ‘Untouchables’ were commonly used for the scheduled-castes during the colonial period. Gandhiji called them *‘Harijans’* (the people of God). But since the passage of the Government of India Act of 1935, they have been generally referred to as ‘Scheduled Castes’. The population of Scheduled Castes in different states of India during 1981 and 1991 is given in figure 22.1.

22.2.1 Castes Deemed as the Scheduled Castes

The Constitution of India (1950) made a provision that “the President may, with respect to any State or Union Territory, after consultation with the Governor, specify the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall for the purposes of the Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes in relation to that State or Union Territory” (Article 34).

In pursuance of this provision, the President of India has passed orders from time to time specifying the names of scheduled castes in the country.

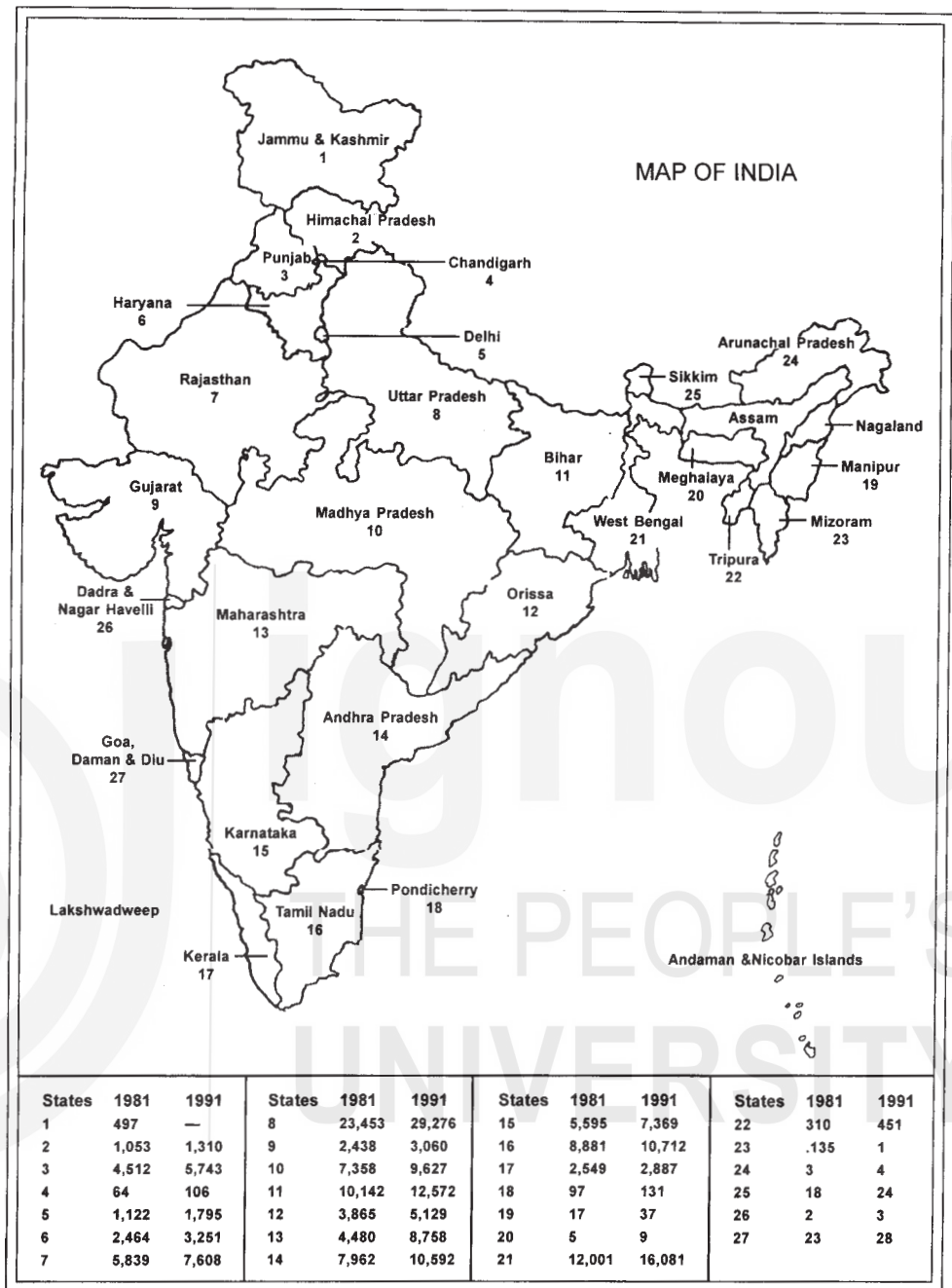


Fig. 22.1: Population of scheduled castes in 1981 and 1991

In the past these groups were classified on ritual criteria: contact with them caused varying degrees of pollution. The criteria adopted for inclusion in the scheduled caste’s list are social, educational and economic backwardness arising out of the stigma of untouchability. The better known Scheduled Castes include Chamar and Bhangi (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab), Bagdi and Rajbansi (West Bengal), Mahar (Maharashtra), Mala and Madiga (Andhra Pradesh), Cheruman and Pulayan (Kerala), Palla and Paraiya (Tamil Nadu). There are numerous other groups, large and small.

22.2.2 Characteristics, Disabilities and Deprivations

The scheduled castes account for about 15 per cent of the total population of the country (Government of India 1988: 15). In 1991 they accounted for about

16.48 percent of the total population. They are not concentrated in any particular geographical region. They are found in every state and their proportion varies from state to state (for details see figure 22.1).

The scheduled castes constituted the lowest strata of Indian society. They had been subjected to a variety of disabilities, deprivations and oppressions under the traditional system. They were placed outside and down below in social and ritual hierarchy under the '*varna*' model of society. They were engaged in manual tasks, which were considered impure and unclean. They were considered untouchables. Their touch required ritual purification for the upper caste people. They were denied entry into temples and to houses of the upper castes. They were prohibited from drawing water from '*savarna*' wells. Like the Shudras, they had no access to the study of religious texts. They were not permitted to wear clothes or jewellery customarily worn by the higher castes. They had to hold upper caste people in high esteem. Generally, they lived at the outskirts of the village in poor housing condition. In his study of Iravas of Kerala, Jeffrey (1976) observes,

They were forbidden the dignity of an umbrella or a shoulder cloth.... Their women were prohibited from covering their breasts and from wearing certain type of jewellery. They were said to pollute a Nambudiri from 36 paces and a Nayar from 120.

Besides this segregation, the scheduled castes formed an integral part of social life. At the village level, a large proportion of them worked as agricultural labourers for landowners or tenants belonging to high castes. Moreover, they provided a variety of specialised services. They worked as servants, scavengers, sweepers, drummers and so forth. They served all the caste Hindus but were not served by Brahman priest, barber, water carrier, washermen, and some others who served the caste Hindus.

In spite of their common deprivations and disabilities, the scheduled castes did not constitute a ritually homogeneous category nor do they do so now. The various castes belonging to this category form a ritual hierarchy somewhat similar to the *varna* model. They do not practice inter-marriage and sometimes do not inter-dine. According to Srinivas (1965), the leather-working Chamars in Uttar Pradesh consider themselves superior to the Bhangis, sweepers. The Kannada Holeya place themselves above the Madiga and do not accept even water or betel leaf from the latter.

Thus, we find that the scheduled castes formed a ritual hierarchy of their own. But they suffered from common deprivations and disabilities in social, economic and political domains in the larger society under the traditional system.

22.3 SOCIAL MOBILITY DURING PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

In spite of the rigid caste structure present in the pre-Independence period, the historical data show that social mobility was present in both ancient and medieval Indian society. But before learning about social mobility during these periods let us understand what the concept of social mobility means.

22.3.1 Social Mobility

Human societies are divided into various social strata. These strata are arranged hierarchically and are considered superior or inferior to one another according to the prevalent value system in society. But, any system of social stratification is not absolutely closed. Individuals or groups can move from one social status to another in the social hierarchy. This process of shifting of social status is called social mobility.

Sorokin has identified two types of social mobility on the basis of direction of mobility, i.e., vertical and horizontal. Vertical mobility refers to transition of an individual or group from one social stratum, to another, either upward or downward. A scheduled caste member getting a high post in an organisation, and a Brahman working as a landless agricultural labourer are examples, on an individual level, of upward and downward social mobility respectively.

By horizontal social mobility is meant shifting from one social group to another situated broadly on the same level. The shift from agricultural labour to factory labour is an example.

22.3.2 Social Mobility During the Ancient Period

Sacred texts portray the traditional Indian society as characterised by a closed and rigid system of social stratification based on '*varna*'. In reality, a degree of social mobility existed in society. The Rig-Vedic society (c 1500-1000 B.C.) as a whole was tribal, pastoral, semi-nomadic and egalitarian. Untouchability did not exist and hence nor did a class of untouchables. But gradually the Vedic society got transformed into an agricultural and *varna*-caste-class divided social order by the sixth century B.C. The scheduled castes were termed as '*antyaaja*' '*panchama*' and '*chandala*' in ancient literature.

But even then the system of social stratification was not entirely 'closed'. In their studies, Romila Thapar (1977) and K.M. Pannikar (1955) have shown that social mobility did exist in ancient India. Individual and group mobility vertical and horizontal did take place during that period. Pannikar has said that the Nandas were the last Kshatriya rulers in India, then people from the lower *varnas* took over. There is also a controversy regarding the Shudra origin of the Mauryas.

The important channels of social mobility during the ancient period were (a) Sanskritisation (b) conversion to Buddhism, Jainism and other heterodox sects, (c) migration and (d) renouncing the world and taking to the life of mendicant and preacher. Srinivas (1966) defines Sanskritisation as "the process by which a low Hindu-caste or tribe or other group changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently twice-born caste". The scheduled castes, along with other lower castes and tribes took advantage of various available avenues of social mobility both on individual and group levels, on a limited scale during this period.

22.3.3 Social Mobility During the Medieval Period

Burton Stein (1986) has shown that social mobility prevailed during the medieval period in India. In addition to the ancient channels of social mobility two fresh avenues opened up during this period, conversion to Islam and the Bhakti cult. Islamic emphasis on equality and brotherhood, a sense of affiliation

with the ruling class and material consideration motivated small sections of the Hindus to embrace Islam. They were from both the upper and lower caste Hindus. Some untouchables also got converted to Islam in the hope of raising their social status. But they did not benefit much. Imtiaz Ahmad (1978) observed that status inequalities continued to exist much as before. But it may have brought about a ‘psychological revaluation’ of themselves. In fact, as Ghaus Ansari (1960) opines, Muslim society in India itself got stratified. The converts from the untouchable castes were placed lowest in Muslim social hierarchy. However, it can be assumed that they suffered less segregation and restrictions in social interaction as Muslims than under the Hindu order.

The Bhakti movement provided another avenue of social mobility for the untouchable castes along with others. Kabir, a weaver, Ravidas, a cobbler and several others belonging to the lower castes became prominent Bhakti saints. The Bhakti saints preached that salvation was possible even for the untouchables, who were sincere devotees of God. Shanker Deva, the great Bhakti saint of Assam sang, “that Chandala at the tip of whose tongue is the message of Hari is to be placed in the highest estimation”.

Additionally, social mobility among the scheduled castes continued along the earlier paths, e.g., Sanskritisation and migration.

However, social mobility among the scheduled castes occurred on a limited scale. An overwhelming majority of them continued to suffer from traditional disabilities and deprivations during the medieval period.

Check Your Progress 1

i) When and by whom was the term ‘scheduled caste’ coined? Answer in two lines.

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ii) List at least two social disabilities or deprivations that the scheduled castes were subjected to in the pre-independence period? (Use about two lines).

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iii) Define social mobility in about three lines.

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iv) Tick the correct answer of the following question.

Who gave the concept of Sanskritisation?

- a) Triloki Nath Madan
- b) Shyama Charan Dube
- c) Mysore N. Srinivas
- d) Yogendra Singh

22.4 SOCIAL MOBILITY DURING THE BRITISH RULE

Social mobility found during the ancient and medieval period was relatively different from the kind found during the colonial rule in India. Now let us examine this social mobility.

22.4.1 Differential Impact of the British Rule

The establishment of British rule brought about deep and far reaching changes in the economic, political, educational and cultural spheres in India. It offered some new avenues of social mobility to the scheduled castes, e.g., new economic opportunities, education, westernisation, conversion to Christianity and politicisation. Moreover, the traditional process of mobility through Sanskritisation also gained more momentum during this period.

But all sections of the scheduled castes did not benefit under the colonial rule. The scheduled castes who were engaged in cottage industries or handicrafts, such as, weaving and tanning could not compete with cheap and better quality machine-made goods imported to India by the British. This led to their proletarianisation and pauperisation, forcing them to take to agricultural labour for survival. Some of the scheduled castes people migrated to urban areas and continued with their traditional occupation e.g., sweeping and scavenging. Hence, despite increased earning in urban areas, they experienced status immobility with regard to occupation.

Some of the scheduled castes benefited economically from the exigencies of the British rule and became upwardly mobile. The Nadars of Tamil Nadu were traditionally engaged in toddy tapping which was considered a polluting occupation. In his study, Hardgrave (1984) found that during the British rule, the Nadars turned to trade in toddy tapping and established themselves as middlemen and money-lenders. They earned wealth, purchased their own land and acquired education and thus raised their social status. Similarly, the Mahars of Maharashtra (studied by Patwardhan 1973) and the Jatav Chamars of Agra in Uttar Pradesh (studied by Lynch 1969) improved their social status by taking advantage of the new economic opportunities.

22.4.2 Social Mobility through Sanskritisation

The traditional avenue of social mobility of the scheduled castes through Sanskritisation gained added momentum during the British period. The economically and educationally mobile scheduled castes were no longer willing to accept their inferior social position. The policy of recording castes in the census gave a fillip to the process of Sanskritisation. Many Scheduled Castes claimed higher status in the caste hierarchy. The Jatavas and the Nadars started claims to Kshatriya status by Sanskritising their way of life. The Jatavas traced their origin to the *gotra* of Siva and stopped eating beef and buffalo. Similarly, the Nadars began to tie the *dhoti* in the fashion of the Brahmins, to crop their hair in the fashion of the Brahmin tuft, and to abandon the heavy jewellery and ear-pieces which had been common among them. But the scheduled castes had to face the wrath of the upper castes who beat them and even stripped their women to the waist for following the style of upper caste living.

Moreover, Sanskritic beliefs and values were mediated to the scheduled castes through a number of movements of different religious sects, e.g., the Satnami Sect, Gorakh Panth, Ramanand Panth and Kabir Panth. Sri Narayana Guru of Kerala started organising his sect around Izhava priests and *sanyasis* for socio-religious reform.

Activity 1

Select at least five people who belong to the scheduled caste category in your area and ask them the following questions.

- 1) Occupation of all the members of their family
- 2) Educational qualifications of their parents, brothers and sisters
- 3) Their personal ambitions regarding what they want to become in future

Write a report of about two pages and compare it, if possible, with those of the other students in your Study Centre.

22.4.3 Social Mobility through Westernisation

Westernisation, as defined by Srinivas (1980), “characterises the changes brought about in society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, and the term subsumes changes occurring at various levels—technology, institutions, ideology, values”. The upwardly mobile untouchable castes adopted the life-style implied in Westernisation. This was facilitated by the prevalence of various non-Sanskritic traditions among them—such as, eating meat and drinking alcohol. Sunanda Patwardhan (1973) observes: “The Mahar were the first people to serve the British officers and their wives as butlers, butchers and ayah. Being beef-eating themselves, the Mahar did not mind working for the foreign, beef-eating master”.

22.4.4 Social Mobility through Conversion

Conversion to Christianity provided an additional avenue of social mobility to the scheduled castes. This was prompted by the hope of improvement in social status through education, health facilities, job opportunities and financial support provided by the Christian missionaries. Large-scale conversion took place during the latter half of the nineteenth century from among the Chamar, the Churra, the Lal Begi and other scheduled castes. Further, it has been observed that though the scheduled castes who became highly educated, got white-collar jobs and earned wealth were integrated into the Christian fold, the backward ones could not remove their stigma of untouchability even after conversion.

22.4.5 Ambedkar and Gandhi

Another important effort to raise the status of the scheduled castes was made by the great leader, B.R. Ambedkar who belonged to the untouchable Mahar caste of Maharashtra. He laid emphasis on horizontal mobilisation of the scheduled castes and made them a political force to reckon with. He emphasised secular avenues of politics, education and administration for social mobility of the scheduled castes. He held that political power was the key to all progress and that the scheduled castes could achieve political salvation if they captured power by organising themselves into a separate party.

Ambedkar emphasised the Depressed Classes Mission Society to articulate the demands of the scheduled castes. Recourse was taken to non-violent direct action for removal of the social and civil disabilities of the scheduled castes. Ambedkar led ‘*satyagraha*’ in 1927 to gain *Harijan* entry in the temple at Poona (now Pune). He also burnt the Manusmriti to express his anger.

In 1928, Ambedkar demanded of the Simon Commission adult franchise, separate electorate and full representation for the scheduled castes. His insistence on separate electorate resulted in big increase in the number of reserved seats for the scheduled castes in legislature under the Poona Pact (1932) with Gandhiji. Further, he set up the Scheduled Caste Federation in 1942 for securing political rights and representation for the Scheduled Castes through acquisition of power. But he failed at the elections in 1946. Later, fed up with political manoeuvring, he embraced Buddhism with a large number of scheduled castes after Independence.

In contrast with Ambedkar, Gandhi wanted the *Harijans* to be integrated into the Hindu society. For this, he tried to raise the consciousness of the upper castes through a countrywide campaign against untouchability and other constructive work. He did not believe in the *Dharma Shastra*, which taught untouchability. He started publishing a newspaper named *Harijan*. His well-known fast in 1932 drew the attention of the people to the problem of the scheduled castes. On his insistence, the British government agreed to increase the representation of the scheduled castes in the legislature under the Poona Pact (1932). Thus, Ambedkar’s demand for separate electorate was abandoned and the scheduled castes remained in the Hindu fold. Gandhiji pleaded for compassion and equity to the scheduled castes.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Read each of the following statements and about each statement write Yes, if you agree and No, if you do not agree.
 - a) There was no scope of social mobility for the scheduled castes during ancient and medieval period in India.
 - b) Bhakti Movement during the medieval period provided opportunities to the scheduled castes for social mobility.
 - c) B.R. Ambedkar gave emphasis on horizontal mobilisation of the scheduled castes for raising their status.
 - d) M.K. Gandhi supported the proposal for separate representation in legislature for the scheduled castes.
 - e) State policy of protective discrimination aims at promoting the interests of the scheduled castes.
- ii) In what way did the Nadars of Tamil Nadu benefit socially and economically during the colonial period? Describe in about six lines.

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iii) Discuss the differences between B.R. Ambedkar and M.K. Gandhi with regard to their approach to raise the status of the scheduled castes. Use about seven lines.

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22.5 SCHEDULED CASTES IN POST-INDEPENDENT INDIA

India gained Independence in 1947. The Constitution of India was enacted in 1950. It aimed at constituting India into a sovereign, democratic republic and securing to all its citizens: justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. Later on the words socialist and secular were also added in the Preamble of our Constitution.

22.5.1 Policy of Protective Discrimination

It was realised that the scheduled castes constituted some of the most backward sections of the population. Hence, to protect them from the difficulties of open competition and safeguard their interests, the policy of ‘protective discrimination’ was adopted. The term protective discrimination implies that the Government under the Constitution of India considers them, i.e., the scheduled castes a separate category which has to be helped through welfare measures, reservation of seats in educational institutions, jobs, etc. so that this backward section of Indian population can catch up with the other sections. The Constitution made provision for special safeguards and protection for the scheduled castes with the object of removing their social disabilities and promoting their educational, economic and political interests (Articles 15,16,17, 23, 25,46, 330, 332, 335, 338). Practice of untouchability was abolished. The scheduled castes were granted access to shops, hotels, and the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort. Forced labour was prohibited. Moreover, the State was given the responsibility to promote the educational and economic interests of the scheduled castes and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46). State was also permitted to make reservation for them in public services (Article 16, 335) and in representation in the Lok Sabha and the state Vidhan Sabhas (Article 330, 332), and also appoint a special officer at the Centre to oversee the implementation of the various provisions (Article 338).

In pursuance of the above Constitutional provisions, about 14 per cent of the total seats in the Lok Sabha and State Vidhan Sabbas have been reserved for the scheduled castes. The proportion of reservation in services is 15 per cent of the vacancies. The position of Commissioner for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has been created at the Centre. Five-Year Plans now have a special component earmarked for the welfare and the development of the scheduled castes.

22.5.2 Vertical Mobilisation

Here, vertical mobilisation refers to the process of political mobilisation of the scheduled castes across caste line by the upper caste people. Government's policy of reservation and special welfare schemes for the scheduled castes have facilitated this process in the post-Independence period. Some individuals and families belonging to the scheduled castes have reached the top of the legislative and administrative bodies. They work as catalysts for vertical mobilisation.

The scheduled caste politicians have been largely co-opted into the major political party, which uses them for creating vote banks. The Scheduled Caste leaders may also be co-opted into upper caste factions in local and regional politics. Dushkin (1972) observes, "Under this arrangement locally powerful upper-caste notables mobilise the vote to fill the reserved seats with their own scheduled caste men, whom they manipulate and control. These men are bound to them by traditional ties as well as political debts, and the kind of leadership expected by them is good fellowship".

22.5.3 Horizontal Mobilisation

Here, the term refers to the political process in which emphasis is on increasing the solidarity among the scheduled castes and organising them into a political force so that their interest is safeguarded and promoted. Before independence Ambedkar made ceaseless efforts in this direction. This process continued after Independence. This is reflected in the formation of political parties and pressure groups by the scheduled castes.

The 'Republican Party of India' was formed by the scheduled castes in 1957. The party stood for an alliance of the scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes and other backward classes. It aimed at fighting for equality of opportunity and for special preference to the 'have-nots'. Its noble ideals included removal of exploitation of man by man and class by class. But the party had limited effectiveness. It formally split in 1970 due to internal differences. Its members were by and large co-opted into the Congress and worked as a pressure group in the party.

A group of young and militant scheduled caste radicals disillusioned with the leadership of the Republican Party formed a new party called the 'Dalit Panthers'. They have a broad orientation and seek to include all depressed people, such as, landless labourers, poor peasants, and factory workers belonging even to non-scheduled caste category in their movement. They aim at revolution. They proclaim: "We want to rule the whole country. Our target is not individuals but a whole system rotten to the core". Their main thrust lies in the sphere of creating a revolutionary consciousness through literature. They have a limited following.

In early 1980s, 'Bahujan Samaj Party' (BSP), under the leadership of Kanshi Ram, championed the cause of the scheduled castes through the strategy of horizontal mobilisation. During its brief career till the year 2003 it has shown itself to be capable of uniting the SCs with OBCs with a view to gain electoral success. Working on the calculation that the SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities constitute about 85 percent of the population BSP has managed to make major inroads to electoral politics (Suresh 1996). In the thirteenth Lok Sabha they have 14 MPs and 5 of their MPs represented the party in Rajya Sabha in 2003. They came to power thrice in the State of Uttar Pradesh, once in the year 1995 and second and third time in 1997 and 2002 respectively.

Further, the power bloc of the scheduled castes in the legislatures at the national and state levels also works on the principle of horizontal mobilisation. Such power blocs aim at securing benefits for the scheduled caste depending on the prevailing political situation. One such effective power bloc existed in the Lok Sabha under the leadership of Jagjivan Ram.

It is observed that vertical mobilisation of the scheduled castes in politics made them an ally in the continuation of an unjust and inegalitarian social order. Their horizontal mobilisation through the Republican Party of India, the Dalit Panthers have had only a limited effect. Bahujan Samaj Party managed to achieve political mileage to a great extent in this regard. Although the BSP is recognised by the Election Commission as a national party and it fields candidates across India, as an official national party must, it effectively functions on a regional basis limited to certain states of north India.

But it is rightly observed by Andre Beteille (1969) that "Since Independence... the emphasis seems to be shifting from Sanskritisation to competition for positions of office and power".

Activity 2

Meet one of the leaders of your area who belongs to the scheduled caste category. Talk to him/her about

- 1) What measures he has taken to improve the socio-economic status of scheduled caste people of his/her area.
- 2) What he/she thinks about the reservation issue.

Write a note of about two pages and compare it, if possible, with those of the other students of your Study Centre.

22.5.4 Sanskritisation

The process of social mobility among the scheduled castes through Sanskritisation has continued during post-Independence period. They have adopted upper caste names, discovered myths regarding their glorious origin, adopted Sanskritic deities, customs and changed their occupations. In Kerala, the scheduled castes have adopted upper caste names, e.g., Uma, Ramani, Sankaran, Pushkaran and so on. The Barwis of West Bengal anoint turmeric on the day of the marriage. The Tiya of West Bengal call themselves Rajbanshi (or royal descent) or Suryabanshi (descendant from the Sun God). Moreover, Mahar of Maharashtra, Pasi of Uttar Pradesh, Baira and Balai of Rajasthan

have given up their traditional polluting occupation and taken up clean occupations in agriculture, industry and services.

22.5.5 Urbanisation

Increased pace of urbanisation and urbanward migration from the rural areas in the post-Independence period has opened up a secular avenue of social mobility. But in case of the scheduled castes urbanward migration per se does not result in upward social mobility. In urban areas, they are generally employed in low status and low income occupations e.g. scavenging, boot polishing, construction work and unskilled factory work. Therefore, in spite of some increased earning they experience status immobility. Srinivas (1980) observed

Rural barbers when they migrate to towns, work in hair cutting saloons, washermen start laundries, smith work in furniture shops, oilmen sell oil, if not press oil, Malis work as gardeners, Chamars work in shoe-shops and Brahmins are cooks, teachers and lawyers.

22.5.6 Present Situation

Some individuals, families and groups from amongst the scheduled castes have achieved social mobility. But the over-whelming majority of the scheduled castes still constitutes the most backward section of society. They suffer from traditional disabilities and deprivations, more in rural than in urban areas. In his study of Gujarat villages, I.P. Desai (1976) found that the practice of untouchability, restriction on entry into temples and upper caste houses, and separate source of water supply prevailed in 47,90 and 64 per cent respectively of the total number of 69 villages.

Occupational mobility of the scheduled castes has been very limited. They are under-represented in Class I and II services but over-represented in Class III and IV services. In politics, they are treated as a 'vote bank'. Educationally, they are still backward. The literacy rate is 21 per cent. Economically, they constitute the bulk of the people living below the poverty line.

Oppression and atrocities against the scheduled castes continue to exist even at the beginning of twenty-first century. On the contrary, we witness sharpening of conflicts between the scheduled castes and dominant section of the population. This is reflected in the emergence of anti-reservation riots in urban areas and increasing atrocities on the scheduled castes in rural areas.

The provisions of reservation for the scheduled castes have given rise to a feeling of resentment among the non-scheduled caste section of the population. Competition over scarce jobs and limited seats in professional colleges has generated tensions and conflicts. Anti-reservation movements have been witnessed in some parts of the country, e.g., Maharashtra and Gujarat. These movements have been directed against the upwardly mobile scheduled castes. In 1981, anti-scheduled caste riots occurred in many urban centres in Gujarat over the issue of reservation of seats in the post-graduate medical courses. The targets of attacks were mainly the upwardly mobile scheduled castes, such as, the Vankar who are generally employed in blue or white-collar jobs. Attacks were not directed at the lowly Bhangi who are generally engaged in the menial jobs as scavengers and where literacy rate is quite low.

Further, we need to understand that the scheduled castes form a part of the large section of backward population of our country, which includes the scheduled tribes and the other backward classes (OBCs). Generally speaking, the whole of the backward classes is backward in social, economic, political and educational domains. Their backwardness is reflected in their under-representation in central government services in which their overall proportion is about thirty per cent though they constitute about seventy-five per cent of the total population. Their representation in Class I services is much smaller (Report of the Backward Classes Commission 1980, First Part, p. 42).

Moreover, we observe that the policy of reservation has led to the growth of a small group of elites from amongst the backward classes. They are well educated, economically prosperous and politically vocal. The benefits of reservation are mainly cornered by them. Regarding the scheduled caste elites, Sachchidananda (1977) states that since they are educated and therefore, comparatively more enlightened than the rest of the community, they are better able to foresee social change. This perception helps them to take advantage of the various concessions and welfare measures adopted by the government for them. The scheduled caste elites, both in the towns and the villages show little concern for their lowly brethren. Instead, they are largely concerned with their own self-interests and those of their family and kin.

Thus, we find that the “trickle down approach” of the planners and “social mobility approach” in academics for raising the status of the scheduled castes have been a failure. An alternative could be a united struggle of all the oppressed sections of the population for transforming the society and building a united struggle of all the oppressed sections of the population for transforming the society and building a secular socialist and democratic India as envisaged in the Constitution.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Tick the correct answer to the following question.
 What is the percentage of the scheduled castes in the total population of India, according to the 1991 Census?
 - a) 20.49 percent
 - b) 10.12 percent
 - c) 23.56 percent
 - d) 16.48 percent
- ii) In what way has the urbanward migration not helped the scheduled castes? Use about five lines.

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22.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have learnt that the term scheduled caste has been defined mainly on ritual basis of untouchability. The criteria of social, economic and educational backwardness have been taken into account for including various castes in the list of the scheduled castes. We have noted that this list is issued by the President of India.

We learnt that the term “scheduled caste” was coined by the Simon Commission in 1927. The concept of social mobility has been defined and its horizontal and vertical dimensions have been described in this unit. We have examined the various aspects of social mobility amongst the scheduled castes during the ancient, medieval and colonial periods. We discussed the different approaches to the problem of scheduled castes taken by B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi.

In this unit, you have learnt about the present situation of the scheduled castes. You have come to know that the policy of ‘protective discrimination’ was adopted by the Indian government in order to protect and promote the socio-economic interests of scheduled castes. The horizontal mobilisation of the scheduled castes can be seen through the formation of political parties, such as, the “Republican Party of India”. You have also learnt about the process of Sanskritisation amongst the scheduled castes and the impact of urbanisation on them. Finally, you have looked at the problems faced by them.

22.7 KEYWORDS

Protective Discrimination

This refers to the policy of the state to safeguard and promote the interests of the backward classes of population through giving preferential treatment to them. This is reflected in state policy of reservation in education, services and legislature to the scheduled castes. The terms “affirmative action”, “reverse discrimination” and “compensatory discrimination” are also used.

Sanskritisation

According to Srinivas, “Sanskritisation is the process by which a low Hindu caste or tribe or other group changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently twice-born caste”.

Social Mobility

The process of shifting of social position by individual or social group in social hierarchy is called social mobility. It could be of two types viz., horizontal and vertical. Horizontal social mobility refers to the process of transition of individual or group from one social position to another situated on the same level in social hierarchy. Vertical mobility refers to the process of shifting of individual or group from one social stratum to another, which may be either upward or downward in social hierarchy.

Westernisation This term is used by Srinivas to “characterise the changes brought about in society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, and the term subsumes changes occurring at various levels-technology, institutions, ideology, values”.

The Scheduled Castes

22.8 FURTHER READING

Ambedkar, B.R. 1945. *Annihilation of Caste*. Bharat Bhushan Press: Bombay

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Kothari, R. (ed.) 1970. *Caste in Indian Politics*. Orient Longman: New Delhi

Suresh, V., 1996. The Dalit Movement in India. In P.C. Chatterji (ed.) *Region, Religion, Caste Gender and Culture in Contemporary India*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi

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22.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) The term ‘scheduled caste’ was coined by the Simon Commission in 1927.
- ii) The scheduled castes were prohibited from drawing water from the ‘savarna’ wells. They were not permitted to wear clothes or jewellery worn by the higher castes.
- iii) Social mobility is described as the process of shifting of an individual or social group from one social position to another in the social hierarchy. It is of two kinds, horizontal mobility and vertical mobility.
- iv) (C)

Check Your Progress 2

- i) a) No
b) Yes
c) Yes

- d) No
- e) Yes
- ii) During the colonial period the Nadars of Tamil Nadu became upwardly mobile. Traditional occupation of toddy tapping which was considered polluting earlier became so profitable in the British period that they earned considerable amount of wealth from it. This wealth they used for purchasing land, for education, and so on. This enabled them to raise their status socially and economically.
- iii) To raise the status of the scheduled castes Ambedkar emphasised horizontal mobilisation of the scheduled castes. He wanted to turn them into a political force. He considered political power and secular means like education, administration, etc. an important tool for social mobility. Mahatma Gandhi on the other hand described their complete integration in the Hindu society. This he thought could be done through raising the consciousness of the upper castes against untouchability and other constructive works.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) (d)
- ii) The urbanward migration has not resulted in raising the social status of the scheduled castes because in urban areas also, they are generally employed in low status and low income occupations, like, scavenging boot polishing, and so on.

Structure

- 23.0 Objectives
- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Social Classes in India
- 23.3 The Impact of British Rule on Class Formation in India
 - 23.3.1 Change in Agriculture
 - 23.3.2 Trade and Commerce
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 - 23.5.4 Agricultural Labourers
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 - 23.6.1 Commercial and Industrial Classes
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23.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- define the concept of social class in India
- discuss the impact of British rule on the class formation in India
- explain the consequent uneven growth of social classes
- describe the rural and urban classes in India.

23.1 INTRODUCTION

You have studied the caste dimension of social structure in the previous units. You learnt how well rooted and significant caste is in our society. Here, we

will introduce you to another dimension of Indian social structure, normally, its class component. We will discuss the classes in India in the British and post-British periods. We will also describe these classes in the context of rural and urban society in India.

In this unit we have discussed the concept of social class in section 23.2, the impact of the British rule on the class formation in India in section 23.3, and the consequent uneven growth of **social classes** has been explained in section 23.4. We have then listed and discussed some of the major types of classes found in rural and urban India in the two main sections 23.5 and 23.6. Finally, in section 23.7 we have given a summary of the unit.

23.2 SOCIAL CLASSES IN INDIA

Social class has been defined as a kind of social group, which is neither legally defined nor religiously sanctioned. It is generally defined as a stratum of people occupying similar social positions. Wealth, income, education, occupation are some of the basic determinants of class. It is relatively open, i.e. any one who satisfies the basic criteria can become its member. There are several classes in a society. These classes are hierarchically ranked primarily in terms of wealth and income. The differences of wealth and income are expressed in different life styles and consumption patterns. Social classes are the characteristic features of industrial societies (Bottomore 1962: 188). To give you an example, in a capitalist society we generally find the class of capitalists and the **working classes** besides several others.

Social classes in India, as we see them today, had their genesis during the British rule. This is not to say that the class phenomenon was absent in the pre-British Indian society. The class dimension of Indian society was only less pronounced than it turned out to be during the British period. The so-called self-sufficiency of the village community appears to have been one of the reasons behind it. That is, village community generally produced only what was required for the consumption needs of the village. There was hence little surplus and therefore less marked differentiation among the village population.

Even when there was a marked class dimension; it was overshadowed by the caste component. In fact, the only sphere where class dimension showed itself rather more sharply was in the nature of interaction between the rulers and the ruled. The king and his courtiers represented a class quite different from the subjects over whom they ruled. The courtiers comprised the *Zamindars*, *Jagirdars* and several others. They along with the king lived on the revenue collected from the village community under their jurisdiction.

Besides these classes there were also classes of administrative officers of various ranks, of merchants, artisans and specialists of various kinds.

The colonial rule in India proved to be one of the turning points in Indian history. It introduced new elements, which led to some radical changes in Indian society. Now let us see what the impact of the British rule was on the class formation in India.

23.3 THE IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE ON CLASS FORMATION IN INDIA

The impact of British rule in India has brought about far-reaching changes in Indian society. Some of these changes are discussed in the following sections.

23.3.1 Change in Agriculture

The emergence of new social classes in India was the consequence of far-reaching changes brought about by the British in the economic structure of India. The British administration revolutionised the existing land system. It did away with the traditional rights of the village community over the village land. Instead it created individual ownership rights in land by introducing several land reforms during the eighteenth century, such as the Permanent Settlement, the *Ryotwari* settlement, and the *Mahalwari* settlement. With this, land became private property, a commodity in the market. It could be mortgaged, purchased or sold.

Till the village ownership of land existed, the village was the unit of assessment. The new land revenue system eliminated the village as the unit. It introduced the system of individual land assessment and revenue payment. Along with it, a new method of fixing land revenue and its payment was introduced. Previously, revenue was fixed at a specified portion of the year's actual produce. This was replaced by a system of fixed money payment irrespective of crops. The landlord or cultivator under the system was hence forced to meet this demand. Further, the payment of revenue in cash gave impetus to production of cash crops in place of food crops. With expanding railway and transport system production for market became fairly well established. This commercialisation of agriculture, in turn, stimulated the growth of trade and commerce in India.

23.3.2 Trade and Commerce

Trade and commerce were centred around two things. Supply of raw material for industries in Britain was one. Procuring of the British manufactured goods for consumption in India was another. The latter had a disastrous effect on town and village handicrafts. Village and town handicrafts could not stand the competition brought about by import of goods from Britain and got disintegrated. Meanwhile there was lack of sufficient industrial development. The result was that the emerging industry could not absorb the displaced population, which eventually fell on an already stagnant agriculture.

23.3.3 Development of Railways and Industry

Alongside the growth of trade and commerce, there was rapid development of the transport system in India. The railways expanded on an increasing scale from the middle of the nineteenth century. These developments were undertaken with a view to meet the raw material requirements of industries in Britain. The construction of railways and roads also gave scope for investment of British capital in India. It led to better mobility of troops and for establishment of law and order. Investment of British capital found an outlet initially in such spheres as plantations (indigo, tea), cotton, jute and mining industries. This was the beginning of the industrialisation process in

India. By then, there was accumulation of sufficient savings on the part of Indian traders and merchants. This served as capital and made possible the creation of Indian owned industries.

23.3.4 State and Administrative System

Even before these developments, the British government had organised a huge and extensive state machinery to administer the conquered territory. A large number of educated individuals were required to staff this machinery. It was not possible to secure the staff of educated people from Britain for running such huge administrative machinery. Therefore the foreign rulers felt that there was a need for the introduction of Western education in India. Thus, schools, colleges and universities were established to impart Western education in India and to cater to the needs of the expanding economy and growing state machinery. As a consequence of the impact of British rule in India, the Indian society experienced an uneven growth of social classes. We are going to examine some aspects of this uneven growth in the next section.

Activity 1

Find out at least five people of your father, grand father or great-grand father's generation and request them to tell you about the changes that they had observed in the area where they lived due to the impact of British rule in India.

Write a note of two pages and compare it, if possible, with the notes of other students at your Study Centre.

23.4 UNEVEN GROWTH OF SOCIAL CLASSES

The process of the rise of new social classes was an uneven one. It did not develop uniformly in different parts of the country and also among various communities. This was due to the fact that the social forces, which developed during the British rule, spread both in time and tempo unevenly. This was, in turn, dependent on the growth of political power in India. For example, it was in Bengal that two of the social classes - *zamindars* and **tenants** - came into existence first. Again it was in Bengal and Bombay that the first industrial enterprises started. This led to the emergence of the class of industrialists and workers in this region. It was for this reason that the British established a complex administrative system and introduced modern education first in Bengal and Bombay.

The process of the rise of new social classes among different communities was also uneven. This was due to the fact that certain communities were already engaged in definite economic, social or educational vocations in pre-British period. For example Baniyas were traders by vocation in our traditional social structure. Hence they were the first to take up modern commerce, banking and industrial enterprises (Misra 1978: 14). Similarly, Brahmans were the first to take up modern education and enter the **professional classes**. These communities took up the new challenges and entered these spheres of activity first because they were already having the basic disposition towards these

occupations. Thus on the eve of Independence we find that Indian social structure was made up of innumerable castes and classes. In some cases, these coincided with each other but in some they did not.

In the next two sections 23.5 and 23.6 we are going to enumerate and discuss the classes in India in the rural context and then in the urban context.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Define the concept of social class. Use about seven lines.

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ii) List some of the changes that have lead to the emergence of social classes in India. Use about three lines.

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iii) Spell out two spheres which show uneven growth of social class. Use about two lines.

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23.5 SOCIAL CLASSES IN RURAL INDIA

In rural areas, classes consist principally of i) **landlords**, ii) tenants, iii) **peasant proprietors**, iv) agricultural labourers and v) artisans. Now let us examine each of them one by one.

23.5.1 Landlords

The British administration made various types of land settlements such as, the Permanent settlement, *Ryotwari* settlement and *Mahalwari* settlement with the natives (for details see Block 3, unit 10, section 10.4 of this course). Under the Permanent Settlement a new type of landlord was created out of the erstwhile tax collectors viz., the *zamindars*. Under the term of this settlement, the right of ownership was conferred on the *zamindars*. Before this settlement, the land used to be auctioned by the state on *patta* basis on which the *zamindars* only had the right to collect revenue. After this settlement, this land became theirs permanently i.e., they became hereditary owners of this land. *Zamindar*'s only

obligation was the payment of fixed land revenue to the British Government. The new type of landholders were for all practical purposes equivalent to those of the landlords. As a result of this arrangement the peasants of this land were transformed into a mass of tenants in a day. This settlement was introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793, in the vast region of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and in certain districts of Madras. It was later also introduced in U.P. and parts of Bombay, Punjab, Sind, and so on. The *zamindari* settlement gave rise to a class of landlords, which was hitherto unknown in Indian society. The conferment of the right of ownership gave recognition to the right of mortgage and sale. Failure on the part of some *zamindars* to pay the fixed revenue led to the auction of portions of large estates. This in turn, led to the entry of a new class of landlords who were primarily the merchants and money-lenders.

The right of ownership also recognised the right to lease. This led to large-scale growth of smaller tenures. Legislation made such tenures transferable. In the course of time, tenure passed into the hands of non-cultivators such as money-lenders, traders, and absentee landlords, who had very little interest in agriculture itself. Their main aim was only in extracting money from the land. The passing of land into the hands of non-cultivating classes was not the feature of *zamindari* areas alone. Similar development took place in the *ryotwari* areas too where the right of ownership was vested in the actual cultivators. (For further details refer back to unit 10, section 10.4.2, ESO-12.)

Types of Landlords

Broadly, there were two types of landlords: (i) the *zamindars/taluqdars* (old landlords) and (ii) money-lenders, merchants and others. Those who held such ownership of tenure rights (in *zamindari* areas) were often referred to as **intermediaries**. These intermediaries were of various categories known by different names and found in various regions of U.P., Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. *Taluqdars* were inferior intermediaries whom the large *zamindars* created out of their own *zamindari* rights. *Jotedars* found in some parts of Bengal were substantial landholders who held land direct from the *zamindars*. They got land cultivated by subletting to the tenants on a 50: 50 share. Similarly, *Pattidars* held permanent leases at fixed dues under the *zamindars*. *Ijardars* on the other hand were those to whom the revenue of an area was hired out on a contract basis.

Land Reform and its Consequences

On the eve of Independence, the class of intermediaries owned a large portion of land in their hands while the peasant cultivators had little or no lands. There was also extreme economic inequality leading to socio-political inequality in Indian society. Hence, our national leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Patel placed a lot of emphasis on land reforms after India gained independence.

The first phase of land reform was aimed at abolition of intermediaries such as, the *Zamindars*. The *Zamindari* system was abolished in the 1950s and land reform was first implemented in Uttar Pradesh. The objective was to bring cultivators into direct relationship with the state. Hence, conferment of proprietary or occupancy rights on actual cultivator-tenants was a part of this measure.

The abolition of *Zamindari* system in the 1950s had several consequences. It led to the formation of new classes. For instance, the intermediaries like the *zamindars* declared themselves as the owners of the land. Previously the *zamindar* used to lease out their lands to the tenants. But when *Zamindari* system was abolished, in states like U.P., the Government permitted the erstwhile *zamindars* to declare ownership of those lands which they were cultivating themselves. These lands were called '*Khudkasht*' lands. So, as consequence, the *Zamindars* forced most of the tenants out of these lands and declared the land, which they were holding as '*Khudkasht*'. Thus, after the land reforms they simply came to be renamed as *bhoomidars*, i.e., cultivators of the soil.

The tenants who were actually cultivating the land prior to the land reforms were thrown out of their lands and most of them became landless **agricultural labourers**. It led to the pauperisation of the peasants. But there was a category of better off tenants who were able to buy the surplus land, created due to the land ceilings from the *Zamindars*, at reasonably low rates determined by the Government. Thus, a new class of peasant proprietors or cultivators was formed who took up agriculture as an enterprise (Khusro 1975: 186).

Thus, the land reform measures after Independence failed to create a socially homogeneous class of cultivators. All the same, the top strata of the agrarian hierarchy, the *Zamindars*, lost their right to extract taxes from the peasants. They were left with truncated landholding. Their economic, political and social supremacy was also broken. Hence, they could no longer enjoy the kind of control they used to exercise over peasants. Under the circumstance, they found it difficult to live as rentiers. Indeed only a small proportion of them continue to live as rentiers. The rest have taken to active participation in the management and improvement of their farm.

They have also brought about radical change in the methods of agricultural production. The erstwhile landlords and some of the ex-tenants thus became the forerunners of capitalist trend in the Indian agriculture. In view of such changes, they also took maximum benefits out of the **Green Revolution** programme launched by the government. These changes had led to the development of a class of "gentlemen" or progressive farmers who had some education and often training in agriculture. These farmers had taken up agriculture as a kind of business. They invest money in agricultural crops, which have higher cash value i.e., they go in for cash crops. They read the reports of experts, use best seeds and fertilisers. (For further details refer back to unit 10, Block 3, ESO-12.)

23.5.2 Peasant Proprietors

Another settlement made by the British is known by the name of Ryotwari Settlement. This was introduced in Madras, Bombay Presidencies in the nineteenth century. Under this settlement, ownership of land was vested in the peasants. The actual cultivators were subjected to the payment of revenue. However, this settlement was not a permanent settlement and was revised periodically after 20-30 years. It did not bring into existence a system of peasant ownership. Instead the cultivators came into direct contact with the State which replaced the oppressive role of the landlord. The settlement thus gave rise to a class of peasant proprietors. Owing to excessive land revenue, small

landholdings, acute indebtedness, this class underwent impoverishment from the very beginning.

The process of differentiation was at work among the peasant proprietors. In the process, a few climbed up in the socio-economic hierarchy but a large number fell from their previous rank and position. A great majority of them were transformed into tenants and even agricultural labourers. This showed a large-scale passing of land from the actual cultivators to not only those of money-lenders, merchants and others, but also to a certain section of peasant proprietors who had become rich peasants.

In the post-Independence period, there was increase in the number of peasant proprietors as mentioned before in this unit. This was due to measures like *Zamindari* abolition and ceiling on existing landholdings and family labour. By paying compensation to *zamindars*, the erstwhile tenants obtained proprietary rights over the land, which they held as tenants. This option could be availed of by and large only by the rich tenants. Similarly, through ceiling on landholding, many could acquire proprietary rights in land.

The peasant proprietors, in the past as well as in the present, hardly constitute a homogeneous category. They may be broadly divided into three categories, namely, (i) the rich, (ii) the middle, and (iii) the poor peasants.

- i) **Rich peasants:** They are proprietors with considerable holdings. They perform no fieldwork but supervise cultivation and take personal interest in land management and improvement. They are emerging into a strong capitalist farmer group.
- ii) **Middle peasants:** They are landowners of medium size holdings. They are generally self-sufficient. They cultivate land with family labour.
- iii) **Poor peasants:** They are landowners with holdings that are not sufficient to maintain a family. They are forced to rent in other's land or supplement income by working as labourers. They constitute a large segment of the agricultural population.

The peasant proprietors had been instrumental in bringing about great change in Indian agriculture, specially in Punjab, Haryana, western U.P., Karnataka and Bihar. This change is known as the Green Revolution. The role of such peasants was crucial in this change.

Green Revolution: After Independence, India was faced with acute food shortage. Green revolution was seen as a way out of the problem. Like all other programmes of planned rural development, India embarked upon the Green Revolution in the 1960s. It began launching programmes like the High Yielding Variety Programme (HYVP), the Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) and the like. These measures were introduced initially in a few selected areas, which were mostly irrigated. Under the programme, there was considerable use of fertilizers and pesticides. There was also increase in the acreage under irrigation either through canals or installation of water pumps, etc. Correspondingly, there was marked increase in crop yield. The programme, initiated initially on an experimental basis, took off exceedingly well in Punjab, Haryana and western U.P. The improved method of cultivation thus became a general pattern of agricultural practices in these parts of the country. There

was even further trend towards modern method of cultivation viz. mechanisation. The increasing use of tractors, tillers, threshers, reflected this trend.

Such development led to grave social consequences. Socio-economic inequalities inherent in the agrarian structure were further reinforced. It led to further concentration of land into the hands of a few. Side by side, rural poverty had increased. The agricultural labourers, the landless and near landless, form the core of the rural poor.

The present big landowners in various parts of India are formed into organisations to safeguard their interests. Some of these organisations are for example, All India Kisan Sabha, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), Kshetkari Sanghatana and so on. Such organisations in some parts of India had begun in the British period. For example, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa Zamindars Association. Under the auspices of such organisations, peasants took part in the National Movement in India (Chandra 1971: 204). All categories of peasants are, in general, members of these organisations. They are, however, mostly dominated by rich peasants and leadership comes from them.

23.5.3 Tenants

The creation of *zamindari* settlement transformed the owner cultivators of pre-British India into a class of tenants. The *zamindars* resorted to the practice of extracting an exorbitant rent from the tenants. Those who failed to pay were evicted from land and were replaced by those ready to pay higher rents. Similar practice prevailed in estates, which were leased out by the *zamindars*. Broadly then there were two categories of tenants in *zamindari* areas- tenants under *zamindars* and tenants under lease (tenure) holders during the British period. Tenants under tenure holders were thus sub-tenants. Of course, various categories of tenants under subtenants too had grown up in Bengal. The lowest in the hierarchy were **sharecroppers**. This process of creating tenants and subtenants is called sub-infeudation. (For further understanding of this concept refer back to Block 3, unit 10 of ESO-12).

The growth of tenants was not confined to *zamindari* areas alone. Even in *ryotwari* areas where peasant proprietorship was introduced, a new class of tenants grew. They were composed broadly of the earlier owners whose land passed into the hands of money-lenders and others in the course of time. Legislations were passed from time to time in various parts to protect the interests of tenants. This did give some protection to the affluent category of tenants. The lower impoverished category of tenants remained unprotected.

On the eve of Independence, there were various categories of tenants. Broadly they could be classified as tenants, subtenants, sharecroppers, etc. In *zamindari* areas, of course, there were many sub-categories between the *zamindars* and the actual cultivators who were in general sharecroppers. Tenants on the whole enjoyed occupancy right. They could not be evicted. Sub-tenants in general enjoyed some security of tenure but were liable to eviction. Sharecroppers on the other hand did not have any security of tenure and were at the mercy of their landlords. They cultivated the land and retained only a half share of the produce.

Tenancy Reforms

Tenancy reforms became an important component of land reform programme. The provisions under the reforms were regulation of rent, security of tenure and ownership of tenant. However, there was not much success due to loopholes in the programme and its implementation. The benefits of the reform, of course, mainly went to the affluent section of the tenant class. They acquired ownership rights in areas not taken by the *zamindars* for their personal cultivation i.e., the land besides their *khudkasht* land. Subtenants too benefited to some extent as they could get the occupancy right and in some situations could even convert it into ownership right.

In short, the affluent section of tenants and subtenants were transformed into peasant proprietors with tenancy reform programme. Sharecroppers on the other hand, gained little from these programmes. With the second phase of land reform viz. ceiling on land holding, there was reduction in the extent of tenancy. Sharecropping however, continues even thereafter. Indeed, sharecroppers constitute the most important, if not the only, segment of tenant class in rural India today. Organisationally and politically, they are weak though they form a very important component of peasant organisation in India.

23.5.4 Agricultural Labourers

Non-cultivating landlords, peasant proprietors and tenants are not the only social groups connected with agriculture. Along with the swelling of rent paying tenants there was also a progressive rise in the number of agricultural labourers. The growing indebtedness among peasant population, followed by land alienation and displacement of village artisans was largely responsible for this.

The agricultural labourers were and still are broadly of three types. Some owned or held a small plot of land in addition to drawing their livelihood from sale of their labour. Others were landless and lived exclusively on hiring out of their labour. In return for their labour, the agricultural labourers were paid wages, which were very low. Their condition of living was far from satisfactory. Wages were generally paid in kind i.e. food grains like paddy, wheat and pulses. Sometimes cash was paid in lieu of wages in kind. A certain standard measure was employed to give these wages. In fact, payment in kind continued alongside money payments.

There was another type of labour prevailing in many parts of the country. Their status was almost that of bondage or semi bondage. *Dublas* and *Halis* in Gujarat, *Padials* in Tamil Nadu are a few examples of such bonded labour existing in India. Such labour force exists in some parts even today. The land reform programmes after Independence have done almost nothing to improve the condition of agricultural labourers in India. Of course, the government has proposed to settle them on co-operative basis on surplus or newly reclaimed or wasteland. Bonded labour was legally abolished in India in 1972 and Government, as well as, voluntary agencies are doing serious work in order to locate the bonded labourers and rehabilitate them. There has been considerable swelling in the number of agricultural labourers in the wake of the land reform programmes. Resumption of land by landlords for personal cultivation and eviction of tenants from their tenure have been the factors leading to this trend. The process was further accelerated by the Green Revolution. Large farms, being in conformity with the Green Revolution, has opened the way for greater

concentration of land by purchase, sale or through eviction of tenants. In the process the rank of agricultural labourers has further increased. At the same time, there is very low rate of transfer of the agricultural labour population to industry. Hence, there is little likelihood of radical change in the social and economic situation of the agricultural labourers in most parts of the country. The government has, of course, taken some steps towards protecting their interest. Legislation towards abolition of bonded labour and minimum wage structure on the one hand, and employment generating programmes on the other, reflect this concern. Such measures are, however, far from effective. The agricultural labourers hence constitute the weakest section of the rural society.

23.5.5 Artisans

In rural areas the class of artisans form an integral part of the village community. They have existed since the ancient periods contributing to the general self-sufficient image of an Indian village. Some of these are like the carpenter (*Badhai*), the ironsmith (*Lohar*), the potter (*Kumhar*) and so on. Not all villages had families of these artisans but under the *Jajmani* system, sometimes a family of these occupational castes served more than one village.

Some social mobility did exist in the pre-British period but, generally, these artisan castes did not experience much change. Due to the advent of the British in India, this relatively static existence of the artisan castes suffered a radical change. Indian economy became subordinate to the interests of the British trade and industry.

Rural artisans and craftsmen were hard hit under the British rule. They could not compete with the mass manufactured goods produced by the British industries. These goods were machine-made and cheap. For example, textile used to be an area where Indian artisans excelled themselves. Even today we hear the praises of “*Dhaka malmal*” (a fine variety of cloth produced in Dhaka, now in Bangladesh). Due to the British impact and availability of mass manufactured cloth, the Indian textiles suffered a severe set-back. Therefore, the demand for the goods produced by the Indian artisans dropped. The artisans suffered badly and most of them became so pauperised that they had to revert back to agriculture. This in turn flooded the agricultural fields with surplus labour which became counter productive instead of useful.

The destruction of the village arts and crafts led to deindustrialisation of rural economy (for more details refer back to unit 10, Block 3, ESO-12). After Independence, the Indian Government has taken several steps to improve the condition of the artisans. New cottage industries have been established, loan facilities provided and their skills have been recognised in the form of National Awards etc. Transport facilities to bring their products to the urban markets have also been provided. However, the class of artisans and craftsmen in the rural areas is not a homogeneous lot. In their own group there are some who are highly skilled and some semi-skilled or less skilled. Thus, socially all of them cannot be ranked in one class. But in a broad sense we can consider them as a class by virtue of their occupation. Yet, they remain very much unorganised except to some extent in parts of south India. Their chance of developing an effective organisation for collective bargain too appears quite remote. The distinct social classes commonly seen in rural and urban India are picturised in figure numbers 23.1 and 23.2, respectively.

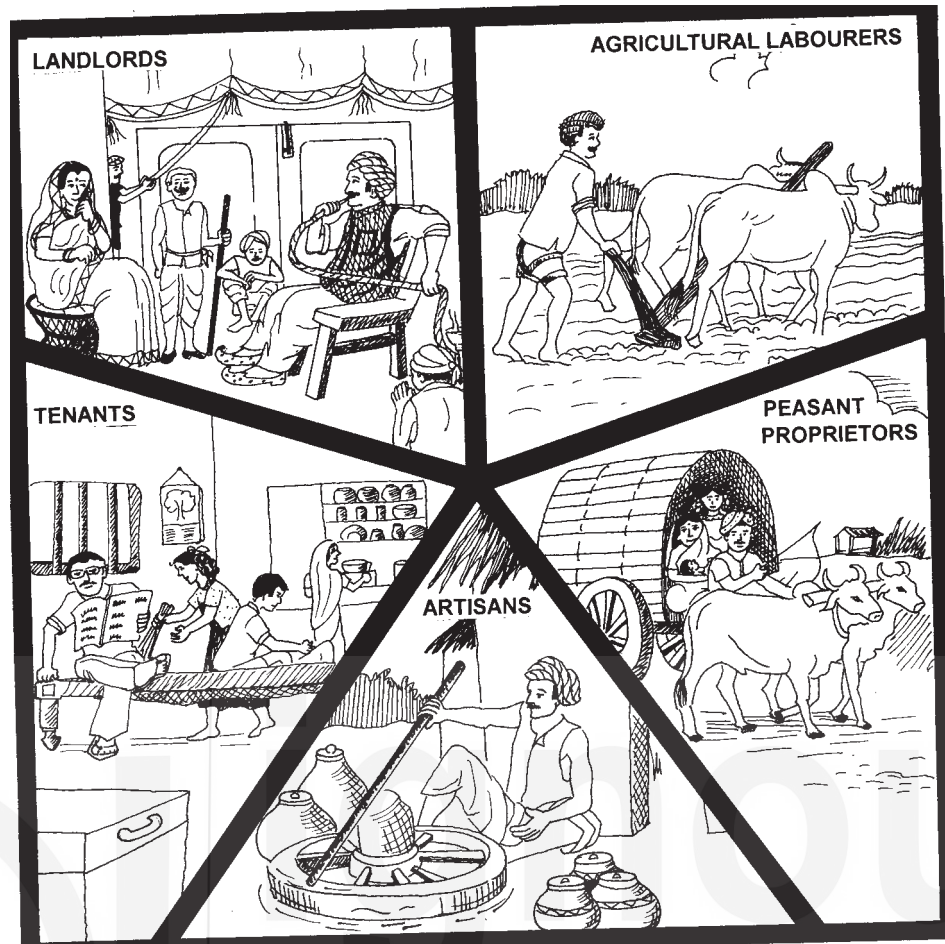


Fig. 23.1 Social classes in rural India

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Describe the *ryotwari* settlement of land during the British rule. Use two lines for your answer.
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- ii) Describe the permanent settlement of land during the British rule. Use three lines for your answer.
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- iii) Distinguish between the rich peasant proprietors and the middle peasant proprietors, in about six lines.
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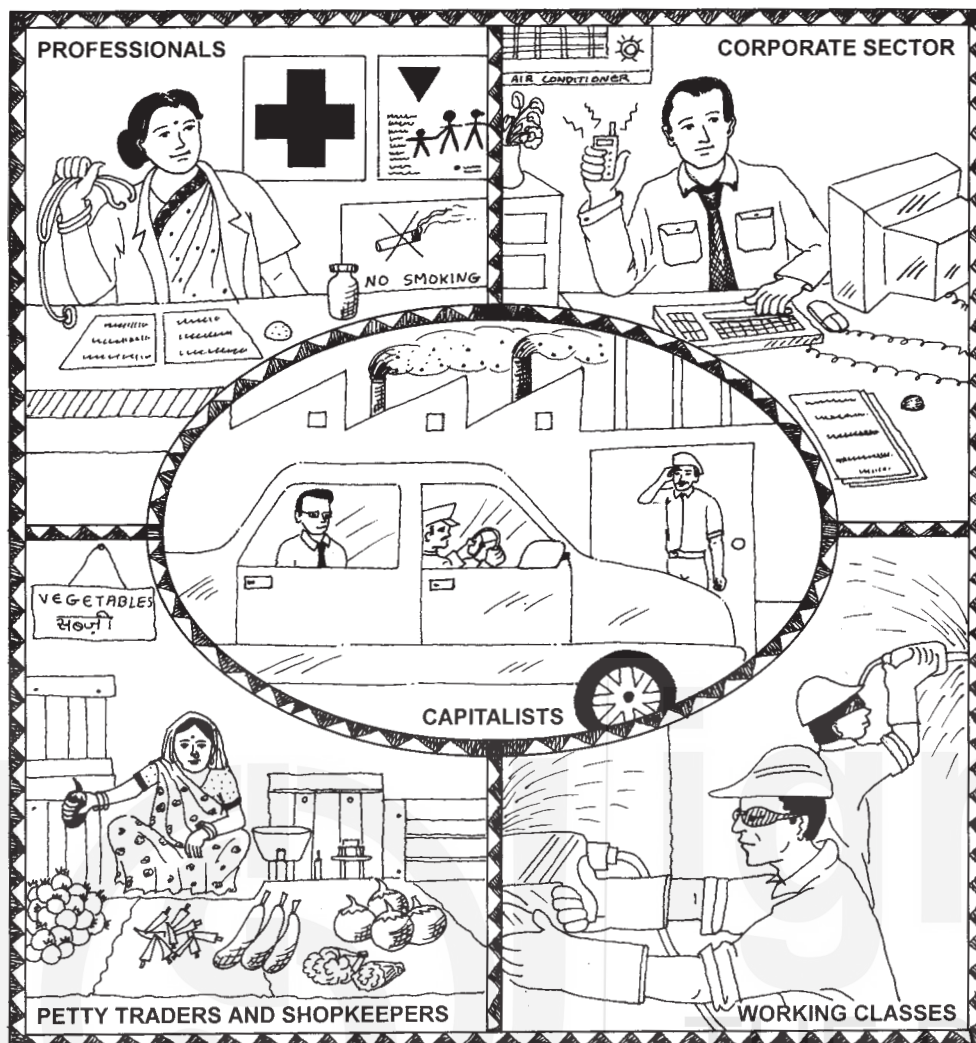


Fig. 23.2: Social classes in urban India

23.6 SOCIAL CLASSES IN URBAN INDIA

In the urban areas social classes comprise principally (i) capitalists (commercial and industrial), (ii) corporate sector (iii) professional classes, (iv) **petty traders and shopkeepers** and (v) working classes (see figure 23.3). Now let us examine each of them one by one.

23.6.1 Commercial and Industrial Classes

Under the British rule, production in India became production for market. As a result of this, internal market expanded and the class of traders engaged in internal trading grew. Simultaneously, India was also linked up with the world market. This led to the growth of a class of merchants engaged in export-import business. Thus, there came into being a commercial middle class in the country. With the establishment of railways, the accumulation of savings on the part of this rich commercial middle class took the form of capital to be invested in other large-scale manufactured goods and modern industries. Like the British, who pioneered the industrial establishment in India, the Indians, too made investment initially in plantations, cotton, jute, mining and so on. Indian society thus included in its composition such new groups as mill owners,

mine owners, etc. Subsequently, they also diversified the sphere of their industrial activity. Economically and socially this class turned out to be the strongest class in India.

However, Indians lagged far behind in comparison to the British in these activities. Government policy was mainly responsible for their slow development during the colonial period. The conflict of interest with the British led to the formation of independent organisations by the Indian **commercial and industrial classes**. This class participated in the freedom struggle by rallying behind the professional classes who were the backbone of the Indian National Movement. With the attainment of Independence, emphasis was laid on rapid industrialisation of the country. In this process, the state was to play a very active role. It evolved economic and industrial policies, which clearly indicated the role of the commercial and industrial class as the catalyst of industrialisation in India. It also actively assisted such classes towards augmentation of production. The state hence introduced the mixed economy pattern, which implies that there is a public sector and a private sector in the Indian Economy. The major fields like agriculture, industry and trade were left to the private individuals. The creation of infrastructure and establishment of heavy and strategic industries was taken up by the state sector. This type of economy led to a phenomenal rise in the number of industries owned and controlled by the capitalists. It also led to the rise of commercial classes. The commercial and business class has therefore, grown in scale and size in the post-Independence era. These industries were not confined to traditional sectors alone such as textile, jute, mines, and plantation. Rather there was considerable diversification into steel industries, paper mills, and various steel manufactured goods. Industrialisation, as has been going on, however shows a disturbing trend. There is a growing tendency towards inequality amongst industrial classes. There is heavy concentration of assets, resources and income in a few business houses such as the Tatas, Birlas, Dalmias, and a few others.

23.6.2 The Corporate Sector

Any organisation that is under government ownership and control is called as public sector units and any organisation, which does not belong to public sector can be taken to be a part of private sector. The firms and organisation which are owned, controlled and managed exclusively by private individuals and entities are included in private sector. All private sector firms can be classified into two categories, such as individually owned and collectively owned. Collectively owned firms are further classified into i) partnership firms ii) joint Hindu family iii) joint-stock companies and iv) co-operatives. The most important of these is the joint-stock organization, which is otherwise popularly known as corporate sector. Joint-stock companies which do not belong to public sector are collectively known as private corporate sector.

Indian corporate sector is substantially large and highly diversified. The role and significance of private corporate sector can be gauged from the contribution it makes in terms of value added to national economy. The contribution of private corporate sector in terms of net value added, increased from 10 per cent of the total 'net value added' generated in the economy in early 1980s to around 19 per cent of the same in mid 1990s (Shanta 1999). This clearly shows the significance of private corporate sector in the economy is increasing constantly. The private corporate sector has been important in many other

important respects also. According to a study carried out by 'Dalal Street Investment Journal (2000), most companies, which achieved best growth in 1999-2000 in terms of their net profit, belong to private corporate sector.

Greater move towards privatisation after the adoption of new economic policy in 1991 accorded significant importance to private sector in the development process of the economy. Due to the radical change in policy approach from regularisation to liberalisation, private corporate sector has gained centre stage in the economic areas.

23.6.3 Professional Classes

The new economic and state systems brought about by the British rule required cadres of educated Indians trained in modern law, technology, medicine, economics, administrative science and other subjects. In fact, it was mainly because of the pressing need of the new commercial and industrial enterprises and the administrative systems that the British government was forced to introduce modern education in India. They established modern educational institutions on an increasing scale. Schools and colleges giving legal, commercial and general education were started to meet the needs of the state and the economy. Thus, there came into being an expanding professional class. Such social categories were linked up with modern industry, agriculture, commerce, finance, administration, press and other fields of social life. The professional classes comprise modern lawyers, doctors, teachers, managers and others working in the modern commercial and other enterprises, officials functioning in state administrative machinery, engineers, technologists; agriculture scientists, journalists and so on. The role of this class in the National Movement was decisive. They were, in fact, pioneers, and pace-setters. They were also the force behind progressive social and religious reform movements in the country.

Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in post-independent India has opened the way for large-scale employment opportunities in industries, trade and commerce, construction, transport, services and other varied economic activities. Simultaneously, the state has created a massive institutional set-up comprising a complex bureaucratic structure throughout the length and breadth of the country. This has provided employment on a sizeable scale. The employment in these sectors, whether private or government requires prerequisite qualifications, such as education, training, skill, and so on. Bureaucrats, management executives, technocrats, doctors, lawyers, teachers, journalists, are some of the categories who possess such skills.

They have grown considerably in size and scale ever since independence. This class, however, hardly constitutes a homogeneous category. Of course, it enjoys pay and condition of work far more favourable than those engaged in manual work but less than those enjoyed by the upper class. However, even within this non-proprietary class of non-manual workers, a deep hierarchy exists. There are some high paid cadres at the top. A large proportion on the other hand, has earnings of only a little above those of the non-manual workers. There are also considerable differences in the condition of their work and opportunity for promotion. They differ in their styles of life as well. In view of these observations we can say that they are only gradually crystallising into a well-defined middle class.

23.6.4 Petty Traders, Shopkeepers and Unorganised Workers

In addition to the new classes discussed above, there has also been in existence in urban areas a class of petty traders and shopkeepers. These classes have developed with the growth of modern cities and towns. They constitute the link between the producers of goods and commodities and the mass of consumers. That is, they buy goods from the producers or wholesalers and sell it among the consumers. Thus, they make their living on the profit margin of the prices on which they buy and sell their goods and commodities.

Like all other classes, this class also has grown in scale in post-independent India. The unprecedented growth of cities in the process of urbanisation, which the post-independent India has been witness to, has stimulated the growth of this class. The pressure of population on land and lack of avenues of employment in rural society has led to a large-scale migration of rural population to towns and cities in search of employment. Such migration is taking place not only in big cities but also in hundreds of medium sized or small sized cities that are springing up in different parts of the country. Urbanisation on the other hand, offers a variety of new activities and employment. The growing urban population creates demands for various kinds of needs and services. Petty shop-keeping and trading caters to these needs of the urban population. A section of the urban population draws its livelihood from these sources. In view of the growing urbanisation their size has considerably increased. Besides these spheres of activities, urbanisation also offers opportunities for employment in the organised and unorganised sector of the economy. The opportunities in the organised sector are small and require educational qualification, and training. The bulk of rural migrants lack this pre-requisite and hence the organised sector is closed to them. Invariably then, they fall back upon the unorganised sector of the economy. They work in small-scale production units or crafts, industry or manual service occupation. They get low wages, and also are deprived of the benefits, the organised labour force are entitled to.

In the wake of economic liberalisation since 1991, there is now a trend towards deregulation of labour market, which may make the labour relations in the unorganised sector more exploitative. Although economic liberalisation is affecting the organised workers directly, there may be considerable impact on unorganised workers. For instance, the growing unemployment in the organised sector tends to decrease the wages and the working days of the workers in the unorganised sector. Besides many petty trade and business activities engaging unorganised workers will be affected because of the entry of the private corporate sector and multinational corporations. A recent study (Haque and Naidu 1999) shows that the impact of economic liberalisation has been disastrous for those employed in petty trade, artisans, fisherman, etc. thus illiteracy coupled with lack of organisational strength is likely to worsen the working environment and labour relations in the unorganised sector.

This class also constitutes an amorphous category. It comprises on the one hand self-employed petty shopkeepers traders, vendors, hawkers, and on the other, semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the informal sector. They are the least organised of the urban groups in India.

Activity 2

In your neighbourhood select ten people of different occupational backgrounds and chart out the class to which they belong, such as, landlord, tenants, artisans, agricultural labourers, capitalists, professional class, petty traders and shopkeepers or working class.

- 1) What are your reasons to put these people in these classes? Give at least two reasons for each
- 2) Write a note of about two pages and compare it, if possible, with other students of your Study Centre.

23.6.5 Working Classes

Origin of the working class could be traced back to the British rule. This was the modern working class which was the direct result of modern industries, railways, and plantations established in India during the British period. This class grew in proportion as plantations, factories, mining, industry, transport, railways and other industrial sectors developed and expanded in India. The Indian working class was formed predominantly out of the pauperised peasants and ruined artisans. Level of living and working conditions characterised their existence. A large proportion of them generally remained indebted because of their inability to maintain themselves and their families. The government passed legislation, from time to time, such as the Indian Posts Act, the Workmen's Compensation Act, the Factories Act, the Miners Act, etc. These were however, considered by social thinkers as inadequate to protect the rights of the labourers.

These hard conditions of life and labour led to the emergence of trade unions and the growth of working class movement in India. This was evident from the participation of the workers in, strikes and other activities launched by trade unions from time to time. As a result, there was considerable improvement in the wage structure and working conditions of the working class populations in India.

India has undergone rapid industrialisation after Independence. This industrialisation is no longer confined to a few urban centres as was the case in colonial period. Further, it is also no longer confined to a few traditional sectors such as textile, jute, mining and plantation. It has diversified into new spheres. The state itself has played a pivotal role in the expansion of heavy and strategic industries.

In view of this working class has grown in volume in post-independent India. They have also been dispersed to different parts and different sectors of the industry. Thus, the working class has become much more heterogeneous. It consists of workers employed in different types of industries that have different social and historical background. This diversity in the working class has given rise to a complex set of relations among the different sectors.

The attitude of the government towards the working class too underwent change in the post-independence period. The government's attitude towards working class had become more favourable. It had imposed some regulation on the employers and had granted some protection to the workers. Several Acts were passed granting some facilities to the workers. Some of these are Payment of

Bonus Act, Provident Fund and Gratuity Act etc. All these affected the working class people in the country.

It is a changed scenario ever since India adopted New Economic Policy and Structural Adjustment programme in 1991. The New Economic Policy, which operates under an open and liberalised economic regime, has emphasised a deregulated regime with less emphasis on regulation of labour and employment conditions. This trend largely went against the interests of the working class. The major adjustment policy followed by the private as well as public sector has resulted in an increase in the casualisation of labour on a large scale. It also resulted in the redundancy of existing workforce and relocation of units to lower wage areas with temporary workforce. Apart from that companies had resorted to direct reduction of workforce. The industrial units resorted to no new recruitment or replacement, retrenchment, voluntary retirement schemes, increased sub contracting, automation and shut down of departments and closure. This is accompanied by the shift in the government policies away from protection of employment by withdrawing certain pro-labour legal provisions. The result is that the workers are made to work under exploitative conditions without much bargaining power.

The trade union organisation too shows some change in the post-Independence period. Till Independence, political and economic struggles of the trade unions had been directed against imperialist subjugation. After Independence their struggle has been against the employers of labour and it is more specific in its goal. Yet, considerable division exists among the trade unions in terms of control, sector and region of the industries. Much of the resistance in the form of strikes has been generally organised industry wise or region wise. Trade unions have also taken refuge and found support in different political parties. As a result, trade union movement in post-Independence period has been subjected to further divisions and subdivisions.

The process of current industrial restructuring has a negative impact on trade unions. The new management strategies created an atmosphere of job insecurity among the workers and severely curtailed trade union activity. Due to the consequences of liberalisation of the Indian economy as well as closure of sick units and changing pattern of work and organisation, the trade union's influence has come down to lowest possible level, resulting in loss of membership. These developments have posed a serious challenge to trade unions reflecting a deep crisis in their existing structure. In the emerging scene the trade unions also adopted different strategies. Providing a joint trade union platform, formation of unity among public sector Unions, merging of central trade unions, addressing the needs of the unorganised sector are some worth mentioning here. In the present circumstances the trade unions have to adopt new strategies and have to leave behind their confrontationist approach, which depend heavily on agitations and protest which became irrelevant (Radhakrishna 1998).

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Identify two important factors, which paved the way for industrialisation in India. Use about three lines.

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- ii) List four major fields in which early industrialisation took place. Use about three lines.

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- iii) Spell out two factors, which facilitated the growth of professional classes in India.

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- iv) What accounts for the growth of petty traders and shopkeepers in India? Use about three lines.

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23.7 LET US SUM UP

Social classes constitute an important segment of social structure in modern India. Social classes have always been present through all ages but the social classes as we see them today in India, had their origins in the British rule.

Therefore, first of all, we outlined the impact of British rule on the class formation in India. In this connection, we pointed out the creation of new economy in British India. This reflected in the agricultural sector, in the form of introduction of private property in land, new revenue system and the increasing commercialisation of agriculture, which was a consequence of Agrarian Reforms introduced after Independence. The other spheres of this new economy were the growth of trade and commerce, extension of railways, introduction and expansion of industrial enterprises. The development of state and administrative system coupled with modern education were the other important social forces, which shaped the new classes in India. In the process we also pointed to the consequent uneven growth of social classes in different parts and communities of India. We then studied the rural classes in India. We classified them broadly into five divisions, such as, landlords, peasant proprietors, tenants, agricultural labourers and artisans. Each was studied with reference to its emergence and character. Major changes in their composition after Independence were pointed out. Similarly, urban classes were divided into five categories. These comprised

commercial and industrial classes, the corporate sector, professional classes, petty traders, shopkeepers and unorganised workers, and working class. They too were studied with reference to their emergence, character and changing situation, in the post-Independence period.

23.8 KEYWORDS

Agricultural Labourers	Social categories drawing livelihood mainly from selling their labour powers.
Commercial and Industrial Capitalists	Owners of industrial establishment and large-scale business.
Green Revolution	Accelerated growth of food production through combination of improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticide and irrigation.
Intermediaries	Social categories between state and the actual cultivators.
Landlords	Owners of estates who leased out land to others in pre-British period.
Peasant Proprietors	Cultivators with proprietary rights in land who emerged after independence.
Petty Traders and Shopkeepers	Population engaged in small business and trading.
Professional Classes	Occupational categories involving prerequisite qualifications such as, education, training and skill.
Sharecroppers	Tenants/cultivators cultivating land on share basis.
Social Classes	Social categories differentiated and hierarchically ranked in terms of primarily income, wealth and assets.
Tenants	Cultivators holding land from owners on some tenure.
Working Class	Those who work in the industries.
Zamindars	Owners of estate, created due to the introduction of Permanent Settlement in 1793 in certain regions of India. However, the word <i>Zamindar</i> is used in different senses in different regions of India.

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23.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Social class is a kind of social group, which is neither legally defined nor religiously sanctioned. It has been defined as a stratum of people who share a similar position in society. They are relatively open and anyone who satisfies the basic criteria of wealth and associated style of life, etc. can become its member. Social classes in a society are ranked hierarchically on the basis of primarily wealth and income. Classes are the characteristic features of industrial societies.
- ii) Some of the changes that have led to the emergence of social classes in India are (a) changing land system, (b) trade and commerce, (c) industrialisation, (d) state and administrative system, and (e) modern education.
- iii) The uneven growth of social classes took place in two spheres. One was the various parts of India and the other, in the various communities in India.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) *Ryotwari* settlement was a settlement made by the British. Under this settlement the ownership of land was vested in the peasants who were the actual cultivators.

Caste and Class

- ii) Permanent settlement was a settlement made by the British. Under this settlement the right of ownership was conferred on the *Zamindars*. Their only obligation was to pay a fixed land revenue to the British Government.
- iii) The rich peasants are proprietors having considerable landholdings. They are rich enough to hire agricultural labourers to do field work and they generally supervised cultivation. They take personal interest in the management and improvement of their land. In comparison to them, the middle peasants own medium size landholdings. They are self-sufficient and they use only family labour for land cultivation.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) The two important factors, which paved the way for industrialisation, are introduction of railways and the accumulation of savings.
- ii) The four major fields in which the early industrialisation took place are (a) plantation, (b) cotton, (c) jute, (d) mining.
- iii) The factors, which facilitated the growth of professional classes in India, are (a) trade, commerce and industry, (b) state and administrative system.
- iv) Growth of towns and cities, on a large-scale accounts for the growth of petty traders and shopkeepers in India.

Structure

- 24.0 Objectives
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 - 24.2.1 Definition of Backward Classes
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24.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the backward classes in India. After studying this unit you will be able to

- explain the meaning of the term “backward classes” and the social categories which constitute it
- describe the social background of each of these categories
- identify some of the distinctive features and problems of each component of the backward classes in the context of social change.

24.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 23 we had discussed the emergence and role of classes in India. Here we shall focus on the **backward classes**. The backward classes constitute an important segment of Indian society. They account for more than thirty per cent of the total population. Their condition is intimately connected with many of the basic features of Indian social structure.

The unit has been divided into three sections each dealing with one of the aspects spelt out in the objectives. In section 24.2 we have defined the composition of the backward classes. In section 24.3 we have given the social background of the backward classes and in section 24.4 we have described the distinguishing features and problems of the backward classes in the context of social change. Finally, in section 24.5 the unit has been summed up. Now let us examine the nature of backward classes.

24.2 NATURE OF BACKWARD CLASSES

The term 'class' signifies a form of social stratification. It is defined as a stratum of people who share a similar socio-economic status or position. It is relatively open as compared to other forms of stratification like caste. A class is considered to be backward if its members are economically and educationally less privileged compared to the other classes in that society. Let us see how a backward class in India is defined and what is its nature. Then we shall discuss the phenomenon of backward classes during the British period and finally, we will discuss how the Constitution has dealt with them.

24.2.1 Definition of Backward Classes

The backward classes in India can be understood only when we understand the basic character of Indian society which consists of a number of closed status groups. The 'backward classes' do not constitute one single whole but a multitude of social groups with varying positions and socio-economic standing in the social hierarchy of Indian society.

They suffer from disadvantages and disabilities which are age-old and which derive their sanction mainly from the caste system. Low status, poverty and illiteracy are social problems, which they have inherited due to their ascribed status of being born in a low caste or tribe.

24.2.2 Composition of Backward Classes

The backward classes constitute a large and mixed category of persons. They comprise roughly one-third of the total population of the country. They are made up of (i) the scheduled **tribes** (*adivasis*); (ii) the **scheduled castes** (the *Harijans*), and (iii) the **other backward classes**. The scheduled castes (SC) and the scheduled tribes (ST) are well-defined categories in the Indian Constitution. The other backward classes are not listed and defined. The problems of this category of people are, therefore, diverse and complex (Kuppuswamy 1984: 192).

24.2.3 British Rule and Backward Classes

The problems of the backward classes came to be more sharply focused during the British rule. The policy, the British government followed towards the backward classes, was partly humanitarian and partly political. The Government desired to do away with certain disabilities of the traditional social structure, which went against the Western principle of social justice and equality. They also extended economic benefits to low castes by encouraging certain occupations or trades such as liquor, hides and so on. The British policy, however, also emanated from another dimension. The Indian national

movement was gaining momentum. Its leadership was provided by the new intelligentsia which came from the upper castes. The British government did not look at them with favour. The perpetuation of cleavage between the high castes and the low castes was in their interest. This they ensured by extending economic and political benefits to the low castes. In this way the wedge was maintained between the high castes and the low castes during the British rule.

24.2.4 Backward Classes and the Indian Constitution

The Indian Constitution is silent on the definition of the backward classes. What one finds, however, is the characteristics of **backwardness** described and spread over the different articles of the Constitution. Article 15 (4) speaks of social and educational backwardness. In Article 16 (4), mention is made of backward classes and their inadequate representation in services. Article 23 speaks of forced labour. Article 46 refers to weaker section of the people in which the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are included.

Along with such references of backwardness, the Constitution also makes special provision for their upliftment. In addition, there is also legal provision. Article 17 of the Constitution, for example, abolishes untouchability. This gives the scheduled castes the same legal rights as any other caste. To reinforce this, the Untouchability (Offences) Act was passed in 1955, which fixed penalties for offences on this score. Similarly, the extension of adult franchise has given the scheduled castes the political power. The real problem, however, is not the removal of legal disabilities but social disabilities. To overcome this, the Constitution has laid down certain provisions under Article 46. It states that the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic advancement of the weaker sections of the people, in particular the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. It shall also protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Finally, there is the Article 340 which makes provision for the state government to investigate the condition of the backward classes. Keeping these points in mind, we will now focus on the social background of the backward classes.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Distinguish between the usage of backward classes in general and its usage in India. Use about four lines.

.....

ii) What is the composition of backward classes in India? Use about three lines.

.....

iii) Tick the correct answer to the following question.

What was the nature of the policy of the British Government during the colonial period?

- a) Very humanitarian
 - b) Very political
 - c) Partly humanitarian and partly political
 - d) None of the above
- iv) Tick the correct answer to the following question.

In the Indian Constitution, what does the Article 17 speak about?

- a) Social and economic backwardness
- b) Weaker section of the people in which are included the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.
- c) Abolishing untouchability
- d) Making provision for the state to investigate the condition of the backward classes

24.3 SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF BACKWARD CLASSES

As mentioned to you earlier, the backward classes in India are socially, economically and educationally most backward section of Indian society. In this section, we will examine each category of backward classes, like the scheduled tribes, the scheduled castes and the other backward classes in detail. The details will include mainly their distinctive features with a special focus on their economic status. Let us first begin with the scheduled tribes.

24.3.1 The Scheduled Tribes

Before we describe the features of the scheduled tribes let us clarify the meaning of tribes. A tribe is defined as a group of people who can be identified as a homogeneous unit with certain common characteristics. The common characteristics that they share are a common territory, a common language and descent from a common ancestor. Apart from these features they are very often backward in technology, pre-literate and observe social and political customs based on kinship (Kuppuswamy 1984:194).

i) **Distribution**

According to the 1981 census, the scheduled tribes constituted nearly seven per cent of the total population. And as per the 1991 census they constitute 8.08 percent of the total population. They are believed to constitute the aboriginal element in the Indian society referred to as the '*Girijan*' or '*Janjatis*' or '*Adivasi*'. They are concentrated in certain geographical areas like the northern and north-eastern mountain valley and the eastern frontiers, hills and plateau between peninsular India and Indo-gangetic plains, hills and ghats in the south-western part of India. The Scheduled Tribe Lists Modification Order, 1956 listed 414 tribes in various states of India. They are scattered over almost

every state in India. They have, however, a fairly large concentration in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Gujarat. In Madhya Pradesh (M.P.), there are nearly seven million tribal people who belong to 68 different groups. In Bihar and Orissa, there are more than four million tribal people. Article 164 provides for a Ministry of Tribal Welfare in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa while the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution provides a considerable degree of social, cultural and political autonomy for the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. The other tribal regions i.e. besides those which came under the 6th Schedule are referred to as the "Scheduled Areas" for the purpose of administration in the Constitution. The population of Scheduled Tribes in different Indian states as per 1981 and 1991 census is given in figure 24.1.

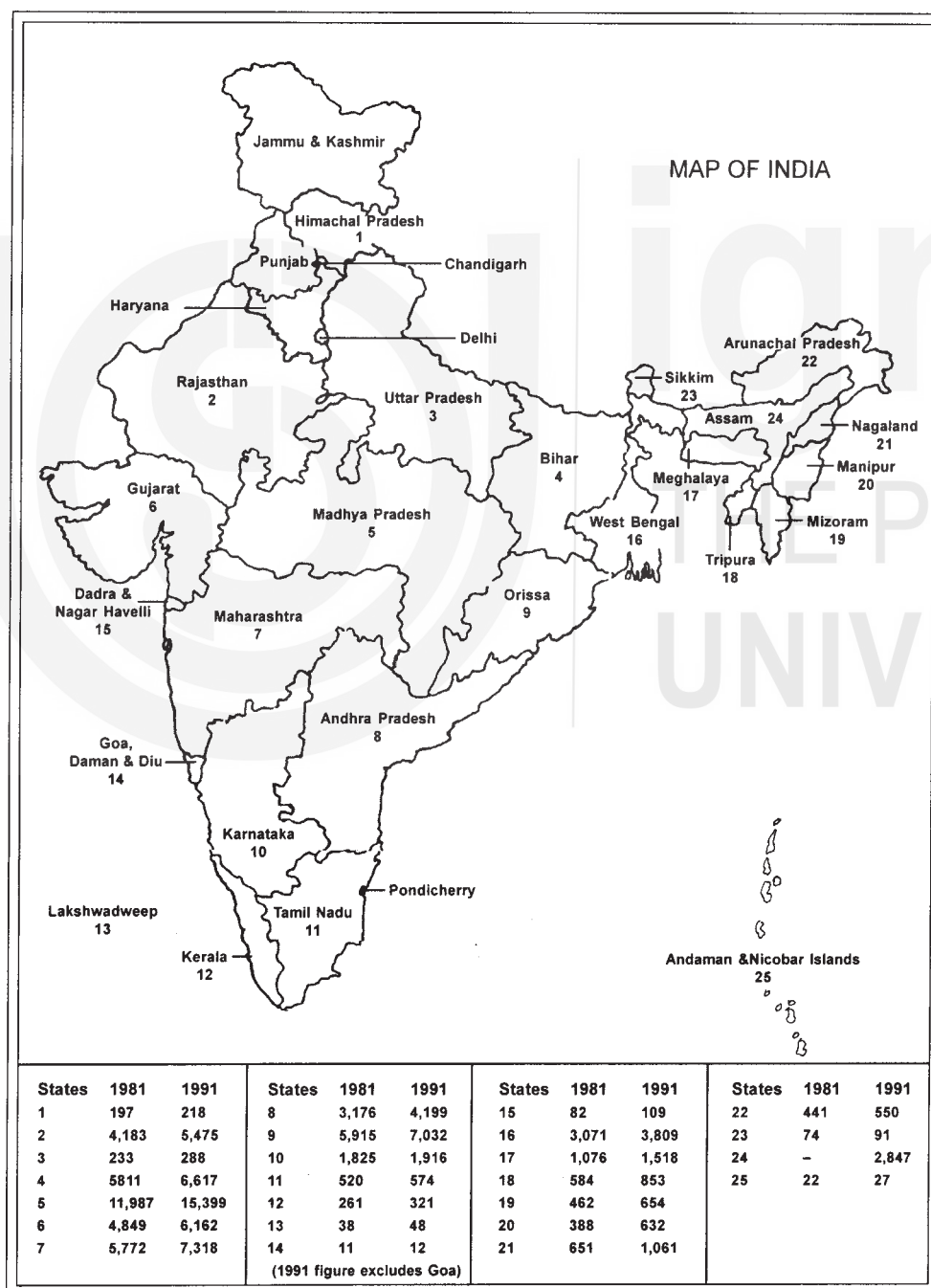


Fig. 24.1: Population of scheduled tribes 1981 and 1991 census

In spite of having a large population of tribal people in the states of M.P., Bihar, Orissa and some other states, these people only constitute a minority in the total population of these states. In contrast, north-eastern states present a different picture. The total tribal population in these states is small in comparison to those of the other states; but the tribals constitute a large percentage of the total population of these states. Besides these there are several other tribal regions like Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar, etc. where some very primitive tribes are found, which are increasingly becoming extinct.

ii) **Distinguishing features**

The tribal populations in India speak a large variety of dialects. There are numerous variations in their habits, customs and arts.

They live generally in the hill and forest areas. The ecological and social **isolation** has been historically one of the principal features of the tribal population. This isolation had left a definite mark on their social system. For example, until recently, they enjoyed a certain measure of political autonomy. Today, it is difficult to define the tribal people of India in terms of any single set of criteria. The difficulty arises from the fact that tribes in India are tribes in transition. Their political boundaries have collapsed. Their ecological and social isolation has been broken. A section of the tribal population has got absorbed into Hindu society, some have converted to Islam and some to Christianity. They have also been drawn into the various sectors of the economy, such as, plantations, mines, industries, etc. This makes the generalised description of the tribal population more difficult. Problem of description is not merely an academic problem, it is also a problem of vital practical concern. The benefit of many welfare programmes goes only to those groups which are listed under the category of scheduled tribes. The list of the scheduled tribes has, therefore, been drawn after careful consideration of each individual tribe so that no group is left out. Generally, such lists have been drawn keeping in mind the geographical isolation and the relative independence of their political and cultural system.

iii) **Economic status**

Economically, tribes vary all the way from food gatherers to the industrial labour force. There are many tribes such as the Kadar, the Malapantaram and the Paniyan of Kerala, the Paliyan of Tamil Nadu who are dependent on forest products. They are essentially food gatherers. They collect fruits, roots and other forest products and supplement them with hunting and fishing.

The bulk of the tribal population of India is dependent on agriculture with forest produce as secondary support. Some of these like the Mizo, the Garo, the Khasi, the Naga, practice shifting or '*jhum*' (i.e. slash and burn) cultivation. Others like the Oraon, the Munda, the Bhil, the Gond are engaged in permanent, settled cultivation. Many of the tribal groups have also migrated in large number to Assam and West Bengal and work as plantation labourers (see Jain 1988). Similarly, areas in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, which are rich in coal, iron and other minerals, have led to the emergence of industrial labour force which consists of the tribals.

Activity 1

Select at least two people living in your neighbourhood, who belong to the category of backward classes. Talk to them about the following:

- a) Have they faced any discrimination so far as an individual or as a social group, for example, a family group?
- b) If yes, then specify in which field(s) they have faced? social, political, economic, educational-school level or college level, and occupational.

Write a short note of about two pages and compare it, if possible, with the notes of other students at your Study Centre.

24.3.2 The Scheduled Castes

We have already discussed in unit 22 of this Block, the term ‘scheduled caste’. This term was coined by the Simon Commission (1927). The expressions ‘Depressed Classes’, ‘Exterior Castes’ and ‘untouchables’ were commonly used for the scheduled castes during the colonial period. Gandhiji called them ‘*Harijans*’, (the people of God). But since the passage of the Government of India Act of 1935 they have been generally referred to as ‘scheduled castes’.

i) Distribution

The scheduled castes constitute about 15.3 percent of India’s total population according to the 1981 census and 15.93 percent as per the 1991 census. They, unlike the tribes, did not have a history of isolation. They have lived with the other castes and communities in segregation rather than isolation. Whereas the tribal people are concentrated in blocks in specific geographical regions, the scheduled castes are scattered through every state and practically through every district. They are concentrated in rural areas and are found commonly in multi-caste villages. Such distributional characteristics lead to certain difficulties. Development measures cannot be uniform, as the individual needs of each group belonging to the SC category are different. It is easier to implement special programmes of development for the scheduled tribes than for the scheduled castes. There is also more scope for the development of separatist political movements among the tribal groups than amongst the scheduled castes due to the very same reason of disparate needs and socio-economic statuses of each group.

ii) Distinguishing marks

The social condition of the scheduled castes has been governed in important ways by the Hindu concept of pollution. The idea of purity and pollution has generally been considered a factor in the genesis of the caste system. This idea was central to the practice of untouchability since ages. That is, social groups following occupations like scavenging, leather work, removing dead cattle and so on were looked upon as polluting groups; contact with them was considered to be defiling. So they were required to live in a separate colony outside the village. Many areas of social life were not accessible to them. They suffered various sorts of restrictions and disabilities. They were socially and legally prohibited from taking up any other profession than what was traditionally ascribed to them. They had no right to enter the temples. They

did not have the freedom to use public wells and tanks which the caste Hindu used. They were not allowed to wear the type of dress the upper caste Hindu wore. In several parts of India, women were not allowed to cover the upper portion of their body and wear ornaments. The practice of untouchability was at its worst in different parts of India. In Kerala, for example, to avoid upper castes being polluted, the distance at which the polluting castes had to remain was prescribed by tradition. Such practices were also maintained in north India. Although the practice of untouchability has been made an offence, the stigma of pollution has not by any means entirely removed. Their economic, social and ritual status continues to be depressed although there are certain indications of change.

iii) **Economic status**

Economically, they are among the poorest sections of the Hindu society. Traditionally as mentioned before, they were engaged in the most degrading occupations like scavenging, removing dead cattle, leather work and so on. Being predominantly rural, they are mainly engaged in agriculture today. Even in agriculture they are mainly found as landless agricultural labourers and marginal sharecroppers and peasants. As a result they are found in varying degrees of bondedness in different parts of the country.

24.3.3 The Other Backward Classes

We have observed that the Indian Constitution specially provides reservation for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Ever since the framing of the Constitution, the demand has been raised for a similar provision for castes, other than the scheduled castes and tribes, which are educationally and socially backward.

This category is, however, mentioned in the Constitution in only the most general terms. There is no all India list for the other backward classes. Lists have of course, been drawn by the Ministry of Education and by the State Governments.

There has been, however, much discrepancy in these lists. The Backward Classes Commission was hence set up in 1953 under the chairmanship of Kaka Kalekar, with a view to decide the criterion on the basis of which socially and educationally backward classes could be identified. The Commission pointed to a good deal of ambiguity in the lists prepared by the Central and State Governments. It also prepared a detailed list of the other backward classes. The list was prepared on the basis of the position of the castes in social hierarchy, percentage of literacy and its representation in services and industries. The Commission was of the view that the majority of the backward classes are ignorant, illiterate and poor. The recommendation of the Commission was not accepted as authoritative by the Government and hence its recommendation was not implemented. Since then the State Governments have been allowed to use their own criteria in drawing up the lists of the other backward classes. Some states like Karnataka did make some provision for the other backward classes. Special commission was appointed and special lists identifying the backward castes were prepared. Suitable laws were introduced by the Government to provide for reservation or special facilities. Some other southern

states too adopted similar measures. However, in states where such provisions were not made or where only half-hearted provisions were made, the demand for reservation of the backward castes began to be expressed in the shape of the movements. When this demand started acquiring the form of a national problem, the Central Government constituted the Mandal Commission to look into it. No sooner was the Mandal Commission report published than the question of reservation became an issue of heated debate and controversy.

Even though the commission submitted its report in 1980, the Union Government implemented its recommendation in 1990 only. The terms of reference of the Mandal Commission inter alia i) to determine the criteria for defining social and educational backwardness, ii) to recommend steps to be taken for the advancement of the socially and educationally backward classes of citizens of India, iii) to examine the desirability or otherwise of making provisions for the reservation of posts in favour of the backward classes. The national government under the leadership of V.P. Singh implemented one of the principal recommendations of the Mandal Commission Report reserving twenty-seven percent posts in central government services and public sector undertakings for the socially and educationally backward classes. The result was widespread agitation against the decision by the middle and upper castes (Nayak 1996). Similar commissions were also instituted by the state Governments of Gujarat (Baxi and Rane Commissions) and Madhya Pradesh (Mahajan Commission). The acceptance of their recommendations by the respective state Governments led to widespread violence by the upper castes in these two states. Thus, we can see that there was a lot of controversy over the definition of Other Backward Classes.

i) **Criterion**

The Central Government has since 1961 been pressing for the adoption of economic criteria in defining the Other Backward Classes. There has been some opposition to this from a number of state governments. Some of the castes included in the earlier lists of the other backward classes are fairly powerful in state politics. They have, therefore, exerted pressure on state governments to have the old criteria retained. The Lingayats of Karnataka and the Ezhavas of Kerala provide good instances.

The Central Government has not insisted on the old lists being abandoned. Yet economic and other pressures have been exerted on the state governments for the adoption of economic criterion. By now the majority of the states have adopted this criterion for defining backwardness for the award of scholarships to the other backward classes, other than the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

ii) **Economic status**

The core of the other backward classes consists of peasant castes of various descriptions. The position occupied by these castes is different from that of the scheduled castes. Frequently, they occupy a low position in the caste hierarchy, but are above the untouchables. They have no tradition of literacy. They have, therefore, lagged behind in the pursuit of modern education. They are often poorly represented in government jobs and **white-collar occupations**.

In spite of this, such castes sometimes occupy a dominant position in the economic and political system of the village. When they are also numerically preponderant, their control over the village, a group of villages or even a district may be decisive. It appears that **dominant castes** of this kind have developed a vested interest in remaining backward in the legal sense i.e. as a category, so that they can enjoy the number of benefits in education and employment provided by the Government (Srinivas 1962: 40).

Check your Progress 2

- i) What was the most distinguishing feature of tribal populations? Tick the correct answer.
 - a) Segregation
 - b) Absorption
 - c) Isolation

- ii) List the major features of the scheduled castes in traditional social structure. Use about two lines.

.....
.....

- iii) Who constitutes the core of the 'other backward classes? Use about three lines

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

24.4 FEATURES AND PROBLEMS OF BACKWARD CLASSES IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

We have so far surveyed the social background of each of the component of the backward classes. We shall now focus on some of the distinctive features emanating from the changing social situation.

24.4.1 Context of Social Change

The traditional Indian society was highly segmented and hierarchical in character. The segments within it were separated from one another by clear-cut boundaries of marriage, restriction in interdining and other forms of social interaction. Social separation between different segments, each pursuing its own style of life could be kept intact so long as the society was fairly closed. In the traditional society, mobility-vertical or horizontal-was slow and limited. The expansion of transport and communication, spread of modern education, new economic opportunities, opportunities of political articulation ushered in during the British rule brought about significant changes in the traditional social structure. This led to the system being more open, allowing for greater mobility.

Of the many changes taking place among the backward classes, two in particular deserve special attention. They are (i) changes in their style of life, and (ii) changes in their relation to the political system. Of course, both are intimately related with changes in their economic life.

i) **Changes in style of life**

The changes in the style of life have followed two trends. They are **Sanskritisation** and **Westernisation**. Sanskritisation is defined as a process by which a caste or social group moves up the social hierarchy by adopting the style of life associated by tradition with the upper castes. These upper castes can be Brahmins, Kshatriyas or even Vaishyas. Westernisation in the Indian context, on the other hand, refers essentially to the process of social change introduced by the British rule in India. Individuals and groups began to respond and adopt to British ideals, relating to politics, economy, education, dress, manners, customs and so on. This follows from their taking up western education and getting into a modern occupation.

The process of Sanskritisation was at work even before the advent of the Europeans, however, it was slow and gradual. The reason being that the economy was relatively static and population movement very limited. Over and above, there were strong legal and ritual sanctions, which acted against the large-scale movement of people from one region to another. For example, each caste was identified with a certain occupation like *Dhobi*, *Nai*, *Kumbhar*, etc. and each family of these castes had a traditional patron whom it served, within the framework of *jajmani* system. Nobody in the traditional system could take over the occupation of another caste and as such, they could not give up their own caste occupation and go away to another place unless and until they were allowed to in special circumstances.

The pace of Sanskritisation was accelerated during the British rule due to factors mentioned earlier. Both the processes of Sanskritisation and Westernisation led to a change of life-style among the backward classes in India.

ii) **Changes in relation to the political system**

Alongside this process, there were changes in the political system. The political system, which developed during the British rule, gave increasing opportunities for political articulation to the people of India, especially those who acquired western education. This facility was taken advantage of by the backward classes. The advent of Independence and the introduction of adult franchise and more recently Panchayati Raj institutions have increased the access to power, especially political power, to the backward classes.

Such access led to a shift from Sanskritisation to competition for positions of higher bureaucratic and political power. These two aspects of change will now be examined with reference to each component of the backward classes, namely scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, and the other backward classes.

24.4.2 The Scheduled Tribes

i) Changes in the style of life

Changes in the style of life are, as mentioned before, two. First is Sanskritisation and second is Westernisation. Let us understand these now in relation to the scheduled tribes.

Sanskritisation

Culturally the distance was greatest between the tribal and the scheduled castes on the one hand and the better off upper caste sections of society on the other. The tribal people were ecologically isolated. They had developed their own traditions, customs, habits and ways of life. Despite this, social forces were at work leading to transmission of cultural elements from the more dominant and better-off sections of society to the more backward viz. the tribals. Two of the most important of such forces at work were Sanskritisation and Westernisation.

The tribal people have been isolated to a far greater extent from the broad stream of Sanskritisation than the scheduled castes and other backward classes. In spite of this, they have felt the impact of Sanskritic ideas and values. This impact has gathered momentum over the last several decades. This has no doubt been largely due to the opening of the tribal areas to the outside world. One of the most general effects of Sanskritisation of tribal communities is that it leads to the **integration** of segments of tribal society unto the wider caste structure and its **assimilation** in the wider Hindu fold. There have been numerous examples of this kind of integration or cultural assimilation. The Bhumij of eastern India, the Raj Gond in Central India and the Patelia in western India are some examples of such integration in the caste structure. This integration cannot be understood simply in terms of changes in rituals or style of life. Rather it is a reflection of fundamental transformation viz. tribal people getting integrated more fully into the wider economic system.

Westernisation

The Christian missions play an active part among tribal communities in India. They operate as agents of social change. Besides providing an alternative system of religious values, the missionaries introduce many new features into tribal society such as education and modern medical facilities. The spread of education and conversion to a new religion, i.e. Christianity have led to rapid Westernisation among the tribal communities. The process is more pronounced in the tribal belts of the north-eastern region than elsewhere. The Mizo, Naga, Khasi are some examples representing such a process. Conversion to Christianity has also taken place in the region of Chotanagpur (Bihar).

The opening of tribal areas to traders, money-lenders and others on the one hand, and cultural contact on the other, have led to disintegration of tribal social organisation. Economically, they have been facing great hardship due to land alienation, and indebtedness, which resulted from opening up of tribal areas to the outside world. Their cultural and social life too has been greatly affected by this process. The question of their integration into the mainstream has become an important subject of discussion. Broadly there were three schools of thought in this regard (i) One of these schools of thought supported the

case of isolation. J.H. Hutton and V. Elwin favoured such a position with a view to protecting tribal people from the evil effects of uncontrolled social and cultural contact. Their policy of isolating the tribal regions was also called “National Park Policy”. (ii) A second school of thought, which found favour with G.S. Ghurye and some social reformers, advocated the assimilation of tribal people in the larger social structure. (iii) Later both Ghurye and Elwin discarded their earlier stand in favour of the policy of integration. The policy of integration aims at bringing the tribal people into the mainstream, but without the loss of their distinctive social organisation and culture.

ii) Changes in Relation to the political system

The impact of change on the political system of the scheduled tribes has been of great importance. Let us see what these changes are.

The approach to the tribal problem differs in many ways from the approach adopted towards the scheduled castes. In the case of tribals, there are certain special problems also. These arise partly from their geographical isolation and partly from their ethnic identity. The consciousness of their distinct ethnic identity has led to organised political activity. The demand for a tribal homeland and the growth of political parties indicate politicisation of tribal society. Through these political processes tribal communities, like the Naga, Khasi, Garo, Mizo attained their separate tribal state. Such processes are still at work in some parts of the tribal belt. The demand existed in the past for a separate Jharkhand state in parts of Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh illustrates this trend. It ultimately resulted in the formation of Jharkhand State in the year 2000.

Activity 2

Read an article about the backward classes which has appeared in any magazine or newspaper within the last six months. Note down

- the issue about which the article is written
- the role of the backward classes
- your view regarding the issue discussed.

Write a note about two pages. Compare, if possible, your note with those of the other students at your Study Centre.

In this section we examined the distinctive features and problems of the scheduled tribes in the context of social change. We saw the changes that have taken place in their cultural life in terms of the process of Sanskritisation and Westernisation. Next we examined the changes in their political system and their role in it. Now let us examine these changes and their impact in the case of the scheduled castes.

24.4.3 The Scheduled Castes

i) Changes in the style of life

The scheduled castes have experienced some changes in their style of life. We will discuss some of these changes here.

Sanskritisation and challenge

Like the tribal population the scheduled castes too had a distinct culture of their own. As mentioned earlier, they were not just one group but several groups, which were all hierarchically placed with relation to each other. They were excluded from temples, bathing ghats, wells and other public places. In south India, and some parts of north India, they were not allowed to use sandals, umbrellas, silken cloth and so on. Their women could not wear upper garments. A large number of civic rights were denied to them by caste and ritual sanctions. Despite this, social forces were at work and there was certain measure of Sanskritisation even in the traditional period, although quite limited.

The new courts established by the British introduced the principle of equality before law. By doing so, it removed one set of obstacles to change in the social life of the scheduled castes. But this did not automatically enable them to exercise their civic rights. Various kinds of sanctions were still applied to keep them in their inferior position.

Since they were economically dependent on the upper castes, they could not press their legal claim to equality. Even the dominant castes among the backward classes rarely looked with favour upon the scheduled caste's claim to equality of status. Physical violence or threat of it has been frequently made on them for attempting to exercise their civic rights. This happens particularly in villages.

In fact, as early as 1930, the assertion by the Adi-Dravida untouchables against traditional disabilities had aroused the wrath of Kallar caste in Tamil Nadu. The disregard of traditional disabilities has led to the use of violence by the Kallars against the untouchable castes whose huts were burnt, granaries and property destroyed and livestock looted. Such incidents do take place even today in villages of Bihar, U.P. and a few other states. Sanskritisation has thus never been easy for the scheduled castes. This is so because the effective adoption of the Sanskrit style of life is dependent on a number of preconditions. These include a minimum of economic and political power and not too inferior ritual status. The scheduled castes on the other hand, have a very low economic, political and ritual status. This has made Sanskritisation difficult for them.

Education and mobility

At the same time the channels of mobility on the economic front is still very restricted. This is largely due to the level of literacy and education, which is still very low. Owing to their very inferior economic position, education turns out to be an important channel of **social mobility**. There is strong demand for education among the scheduled castes population. The government too is making considerable investment in the form of scholarships to meet such demands. Indeed, some groups amongst the SCs have already been making effective use of facilities provided by the government to better their socio-economic and educational position. Formerly, many of the posts in the higher services reserved for members of these communities could not be filled for want of suitable qualified candidates. This is no longer the case now and is not likely to be so in future. With such efforts, especially by the government to promote the mobility of SCs one can expect a change in their style of life. However, much of the benefits and privileges provided by the government for

the SCs has been cornered by a small section of them who are referred to by Sachchidanand as the “*Harijan Elites*”. Majority of the SC population in the remote corners of India is still suffering from poverty and exploitation (see unit 22 for more details).

There is also a measure of ambivalence in the attitude of the scheduled castes. On the one hand, there is an urge to adopt many of the symbols of the upper caste groups and on the other there is also an undercurrent of resentment against the traditional order. Such an attitude is most easily perceptible among the younger generation of the scheduled castes who have been exposed to the ideas of secularism and democracy. In some places, it has been nourished by strong social movement of fairly organised nature.

In Tamil Nadu, the Self-Respect movement of the Adi-Dravidas challenged the traditional social and ritual order. In Maharashtra, a considerable section of the scheduled castes became converts to Buddhism. The neo-Buddhist movement spearheaded by Ambedkar, a prominent leader of the scheduled castes, was in fact an assertion of self-respect on the part of the scheduled castes. Buddhism was not the only religion, which attracted this alienated section of the Hindu society. Islam, Sikhism and Christianity too attracted converts from the lower sections of the society. The scheduled castes have been converted in large numbers to Christianity, particularly in south India. However, in spite of the conversions these people have not benefited much in terms of social status.

ii) **Changes in relation to the political system**

The impact of change in relation to the political system has been very significant amongst the scheduled castes. Let us see what these changes are.

The channels of mobility in the status system or in the sphere of economy are very restricted. On the other hand, the new political system has thrown open many possibilities of advancement to people from the scheduled castes. Today, if a scheduled caste person cannot find place in higher status group economically or socially, he or she can still hope to become an influential political leader. And where the scheduled castes and *adivasis* are concerned, the principle of reservation provides a sure method of political representation.

There is a clear trend towards increasing participation in the political process by a section of society, which has hitherto been excluded from position of power. They have had the experience of several elections. Their awareness of political parties, movements, propaganda, etc. has grown. Younger sections of the groups are busy building political connections.

The institution of Panchayati Raj has quickened the pace of politicisation. Provision has in general been made for some reservation of seats for the scheduled castes at all levels of local self-government. The participation has led to conflict and cleavage especially with the groups of the other backward classes. Where the scheduled castes are more or less matched in numerical strength with caste Hindus, a certain amount of tension and even violence has become a part of the system. Their participation in the political system has been more marked at the national and state levels than at the village or district level. So far we talked about the features and problems of the scheduled castes in the context of social change. Let us see how and in what ways the other

backward classes have undergone changes in their socio-cultural and political life.

24.4.4 The Other Backward Classes

i) Changes in style of life

The changes in the style of life of the other backward classes have been described in this section.

Sanskritisation

The other backward classes occupied a low position in the traditional society but were above the line of untouchability. Many of the castes included in this category also enjoyed a measure of economic and political dominance. A good example of this is provided by the Okkaligas of Mysore studied by Srinivas. These castes (classes) or a section of them were, therefore, the first to seize the new opportunities offered during the British rule in comparison to the scheduled tribes and the scheduled castes. They drew maximum benefits from new economic opportunities. And they were also the ones most interested in Sanskritising their style of life in order to get social acceptance of their material success.

Social movements

Yet they experienced considerable gaps between themselves and the upper castes who were rapidly westernising themselves. The upper castes such as the Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and the Vaishyas not only adopted the western life-style but took up western education with all seriousness. And because of their tradition of education they did not find it very difficult to do so. The result was that western education was mostly confined to them. In view of this, only the members of these castes could get the jobs, in the government services and could further increase their prestige. This increased the cultural, social and economic distance between them and the other backward classes even more. Thus, the social inequality was perpetuated in the new system to a large extent. The lower castes realised that mere Sanskritisation was not enough to improve their social condition. It did not provide them the avenue to obtain well paid and prestigious jobs in the administrative services. So they desired to get themselves educated through the English medium in order to qualify for these jobs. In fact, the demand for educational concessions was the major objective of the Backward Class Movement, which started in the early part of the twentieth century. The movement was strongest in Madras, Mysore and Maharashtra where Brahmans had almost total monopoly in higher education, professions and government employment (Kuppuswamy 1984: 187).

A characteristic feature of this movement was that it was caste based. The caste organisations had made education of their children an important part of their programme. However, it was soon realised that the qualified youth could not get admission in the professional and post-graduate courses as admission was based on marks in high school and college examinations. Naturally they were handicapped, since the boys from such homes where the tradition of education existed were able to secure higher marks as compared to them.

The other dimension was that lecturers and examiners, as well as, those who held government jobs were from upper caste groups. This increased the fear

among the other backward classes that they were being discriminated against. Hence, they formed associations and federations to advance and protect the interest of the non-Brahman especially in south India. Reservation of seats in professional courses, post-graduate studies, and in government services, became their major demands. The opposition to Brahman dominance thus did not come from the low and oppressed castes but from the leaders of powerful rural dominant castes such as the Kamma and Reddi of Andhra Pradesh, Vellala of Tamil Nadu, Nayar of Kerala, Okkaliga of Mysore, Yadava or Ahir and Kurmi of U.P. and Bihar and so on.

ii) Changes in relation to the political system

Today, there is considerable debate regarding the reservation policy to uplift the backward classes. This has become more pronounced after the publication of the Mandal Commission Report. The controversy is not on whether or not to have reservation but on the criterion of reservation in the context of social change. To put it differently, the question centres around the criterion of backwardness in the wider perspective of social change.

There are those who view that reservation should be in terms of economic class instead of castes. They say that the caste based reservation is against the basic spirit of the Constitution. The Constitution promises equality and non-casteist and non-communal society. They also argue that the caste system is disintegrating. The relationship between caste and traditional occupation is breaking down. The definition of backwardness is altered with change in its form and basis. Under the changed situation, no group can be called forward or backward.

Further, if caste-based reservation is carried on, then the benefits are likely to be grabbed by those within the concerned castes who are economically and educationally better off. Hence, to them, the basis of backwardness should not be caste but economic category. That is deprivation in terms of income, education and occupation should form the basis of backwardness and, therefore, also the criteria of reservation policy.

Those who are opposed to this view, however, argue that caste basis was/is aimed at countering and removing social injustice and not mere economic backwardness. They argue that the problem of backwardness has arisen out of a long history of exploitation and oppression. The backward castes have hence not been able to enter into the normal process of development and social change. They face not only material obstacles of lack of education and resources but also come across innumerable hurdles in the form of social norms and restrictions. Hence they argue for caste basis of reservation.

The controversy has thus centred around the determination of (a) the unit, and (b) criterion for delineating the backwardness. The national and the regional upper caste elites are in favour of individual as the unit. Accordingly, they prefer deprivation in income or education as the sole criterion of backwardness. As against this, the backward caste elites, both national and regional, emphasise caste as the unit as well as the sole criterion in determining the backwardness.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Distinguish between Sanskritisation and Westernisation. Use about five lines.

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- ii) List some of the approaches to tribal policy. Use about three lines.

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- iii) Identify three factors standing in the way of rapid Sanskritisation among the scheduled castes. Use about four lines.

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- iv) List the bases of backward class movement. Use about three lines.

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24.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have seen that the term “backward classes” has different connotations in India and the backward classes consist broadly of three major components, viz. the scheduled tribes, the scheduled castes and the other backward classes.

Social background of each of these three components has been discussed in this unit in terms of their geographical distribution, distinguishing features and economic status. Major emphasis in the unit is on the distinctive features and problems emanating from the changing social situation. This has been studied in terms of changes in their life style and in relation to the larger political system.

24.6 KEYWORDS

Assimilation	Process of fusion into larger social system
Backwardness	Lack of educational and economic advancement
Backward classes	Communities or groups falling into the larger category of scheduled tribes, scheduled castes and the other backward classes
Dominant caste	A relatively high caste enjoying numerical preponderance, economic and political power.
Integration	Process of getting closer to larger social system but without loss of distinct socio-cultural identity
Isolation	Lack of contact with outside world
Other backward classes	Castes occupying low position but above the untouchables, known also as the backward castes
Sanskritisation	Process by which a caste or group moves up the social hierarchy by adopting the life style of the upper castes
Scheduled caste	Ritually low castes, constituting the lowest strata of Hindu society who used to be considered to be polluting by the upper castes
Social mobility	Process by which an individual or group moves from one position to another in the social hierarchy
Tribes	A culturally homogeneous community, which shares a common territory, language and traces its descent from a common ancestor. It is generally low in technology, is preliterate and observes social and political customs based on kinship
Westernisation	Process by which a community adopts the life-style of Europeans, especially the Britishers
White-collar occupation	Pertaining to, or designating, the class of workers, as clerks, etc. who are not engaged in manual labour

24.7 FURTHER READING

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24.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Backwardness in general is understood in terms of lack of economic and educational advancement. In this sense, it is taken as an attribute of an individual. In India backwardness is taken as an attribute not of an individual but of a certain group in which membership is determined by birth.
- ii) The composition of backward classes in India includes the scheduled tribes, the scheduled castes, and the other backward classes.
- iii) c)
- iv) c)

Check Your Progress 2

- i) c) Isolation
- ii) a) degrading occupation,
b) settlement outside the village
d) social, political and cultural disabilities.
- iii) Peasant castes with low position in caste hierarchy but above the scheduled castes constitute the core of the "other backward classes".

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Sanskritisation is a process by which a low caste adopts the life-style of upper castes and attempts to move up in the local social hierarchy; while Westernisation is a process of social change mainly brought about by the impact of British rule in India. In this process individuals or social groups adopt the values, customs, life-style of the Europeans, especially Britishers.
- ii) Some of the approaches to tribal policy are
 - a) isolation,

- b) assimilation and
 - c) integration.
- iii) The factors, which are standing against the rapid Sanskritisation of the scheduled castes, are
- a) low ritual status
 - b) low economic status and
 - c) low level of political participation.
- iv) Backward Classes Movement was based mainly on the realisation of the gap between lower castes and upper castes in terms of a) higher education and b) appointments in government services.



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