UNIT 19   HINDUISM

Structure

19.0   OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall deal with Hinduism in the context of religious pluralism in India. After reading this unit you should be able to

- explain the theological and metaphysical basis of Hinduism

- describe the basic cults and deieties of Hinduism

- discuss the Hindu social institutions

- analyse Hinduism in its historical settings

- examine the emerging facets of Hinduism in the contemporary period.

19.1   INTRODUCTION

This unit begins with a discussion on the theological and the metaphysical basis of Hinduism. It is recognised that it is very difficult to define Hinduism. However, there are a set of central belief systems of Hinduism. The belief systems are centred around the notion of *Brahman, Atman, Karma, Dharma, Artha, Moksha* and the ideas of purity and pollution. At the outset we discuss these belief systems. There are numerous cults and deities in Hinduism. We discuss some of the basic cults and deities in Hinduism to this unit. The Hindu way of life is reflected through the social institutions of this religion. We also discuss here the social institutions of marriage, family and inheritance in Hinduism at length. Hinduism is the oldest of all great religions of the world. In its historical setting there have been various movements in Hinduism and it has also encontered various exogenous (external) and endogenous (internal) forces

In this unit we discuss the Bhakti movement in Hinduism and the encounter of Hinduism with Islam and the West. In the last section of this unit we discuss the contemporary facets of Hinduism. Here we cover the aspects related to the efforts made towards internationalisation of Hinduism, emergence of individualised cults in Hinduism and politicisation of Hinduism.

19.2 HINDUISM: THE THEOLOGICAL AND METAPHYSICAL BASIS

Hinduism is followed by a vast majority of Indian population (more than 80%). However, Hinduism is not confined to India only. The followers of Hinduism, the Hindus, spread over to Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, Indonesia, East and South Africa, the Caribbean Islands, Guyana, Fiji, U.K., U.S.A. and Canada and in many other countries of the globe to a lesser extent.

Hinduism is an embodiment of a vast body of literature. M.N. Srinivas and A.M. Shah (1972) point out that the doctrines of Hinduism are not embodied in one sacred book, nor does Hinduism have a single historical founder. There is a vast body of sacred literature in Hinduism. These are the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanisads, Vedangas, Dharmasastras, Niboudhas, Puranas, Itihasas, Darsanas, Aganas, Mahabharata, etc. There are, not one, but innumerable gods, and it is not essential to believe in the essence of god in order to be a Hindu (358). This facet of Hinduism keeps it tolerant and open to dissent from within or without. Hence there are diverse interactions between the theological or metaphysical and the local levels of Hinduism in practice.

We should recognise that it is very difficult to define Hinduism. Hinduism unites a diverse elements of beliefs and practices into a continuous whole. It covers the whole of life. It has religious, social, economic, literary and artistic aspects. Hinduism, thus, resists a precise definition, but a common code of characteristics that most Hindus share can be identified (The New Encyclopaedia of Britannica, 1985: 935).

Hinduism is the oldest of all great religions of the world. In the process of social evoljution and change various sects have developed in Hinduism. Each of the sects has distinctive sets of literatures, Gods and Goddesses. However, fundamental to all Hindu sects is a set of eternal belief systems centered around the Hindu concepts of *Brahman* (universal soul) and *Atman* (individual soul), *Dharma, Karma, Artha, Moksha* and the ideas of purity and pollution. Let us discuss these concepts putting them in a broad societal contextof Hinduism.

19.2.1 Brahman and Atman

Hindus believe in an eternal, infinite and all-embracing ultimate force called *Brahman*. The *Brahman* is present in all forms of life. The relationship between the *Brahman* (the universal soul) and *Atman* (the individual soul) has been the main concern in Hinduism. However, there are diverse views on this relationship. One view is that there is no existence of God and the *Brahman* is absolute and attributeless. However, most other views recognise the existence of God; and consider the issue of his relations with *Brahman* on the one hand, and the *Atman* on the other. "The *Atman*, considered to be indestructible and passes through an endless migration, or series of incarnations—human, animal or super human, is influenced by the net balance of good and bad *karma* (deeds) in previous births. The goodness or badness is defined by reference to *Dharma* (Srinivas and Shah 1972: 359). Hence let us know the meanings of *Dharma* and *Karma*.

19.2.2 Dharma

Dharma has plural meanings. It "includes cosmological, ethical, social and legal principles that provide the basis for the notion of an ordered universe. In the social context, it stands for the imperative or righteousness in the definition of good life. More specifically, *dharma* refers to the rules of social intercourse laid down traditionally for every category of actor (or moral agent) in terms of social status (*Varna*), the stage of life (*ashrama*) and the qualities of inborn nature (*guna*). (We shall discuss the relationships between these three in the following sub-sections). Put simply, for every person there is a mode of conduct that is most appropriate: it is his or her *svadharma,* which may be translated as 'vocation'. Indeed the foundation of good life is laid down by *Dharma.* Thus *Dharma* consists of the "rational pursuit of economic and political goals (*Artha*) as well as pleasure (*Karma*)". The goals of life (*purushartha*) also incorporate the goals of *moksha* or "freedom through transcendence from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Dharma, inclusive of *artha* and *kama,* is a grand design of life, and *moksha* is the alternative (Madan, 1989: 118-119).

Hindu saints often put their teachings into compositions which they sang as part of their devotional activities.

To be more clear let us have a brief discussion on notions of *Purusartha* (goals of a man). *Rins* (obligations) and *Varnaashram* (divisions of the society) and the interdependence among them.

a) Purusartha

There has been a constant quest towards achieving a fruitful life in Hinduism. Pursuits of certail goals has been considered inhabitable, for the achievement of such life. The integrated life of a Hindu involves the pursuit of four goals: Dharma, Artha, (material pursuits) *Kama* (love desire) and *Moksha* (salvation). The pursuit of these four fold goals is known as *purusartha*. These goals are to be pursued in a righteous way in this *samsara* (the *arena* where the cycle of birth and rebirth continues to operate until one attains salvation). Hinduism is a holistic way of living and thinking. The full validity of Hindu life lies in the integration of the above four goals. This process puts every moment of life of a Hindu under self-examination and binds him with enormous social and spiritual obligations. Thus Hinduism calls for the voluntary acceptance and submission to the four defined obligations (Rins).

b) Rins

There are four important obligations (*Rins*) for a Hindu. These are obligations to the sages, to the ancestors, to god and to human beings. These obligations are fulfilled through the performance of duties in various stages of life (*ashrama*).

There are four stages of life of a Hindu. These are: Brahmacharya, Grihasta, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. In the first stage of life a young Hindu should devote to study. He leads a celibate life, and involves himself in the pursuit of knowledge. The second stage of life is that of a householder beginning with marriage. The third stage begins when the householder accepts the life of a wanderer maintaining some linkages with the household. In the last stage of life the old Hindu breaks away all ties with the household and goes to the forest and accept the life of a sage.

Vidya Nivas Misra in his book Hindudharm: Jivan me Santan ke Khoj (Hindi) points out that by studying scriptures, accumulating knoweldge, and following a rigorous way of life a Hindu may fulfil his obligation to the sages. These are the activities of the *Brahmacharya ashram*. The obligation to the ancestors can be fulfilled by leading the life of a householder — the *Grihasth ashram*. As a householder his responsibilities are to procreate, to maintain the tradition of his ancestor, to take care of the young who are at the stage of learning, to take care of those who are at the foresters and wanderers stages of life. In the third stage of life i.e. *vanaprastha* openings are made to be one with the gods. Leaving home behind the lives the life of homelessness. "So be one with gods means to be one with all manifest powers reflected in all elements, all living beings and all nature". This stage of life prepares him for such a manifestation. In the fourth and the final stage he fulfills his obligations to all beings. He becomes nameless, homeless wanderer and becomes a renouncer.

c) Varna ashrama

The goals of Hindu life are achieved within the context of Hindu social organisation. There is a four-fold division of Hindu society in terms of four *varnas*: the brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya and sudra. A Hindu is born into a *varna* and follows his *varnadharma* in this birth for *moksha* — the ultimate goal of the life. According to Rig Veda the four varna orders emerged from the limbs of the primeval man who is a victim of the divine sacrifice that produced the cosmos. The Brahmana emerged from his mouth and are supposed to be involved in the pursuits of knowledge. The Kshatriya emerged from his arm to be the warriors and rulers; the Vaishya emerged from his thigh to be in the pursuit of trade and commerce and lastly the Sudras emerged from his feet to be in the pursuit of service of other three varnas.

It is significant that untouchables are not mentioned in the Vedic hymn (Srinivas and Shah, 1972: 358). There are innumerable number of castes within the broad fold of these varnas with ascribed occupation, social status and localised concepts of purity and pollution. Traditionally, each caste (jati) performs its *jatidharma* to achieve the goals of life.

All Hindus recognise this system and can place their identity in terms of the *varna ashram*. Most of the basic ideas on *varna* system and its links to the concepts of *Karma* and *Dharma* are universally present in the world view of Hindus.

19.2.3 Karma

"The notions of *Dharma* and *Karma* are closely interlinked to each other and on many occasion they are indistinguishable and inseparable." If *Dharma* is a social consciousness about the good life, *Karma* is the individual actor's effort to live according to it". The literary meaning of the notion of *Karma* is action. According to the message of *Bhagavad Gita* the direction of the *Karma* is value neutral and one must perform *Karma* without expecting the rewards which may be desirable or undesirable. It also accords highest emphasis on the accomplishment of *Karma*. Popularly the notion of *Karma* is also related to the perceptions of birth, rebirth and salvation. It is popularly believed that an individual is born to a higher or lower caste and suffers the pains and enjoys pleasures in the present life in terms of the *Karma* he/she undertook in the past life. Again his or her future life, rebirth or salvation will be determined in terms of the Karma he/she undertakes in the present life. In all Indian cultural tradition all human actions have inescapable consequences. The fruits of action brings joy or sorrow depending on whether certain actions have been good or evil. Whatever cannot be enjoyed or suffered in the present life must be experienced hereafter in another birth, which may not be a human birth. To be born a human being is a rare privilege because it is only through such a birth that a soul may be freed from reincarnation" (Madan, 1989: 123). It is significant that there are three pragmatic aspects of the concept of *Karma* as practised in popular Hinduism.

Hindu temple complex. Note the use of conical turrets in the architechtural design of the temple.

i) Orthodox Hindu will explain *Karma* in terms of certain rituals in the form of worship or prayer of favourite Gods and Goddesses which are popularly known as *puja*. Though, the origin of puja goes back to *Vedic* period, sacrificial rituals became associated with the concept of *Karma* in the later part of the evolution of Hinduism. It is popularly beliebvged that the direction of life (present or future) can also be determined through the performance of such *Karma*.

ii) *Karma* has also become identified with life cycle rituals of the Hindus. It is significant that every Hindu is to follow distinctive life cycle rituals (*samskara*) at birth, marriage and death. These rituals are performed for the moral refinement of the individual to make them complete and perfect, and ultimately after death, "transform into an ancestor". Thus the rituals give social identity to the new-born. Through the rituals of marriage the ocean of life is filled with love. "The so called rites of passage are in fact rituals of transformation and continuity in one gfeat chain of being".

iii) Besides offerings of *puja* (both at home and in the temple) and performing of the life cycle rituals, offerings of prayers at the sacred places (Tirthas) are also important aspects of Hindu way life and the *Karma*. Going on pilgrimages particularly on auspicious occasions are also scripturally recommended *Karma* (you will be able to know more about these aspects in Unit No. 29 of this course).

We may also point out the various sects and cults in India have a very rigorous definition of *Karma* dividing them into various types and linking them to *Samsara* and *moksa*.

It is significant to mention here that a typical Hindu wants liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. To him the *Karmic* store of accumulated merit may appear to be atrap and hereby abandon all wordly *Karma*. However, Bhagavad Gita gives a proper direction towards this dilemma. Gita emphasises on the accomplishment of *Karma* rather than the abandonment of Karma. It "teaches the ethics of altruism. If one performs one's duty in a spirit of sacrifice, eliminating one's ego and self interest, one is liberated from the fruits of action even before death. One of the most crucial statements in the Bhagavad Gita bears on this point: "Your entitlement is to *Karma* alone, never to its fruits. The hope of such fruit should not therefore be the motive for action, you should not therefore become inactive". (cf. Madan, 1989: 127).

19.2.4 Moksha

The concept of *Moksha* (liberation from the chain of rebirth) is closely related to the notion of *Karma* and in turn with *Dharma*. It is the reward of the persistent good deeds, *Karma*, that liberalise the individual from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth; and ultimately brings him in contact with the *Brahman* (the universal soul. Hindu theology is largely preoccupied with the issue of achievement of *Moksha*. Sound knowledge, good deeds and love and devotion towards God are the ways through which *Moksha* can be achieved. For acquiring knowledge an individual is required to renounce the world and lead the life of an ascetic. However, this method of achieving *Moksha* was followed only by a few. The most popular form of devotion, however, is the worship of one's chosen God according to tradition. It is significant to mention here that Bhagavad gita has given a new direction for achieving *Moksha*. The Bhagavad Gita has emphasised on the way of works and devotion to bring liberation with the reach of "man-in-the-World", including women and the lower castes. In the last hundred years the Bhagavad Gita reinterpreted by Indian political leaders, including Gandhi and Tilak, to provide the basis for live devoted to altruistic action (Srinivas & Shah 1872: 359).

19.3 BASIC CULTS AND DEITIES IN HINDUISM

It is significant that, although various sects of Hinduism follow their own sets of literature, most of the Hindus recognise the sacredness of Vedas — the oldest text of Hinduism. "Vedism was almost entirely concerned with the cult of fire sacrifice (Yajna) and the continual regeneration of the universe that resulted from it. By means of the correspondences that linked the ritual to both the macrocosmos and the microcosmos, the sacrificer simultaneously contributed to the welfare of the transcendental order and furthered his own interest. These correspondences were explored in the philosophical Vedic texts, the *Upanisads* in which a search for the knowledge that would liberate man from repeated death led to the earliest formulations of Hinduism". The chief Vedic Gods are *Brahma* the ctreator. *Vishnu* the protector God of extension and pervasiveness and *Siva* the perserver and destroyer. It is significant that the major deities of Hinduism have many forms based on distinctive mythology. For example, "Vishnu has a number of incarnations, the chief of which are *Rama* (man), *Krishna* (man). The idea behind the many forms is that God periodically allows himself to be reborn on earth, to overcome evil and restore reighteousness.

Box 1

Puja (worship) and *bhakti* (devotion) are important aspects of theistic Hinduism which gradually replaced the Vedic sacrificial cult by devotion and worship to an image of the deity. The main purpose of this *puja* is the communion with deity gradually leading to a more permanent, even a closer relationship between the worshipper and the god. Hence based on worship three important cults emergted in theistic Hinduism: (a) *Vaishnavism:* *the worship of Vishnu). It emphasises a personal relation with a loving and gracious god. (b) *Saivism* (the worship of Siva) is more asceptically inclined. However, it also often incorporates yogic mystical practices into its worship". (c) *Saktism:* Cult of Goddess is an important component of theistic Hinduism in the form of worship of mother goddesses like Devi, Durga, Kali etc. It follows the tantric methods of tapping the creating energies (Saktis) within oneself. You can find *Saktism* within the broad fold of *Vaishnavism* and *Saivism* whereby Laxmi and Parvati, the divine consorts of Vishnu and Siva respectively are worshipped in many places in India. *(The New Encyclopedia of Britannica* 1985: 935). The mother goddesses like Shakti, Durga, Parvati, Kali, Laxmi, Saraswati are popular deities in Hinduism. Again, Kartikeya and Ganesa the sons of Siva and Durga, *Hanuman* chief of the monkey army of Rama are also popular deities.

Hindu mythology has depicted numerous deities—major and minor. A significant number of these deities are the God of nature viz., *Indra* (the God of Sky), *Agni* (the God of fire), Varuna (the God of water). The *Vahana* (vehicles) in the form of birds or animals on which Gods/Goddesses sit, the sun, moon, stars, rivers, mountains, lakes, animals, snakes are also worshipped in Hinduism. Besides, there are important localised deities in Hinduism in various parts of the country viz., goddess Kali and Manasa are popular in Bengal. Some localised deities also become universally accepted in Hinduism over a period of time viz. Mata Santoshi and Goddess Vaishnadevi of northern India, Srivenkatesh of Tirupati, South India.

The trends of localised manifestation of some deities and universalisation of some local deities are of great sociological significance. There are enourmous ties of localised culture in the great tradition of Hinduism. These ties are often reflected in the popularity of localised deities and in the patterns of their universalisation. (For further detail you may see Block 1 of ESO-02).

i)   Tick mark the correct answer.

Hinduism is

1) the youngest of all great religions

2) the second oldest of all great religions

3) emerged in the fourth century B.C.

4) the oldest of all great religions.

ii) *Dharma* provides the basis for the notion of an ordered universe based on the principles of

1) Cosmologis

2) Ethics

3) Social and legal

4) All of the above.

iii) Which one of the following is not a cult in theistic Hinduism?

1) Vaishnavism

2) Saivism

3) Saktism

4) None of the above.

19.4   HINDU SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Hindu social institutions are distinctive in nature both in terms of their form and function. These social institutions ideally operate according to prescribed norms and religious sanction. Let us examine some of these institutions.

19.4.1   Caste

Caste is a hereditory social institution based on the principle of endogamy, hierarchy, occupational specialisation and purity and pollution. Complete commensality prevails only within it. There are various kinds of restrictions imposed on inter caste relationships. These restrictions are explicit in the acceptance of food and drink by the upper castes from a lower ones, their inter caste marriage, sex relation, on going or touching the upper castes by a lower ones etc. The implicit and explicit meanings are that the lower caste people are impure and by their simple touch they will pollute the upper caste members. Hence there are various prescribed rites for the repurification of the upper caste members. Indeed, traditional Hindu life is arranged in terms of the hierarchical orders to the caste system. It is sociologically an ascribed status group. You may like to see Block 5 of ESO-02 to have a better idea on caste system in India.

19.4.2   Marriage

Among the Hindus marriage is an obligatory sacrament. It is in the context that for obtaining salvation a Hindu is required to perform certain rituals towards the gods and the ancestors as prescribed in the religious texts. The rituals are performed by the male descendants. Hence every Hindu must marry to have a male descendent for salvation.

Box 2

There are well defined Samskara (Sacraments) in Hinduism. In Hinduism each and every Samskara has a particular object i.e. to cleanse to be fit to be used in a divine activity. All aspects of Hindu life are a part of the divine activity. Thus through the processes of various *samskara* all aspects of Hindu life are purified to be the part of the divine. The Brahma Sutra (1.1.4) says: Samskara is a happening made possible through investment or accentuation of qualities in a person or an object and through cleansing of the stain attached to the person or the object." Utterances of Mantras is an essential part of the *samskara*. It is believed that such utterances invests a person or an object with same divine power and purifies them. To Vidya Nivas Misra 193 samskaras are investiture-cum-purificatory rites. These are performed in different stages of the Hindus from prenatal to funeral. These are enumerated to be sixteen:

Conception (Garbhadharna = placing the seed in the womb), Invocation to the male child (Pumsavana), Braiding of the hair of the pregnant women (Simantonanayana), Offering to Vishnu, the sustainer (Vishnu Bali in the eighth month of pregnancy), Birth rites (Jata Karma), Giving a name (Nama-Karana), Taking a child out of the house (Niskramana), first feeding (Anna-prasana), Tonsure (Caula-Karma), the rite of letters (Aksararambha), Piercing of the ear lobe (Karnacedha), Sacred thread ceremony (Upanayana = Lit. taking a boy to the place of Guru for study), initiation into the Vedic studies (vedarambha), Entering into life (Samavartana), Marriage (Vivaha), Last rite (Antyesti).

According to the ancient Hindu texts there are three main objectives of marriage. These are *dharma* (honest and upright conduct), *praja* (progeny) and *rati* (sensual pleasure). Thus according to scripture a Hindu is incomplete without a wife and male children. Some of the salient features of Hindi marriage are as follows:

i) **Monogamy:** It is significant that monogamy (marriage of one man and one woman at a time) is the usual form of marriage in Hinduism. Polygamy was also found among some Hindus based on local customs. However, various social reform movements led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Dayanand Saraswati etc. took place in India against such practices; and the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 permits only monogamous form of marriage.

ii) **Endogamy:** The Hindus maintain the religious and caste endogamy. Though legally permitted inter-caste and inter religious marriages are very few and confined mostly among the literate sections and in the urban areas.

iii) **Hypergamy:** According to the rule of hypergamy the status of the husband is always higher than the wife. The hypergamy emerged based on the marriage among different sub-sections of a caste or sub-caste rather than between the castes. The ancient Hindu literature permits hypergamy in the form of *anuloma* whereby a girl is married to upper sub-caste. However, it does not permit *pratiloma* whereby a girl marries a boy from lower sub-caste.

iv) **Gotra Exogamy:** Hindu maintain the gotra exogamy. *Gotra* indicates the common ancestor of a clan or a family. People with common ancestor are not allowed to intermarry. In recent years *gotra* exogamy is defined in terms of prohibition of marriage within five generations on the mother's side and seven generations on the father's side. However, there are significant variations with regard to the practice of gotra exogamy between the Hindus in the North and the South India. In South India cross-cousin marriages are allowed, while it is strictly forbidden in

North India. (For details you may like to see the Unit No. 8 & 9 of Block 2, ESO-02).

19.4.3 Family

Grihastha Ashrama is the stage of family life of a Hindu. The main objective of the marriage is reflected in the Grihastha ashram. Here a Hindu perform his *Dharma* and *Karma* for the continuity of the family and his salvation. Thus, the ideal typical family of the Hindu is joint in nature where people of three generations usually live together. Hindu joint family is mostly patrilineal, patrivirilocal, co-residential and common property ownership and a commercial unit. This family is usually composed of a man and his wife, their adult sons and their wives and children. Some times some other close (even distant in many cases) relatives become members of the Hindu joint family. The oldest male member of the famil is the head of the family. Here sex and age are the guiding principles of the familial hierarchy.

In recent years in the wake of rapid urbanisation, industrialisation, spread of commercial values, education and mass-communication and implementation of progressive land reforms laws of the joint family system has been under severe threat in India. Indeed, nuclearisation has been the major trend. However, the sentiments of the joint family still continues among most of the Hindu which are expressed on the occasion of family ritual, patterns of ownership of property and in the exigencies of these families. (For details you may see Unit No. 6 Block 2 ESO-02 and Unit No. 7 Block 2 ESO-06).

19.4.4 Inheritance

Traditionally the *Mitakshara* system of inheritance was practiced in most parts of India (except for Bengal and Assam). According to this system a son has a birth right on father's ancestral property and the father cannot dispose this property in a way which can be detrimental to the interest of the son. Howver, according to the *Dayabaga* (applicable to Bengal and Assam) system of inheritance the father is the absolute owner of this property and he has the right to dispose it according to his will.

Traditionally females are not coparcenary. The customary practices only provide maintenance rights to females. Women in the patrilinear society get some movable property as *stridhana* at the time of marriage.

The Hindu Succession Act and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956 (Applicable to Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs) has established a uniform system of inheritance. According to this act a husband is legally responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children. The individual property of a male Hindu, dying interstate (having made no will), passes on equal share between his son, daughter, widow and mother. Male and female heirs have come to be treated as equal in matters of inheritance and succession. This act has also given a woman the right to inherit from the father and the husband. However, women have no right to coparcenary ancestral property by birth (cf. Unit 6.4.2, ESO-02).

19.4.5 Hindu Social Institutions

In Block 4 of ESO-03 you have learnt how Max Weber has located the stimuli of economic development within the ethics of religious belief system. To him economic development fostered in the Western World because of the rationalisation of religious ethics of Protestantism (especially of the Puritan sects) of Christianity. To him, however, such a process of rationalisation has not taken place in Hinduism. Rather he pointed out that the Hindu belief system, which centered around the doctrines of *Dharma, Karma* and *Moksha,* and the social institution of the Hinduism produced

an irrational and 'otherworldly' social atmosphere. This phenomena hindered the economic development and the growth of industrial capitalism. However, the validity of the thesis of Max Weber was challenged by many scholars. For example Milton Singer 91968) pointed out that Hinduism has not hindered the growth of the same. The traditional business families in India have generated the required capital from family sources and their traditional expertise are also used for economic development. Scholars also pointed out that Hindu social institutions and belief systems have enormous elements of rationalisation and this-wordly attitudes required for economic modernisation. However, these elements of rationalisation and this wordly attitudes are to be understood in the context of the changing need of Hinduism in particular and the society in India in general.

Activity 1

Interview at least 10 heads of the family belonging to different caste groups among Hindus. Collect information on the marriage practices as practised by them in their marriage and in the marriage of their children. Based on your finding write a note of about two pages on the "Features of Hindu Marriage: A Field Observation". Exchange your note with the co-learners of the Study Centre, if possible.

19.5 HINDUISM IN THE HISTORICAL SETTINGS

Hinduism has undergone a process of transformation over millions of years. The Vedic ritualism an Upanishadic philosophies played significant roles in Hinduism. Indeed transformation started in Hinduism with the message of Bhagvad Gita, which added the notion of *Bhakti* (devotion) in Hinduism. Hinduismacquired new dimentions in Bhakti cult. Besides the Bhakti cult, Hinduism has also to encounter with forces of Islam and the West. Let us examine Hinduism in the context of these broad social and historical processes.

19.5.1 Bhakti

There are various important facets of the Bhakti movement. Let us begin with the important facets that the message of Gita initiated.

i) Bhagavad Gita

Bhagavad Gita recognised the Vedic rituals and Upanishadic philosophy of knowledge as the legitimate ways to attain self-realisation which is the goal of life of an ideal Hindu. Hence to the paths of *Karma* (action) and *Jnana* (knowledge) the Gita added the pay of Bhakti (devotion). This revived the elements of theistic elements in Hinduism. "After describing the ways of action, knowledge and devotion, the Bhagavad Gita enjoins the seekers to abandon all three ways to seek refuge in God so as to be free of the burden of all moral imperfections. This call to total surrender is as much intellectual as it is devotional" (Madan, 1989: 127).

ii) Alvars

The devotional movement for the first time flourished in South India towards the end of eighth century A.D. among the non-Brahmin groups which expressed the strong desire for theism after Jainism and Buddhism had spread all over India. The followers of this movement were known as the *Alvars* (that is those with an intuitive knowledge of God who were engaged in complete immersion in Him). They questioned the *dharmas* of caste and gender. They tried to exceed such relationships through personal devotion to deities like Siva and Vishnu. The *Alvars* emphasised on the constant companionship of God. However, they expressed their

preoccupation with *Viraha*, (separation) from God. *Nammalvar* was prominent among the Alvars who put forward the notion of devotion as assumption of feminity by the devotee in relation to God *Vishnu* (*ibid*, 128). Hence love of women for Vishnu symbolises the love of the devotees for the supreme soul, the God.

iii) Jayadeva, Srichaitanya and Mira

The love stories of unmarried Krishna (reincarnation of Vishnu) and Radha have got the central place in the Bhakti movement. It emphasised on total devotion to God as a means to self-realisation. In this movement Krishna is symbolised as the supreme soul and Radha as the individual soul. Jayadeva's Gita Goyinda, written on the eternal love of Radha and Krishna in the later part of 12th century, has spread all over the country. The origin of many of the Vaishnava sects is located in this movement. In the 16th century Srichaitanya in Bengal, Vallabha in Gujarat, Mira in Rajasthan were possessed with the love of Krishna. Bhakti movement got momentum in the given path of total devotion to Krishna as followed by them.

iv) Sura Das, Tulsidas and Kabir

It is significant that intense religious devotion was also expressed the luminaries of medieval Bhakti Movement in the songs of Sura Das on Krishna (in Brijbhasha), Tulsi Das on Rama (in Avadhi) and in Kabir's devotionalism. "Tulsi's bhakti was that of a servant (dasa) devoted to the service of his divine master. The love of God for the devotee, who dwells on his own imperfection and therefore on divine grace, is a central theme of Tulsi's sublime poetry...Kabir's devotionalism was centered on a personalised god in human form, however, but on an abstract and formless conception of the divine. (Madan, 1989: 131). You will learn more about Bhakti Movement in Unit 28 of Block 6 of this course.
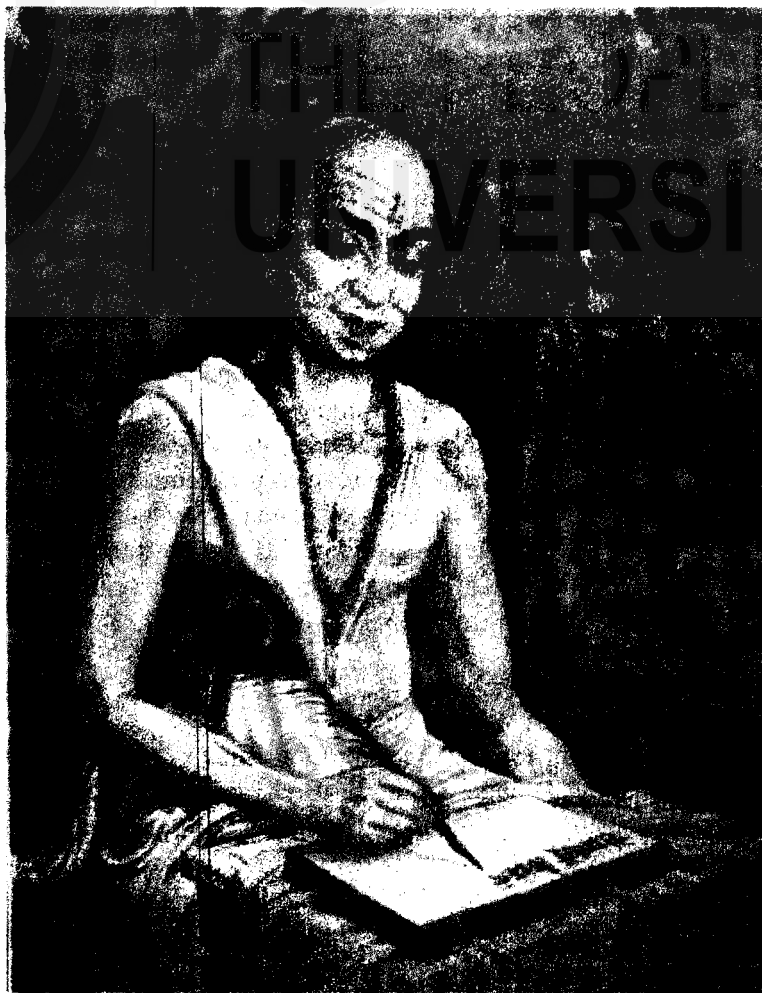
Saints in Hinduism often wrote and sang their religions and spiritual compositions.

19.5.2 Encounter with Islam

Hinduism has been responding to the external religious influences since the classical period. It has responded to distinctive Islamic and the Western influences for almost ten and five centuries respectively. Let us mention here some of the impacts of the encounter of Hinduism with Islam.

It is very difficult to assess the impact of Islam on Hinduism since it has various dimensions. Hinduism dealt with the periodic outbreaks of violence since the time of the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni into North-west India (977-1030). These invasions led to the development of Hindu ideal of territorial kingdom "as the mode for the protection of Hindu values". Hence the defence of Hindu traditions against Islam came first from the Rajputs of Rajasthan, then the rulers and successors of Vijayanagar Kingdom of South India (1333-18th century) and the Marathas in Maharasthra from late sixteenth century to the close of 18th century. As an immediate impact of the dominance of the Muslim rule "conservative and puritanical tendencies gained momentum in orthodox Hinduism" particularly with regard to the strictness of the caste and purity of women. However, there are many evidences to show that over the years various Muslims themes and features have been incorporated into popular Hindu myths and rituals. Significantly while the orthodox, popular and the domestic form of Hinduism thus drew in on themselves, Hindu sectarian traditions multipled under the influence of Islam. Notable of these were that of the *Bhakti* cult of Chaitanya in Bengal and sant tradition of North India by Kabir (1440-1518) from Banaras and Nanak (1469-1539) from Punjab. Kabir and Nanak propagated devotion to one God "that combined aspects of Islamic *Sufism* and Hindu *Bhakti*. They brought in Hinduism an exclusivist monotheism like that found in the tradition of Islam. Their teachings rejected both the caste system and idol worship. Guru Nanak laid the foundation of Sikhism that synthesised philosophies of Islam and Hinduism.

Emperor Akbar in his *Din-Elahi* synthesised Islam and Hinduism. He propagated religious tolerance. However, his successors abandoned his path and followed *expansionist* policies. These policies of expansion aroused resistance from the heirs of the Vijaynagar and the Rajpur Kingdoms, and also from the Sikhs and the Marathas. 'The seeds of a nationalist vision of Hinduism may be traced through these movements (Hiltebeital 1987: 358). (We shall discuss some related aspects of this issue in the last section of this Block).

19.5.3 Encounter with the West

Hinduism has been widely influenced by West and the beliefs and practices of Christianity. Various reform movements started in Hinduism in the 19th century as the direct impact of Christianity. The *Brahmo Samaj* was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1928 which advocated monotheism and rejected the caste order, idolatry and animal sacrifice.

Activity 2

Make a list of 10 religious organisations with the help of knowledgeable people. Your list should have a few sentences about the purpose and the goals of these organisations and how they differ from each other.

The *Arya Samaj* was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875. This movement rejected the Puranic Hinduism and attempted the return of Vedic Hinduism. According to them image worship has no sanction of Veda. They also advocated monotheism. They denied the religious base of the caste and the Varna.

Rama Krishna Mission was founded in 186. Swami Vivekananda carried forward

the activities of this mission on the line of traditional Hindu values. The followers of this mission uphold strong tradition of Bhakti and tantric strains along with Vedanta philosophy and Ramakrishna's experiences of the oneness of all religions through visions not only of Hindu deities but of Jesus and Allah". (*ibid* 360). Rama Krishna Mission aims the propagation of a modern and activist version of Hinduism. It is engaged in a variety of cultural, educational and social welfare activities and has branches in cities throughout the world. The Rama Krishna Mission, modelled after the European Christian missions of the nineteenth century in India, has itself provided a model for numerous other Hindu organisations (Srinivas, 192: 130).

To eradicate some evil customs and practices as traditionally followed in Hinduism several religious organisations came into being during the British rule. These organisations also took up the task of the promotion of education and social reform. As a result of prolonged contact with West various significant changes have taken place in Hinduism. Some of these changes can be listed here:

a) Activist streak in Hinduism has received significant attention and the Bhagavad Gita has become the single most important book of the Hindus.

b) Leaders of various Hindu religious institutions are now undertaking various social reform and welfare activities viz. running of schools, colleges, hospitals etc.

c) The idea of purity and pollution, which permeated daily life, life cycle rituals, and the intercaste relations, particularly by the higher castes, are rapidly weakening, especially in the urban areas. A caste-free Hinduism may emerge in future out of these changes. The movement of caste-free Hinduism is supported by the cult of the new godmen (e.g. Sri Saibaba etc.) in Hinduism.

d) Another change has been that of the "emergence of militant forms of Hinduism, partly in response to the evangelical activities of the missionaries among the Harijans and tribals, and to the appearance of separationist tendencies among certain religious and ethnic minorities in India (Srinivas 1992: 130).

It is significant to note here that, Hinduism has also influenced other religions in India. Many of the important traits of Hinduism are found among other religious groups also. The caste system can be put here as a ready reference. The caste divisions also exist among the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and the Jains. Indeed, conversion to any other religions does not necessarily dissolve the caste order. Occupational specialisation, caste endogamy, social distance etc. are practised even after conversion.

Check Your Progress 2

i) Explain how Bhagavad Gita revived the theistic elements in Hinduism? Answer in about six lines.

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ii) Mention a few important impacts of the encounter of Hinduism with Islam. Use five lines to answer.

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iii) Which one of the following is not an impact of the West on Hinduism?

1) promotion of education

2) promotion of social reform and welfare activities

3) weakening of the idea of purity and pollution in the urban areas

4) none of the above.

19.6 HINDUISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

In recent years Hinduism has acquired various new dimensions most important of which have been the efforts towards internationalisation of Hinduism, emergence of various personalised cults in Hinduism and politicisation of Hinduism. In the following sub-sections we shall be dealing with these aspects with the help of some caste studies.

19.6.1 Internationalisation of Hinduism

There have been numerous efforts for internationalisation of Hinduism. The Rama Krishna Mission and International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) have made important efforts in this matter. In Unit 28 of this course the activitries of Rama Krishna Mission have been discussed at length. In this section we shall discuss the case of ISKCON.

International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

The devotional Hinduism with its missionary aspiration was spread over the U.K., U.S.A., Canada and other Western Nations by the followers of ISKCON, popularly known as *Hare Krishna* cult. It has become an international movement with numerous centres all over the world, especially in the English speaking world. The founder of this society was A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, a Bengali by birth. he was initiated by his *guru* Bhaktivedanta Saraswati to the path of *Bhakti* in 1922 in the devotional line of Chaitanya. He gave up the householder's life in 1954 and became an ascetic by 1959. Bhaktivedanta Swami went to USA in 1965, to spread the message of Srimad Bhagavatam there in the USA. Slowly his followers grew in New York, Los Angeles, Berkeley, Boston and Montreal. Bhaktivedanta Swami established various centres of ISKCON in those places with its headquarters in Los Angeles. There he printed more than fifty volumes of translations and original works of his guru.

Recitation of the name of Lord Sri Krishna was considered instrumental for salvation by the followers of ISKCON movement. Hence they performed public chanting of the *Hare Krishna Mantra*. Thus over the years the Krishna Consciousness movement has been visible in the English speaking world.

Bhaktivedanta has introduced several practices for the ISKCON followers viz. wearing of traditional Indian saffron dress and shaving of heads by the male devotees and wearing of saris by the female devotees, early rising and timely devotional services etc. ISKCON has spread over to every continent of the globe.

Bhaktivedanta expired in Vrindavan in 1977. Just before his death he appointed eleven disciples as initiating guru to keep the Chaitanya chain of disciples unbroken and missionise the rest of the world. By early 1980s ISKCON branches grew rapidly in many overseas areas, where they found more tolerant environments (Shiva, 1987: 267).

It is necessary to point out that ISKCON is only one example and that Hinduism based cults have spread all over the world.

19.6.2 Individualised Cults

Hinduism has been a breeding ground for the emergence of personalised religious cults in recent years. Some of these cults have received wide attention from their followers. Satya Sai Baba, Acharya Rajnees, Muktananda etc. are prominent among them. It is not possible to discuss all of them in this unit. Here for your specific understanding of this phenomenon we shall be discussing the cult of Satya Sai Baba as a case study.

Satya Sai Baba

In contemporary India Satya Sai Baba is the most famous deity saint in Hinduism. He is worshipped by his followers as the *Avatar*. His followers have increased tremendously in recent years.

Satya Sai Baba was born in a village called Puttaparthi in Andhra Pradesh. He belonged to the *Raju* Caste and was named Satyanarayana by his parents. He was fond of *bhajan* (devotional songs) and performing of Hindu mythological dramas during his young and school days.

As claimed by Satya Sai Baba and accepted and propagated by his followers Satya Sai Baba is the reincarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi in Maharashtra. He is the embodiment of Lord Shiva and is consort Shakti in one soul. Lawrence Babb writes that Sathya Sai Baba's assertion of divine status is expressed in first person; he states it boldly and repeatedly. He has come in the present age of wickedness and misery, he says, not merely to alleviate individual misfortunes (though he does this for his devotees), but to set the whole world right, to usher in a "Sai Age". In the form of Shirdi Sai Baba his mission was to establish Hindu-Muslim unity, in the present incarnation he will re-establish Vedic and Shastric religion. On his rebirth as Prem Sai, he will be born in Karnataka and bring all his work to completion (Babb 1991: 284). The followers of Sai Baba are not only the Hindus. There are Muslims, Christians, and others among his prominent followers.

Though he is the manifestation of all gods and goddesses, his dominant identity is that of Shiva. He is portrayed in association with Shiva. *Mahashivratri* is the most important festival of this cult. In this festival Satya Sai Baba materalises vast quantities of *vibhuti* (Sacred Ash) from his hand and *Shivalingam* (which symbolises God Shiva) from his mouth.

This cult has rapidly attracted a large number following not only in India but also abroad. Majority of his devotees are from urban middle classes. His devotees recognise him as "Bhagwan". Baba attracts followers by his personal charisma and the miracles he often performs. He also cures the illness of his devotees. Howver, Baba often maintains distance from his followers living in his "personal constituency" and giving only occasional darshan.

Some basic features of Sathya Sai Baba's teachings are as follows: He does not impose strict rules of conduct on his devotees. Moderate and vegetarian diets, avoidance of alcohol and smoking, practice of householder's life and celibvacy after

age of fifty, tolerance, gentleness and kindness towards others, non-violence are encouraged by him. He also suggests meditations of the God (who is in fact Baba) for inner peace. A significant aspect of Baba's teaching is that he considers the influence of Western culture as inimical to India. To him Indian folk traditions should be adhered to. Thus he professes a cultural nationalism.

He recognises inherent inequalities existing in the society. Though he has discontent against the present day state, he does not advocate radical change in the existing economic and social institutions.

Social service is an important aspect of the cult of Satya Sai Baba. Feeding the poor, assiting authorities in the relief work, expansion of education, child development are some of the important areas of social service of the cult.

What is sociologically important here is that Baba attracts a large numbers of followers through the performance of his charisma repeatedly. He also legitimates his position in term of the Hindu notion and rebirth and karma. He, however has incorporated the missionary zeal of social service in his regular activities. The charisma and legitimacy of Sai Baba is accepted not only by the common folllowers but also by some of the prominent social, political and business elites of the country.

19.6.3 Politicisation of Hinduism

In Hinduism there has always been a tradition of tolerance and hospitality to other religions. These elements of tolerance and hospitality have paved the way to declare India a secular state. It is significant that in the nineteenth century there were the revivalist tendencies and attempts in Hinduism advocating a return to the *Vedas* and occasionally Indian nationalism was expressed itself in the Hindu idiom. However,

Satya Sai Baba is a most famous deity saint in contemporary Hinduism.

during the British rule in India there emerged a group of westernised elite which "while rooted in the country and its tradition, was committed to independence, democracy, egalitarianism and secularism. It is this elite that not only declared India a secular state but also attempted whole heartedly to establish the principle of equity of man (Srinivas and Shah 1972: 364).

The Constitution has declared India a "Sovereign Secular Socialistic Democratic Republic". In the process of democratic functioning of the state and the society our religious lifehas been widely politicised in recent years. Politicisation has emerged as a pervastive process in post-independence India. Religion is not free from this process. In recent years Hinduism has been politicised for certain political ends. In general, protection of the interest of the Hindus, creation of Hindu Rashtra etc. have been the major objectives of such a process of politicisation of Hinduism.

While discussing politicisation of Hinduism, the activities of RSS and its front organisations are generally widely discussed. Let us know briefly the origin and activities of the RSS. The RSS was founded in Maharashtra in 1925-26 by Dr. K.B. Hedgewar. The RSS operates at the political level through its various front organisations viz., Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Bharatiya Majdoor Sangh, Vidyarthi Parisad etc. In recent years it has been using the wider front organisations usch as the Vishwa Hindu Parisad. In the passage of time the RSS has acquired well-defined ideology and organisational strength. As articulated by its second guru, Guru Golwalkar the ideology of the RSS is explicitly represented by Hindu nationalism. Creation of a Hindu Rashtra and bringing of all round glory to the Hindu Rashtra are the main objectives of the RSS. Golwalkarji writes:

The non-Hindu population of Hindustan must adopt the Hindu culture and languages, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of Hindu race and culture, i.e. they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its age long tradition but also must cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead, in a word, they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country wholly subordinate to the Hindu nation...". Ideologically the RSS equates Hindus with the Aryans and its characteristic Vedic age as the Golden Age of India.

In recent years India has visualised a considerable increase of the efforts towards politicisation of Hinduism. There has been the growth of fundamentalism as well M.M. Srinivas has made an important observation on this emerging phenomena. To him: in the last few decades Hinduism has had to cope with certain momentous changes such as the division of Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan, the latter being theocratic state...That period also saw the establishment of a Jewish state in Israel and Buddhist states in Sri Lanka and Burma. It also witnessed the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in a vast region extending from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific. How can Hinduism remain immune to all these forces and events? To him fundamentalism in Hinduism has grown as a matter of challenge faced by it, because of the growth fundamentalism in other religions and also in the neighbouring countries (Srinivas 1992: 16).

Whatsoever may be the reason for the growth of fundamentalism in Hinduism, the facts remain that there has been delibrate tendency to politicise Hinduism as a means to gain power. However, reaction of the average Hindus towards such develoment is of great significance. Through democratic process they have upheld the noble tradition of tolerance and hospitality of Hinduism and the secular basis of the nation.

Check Your Progress 3

i)   Activities of the ISKCON was confined mainly to

1) the French speaking world

2) the English speaking world

3) the Hindi speaking world

4) the Non English speaking world

ii) As claimed by Satya Sai Baba, he is the embodiment of

1) Lord Shiva

2) Goddess Shakti

3) Both of Lord Shiva and Goddess Shakti

4) None of the above

19.7 LET US SUM UP

Hinduism is the oldest of all great religions of the world. It has encountered various forces in various historical settings. However the central belief system has remained eternal to Hinduism. We discussed in this unit the central belief system of Hinduism as reflected in the notions of *Brahman, Atman, Dharma, Karma, Moksha,* and the notion of purity and pollution. We also discussed the basic cults and deities in Hinduism.

The social institutions of marriage, family and inheritance are also discussed in this unit. The Bhakti Movement in Hinduism and the encounter of Hinduism with Islam and the West are discussed at length. Lastly we discussed the emerging facets of Hinduism. Here we discussed the effort towards internationalisation of Hinduism, emergence of individual cults in Hinduism and politicisation of Hinduism based on some case studies.

19.8 KEY WORDS

Altruism	: Unselfish concern for the welfare of others.
Ashrama	: There are four well-defined stages of life in Hinduism. These are *Brahmacharya* (for youth), *Grihastha* (for adult), *Vanaprastha* (for middle aged) and *Sanyasa* (for old aged).
Case study	: A sociological method of analysing and presenting data using specific examples.
Bhaktism	: Religions ideology of devotionalism.
Gotra	: Exogamous groups indicating common ancestor of that group, family or clan.
Ritual	: A systematic and repititive system of actions directed towards a specific target or religions goal.
Stridhana	: Movable property given to women at the time of marriage.
Varna	: Broad ascribed status groups in Hinduism. There are four *Varnas* in Hinduism—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra.

19.9   FURTHER READINGS

Besant, A. 1985. *Seven Great Religions*. The Theosophical Publishing House: Madras.

Madan, T.N. (ed) 1991. *Religions in India*, Oxford University Press. New Delhi.

Prabhu, P.H. 1919. *Hindu Social Organisation.* People Publishing House: Bombay.

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19.10   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i)   4)

ii)   4)

iii) 4)

Check Your Progress 2

i)   Bhagvad Gita suggests the paths of action (Karma), knowledge and devotion for self-realisation. Bhagavad Gita finally enjoins the seekers to abandon all these paths and to seek refuge in God so as to be free from the burden of all imperfections.

ii)   (a) As an immediate impact conservative and puritanical tendencies gained momentum in Hinduism, (b) Sectarian traditions multiplied in Hinduism (c) Muslim themes were incorporated in popular Hindu myths and rituals.

iii) 4)

Check Your Progress 3

i)   2)

ii)   3)

UNIT 20 JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

Structure

20.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the religious belief systems and philosophies of Jainism and Buddhism. After reading this unit you should be able to

- explain the social, political and economic background of the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism in India

- describe the basic teaching of Jainism

- explain the growth and development of Jainism in India

- discuss the Jain ways of life

- describe the basic teachings of Buddhism

- discuss the relationship between the Buddist philosophy and the society of that age

- examine growth and development of Buddhism over a period of time

- highlight the similarities between Buddhism and Hinduism and discuss the decline of Buddhism in India.

20.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit of this Block, we discussed Hinduism. In this Unit we shall be dealing with Jainism and Buddhism which evolved from within Hinduism. These religions developed against the backdrop of certain political systems, political philosophy, economic and social order, and practising of particular religious activities in ancient India. This Unit begins with an indepth discussion on the background of the emergence of these religions. In this unit we discussed the central doctrine of Jainism in Section 20.4 of this unit. In the section 20.5 of this text we discussed the religious practices and ways and life of the Jain and the similarity of Jainism and Hinduism. Gautam Buddha is the founder of Buddhism and he has given a significant direction to the religious ideologies of India. We discss these aspects in section 20.6. The relationship between Buddhism and society of that age is discussed in the next section (i.e. 20.7). Buddhism has grown over a period of time and acquired various new dimensions. We discuss all these aspects in section 20.8. In this section besides discussing various sects in Buddhism we also discussed the similarity of Buddhism with Hinduism and decline of Buddhism in India.

20.2 THE EMERGENCE OF BUDDHISM AND JAINISM

The sixth century B.C. has left a permanent impress on Indian history mainly because it witnessed an intense preoccupation with philosophical speculation. Among the various thinkers contributing to this unique phase were the Mahavira and Buddha, who more than any other historical personages born in India have compelled the attention of the world as the most humane thinkers, the Indian tradition has produced. Jainism and Buddhism represent the most serious and most comprehensive attempt to analyse the rapidly changing society in which it originated and to provide an enduring social philosophy for mankind. Buddhism created the vision of an alternative society, the possibility of organising society on different principles from the hierarchical and inegalitarian ideology and practices that had begun to gain ground.

The roots of Mahavira's and Buddha's social philosophy can be clearly traced back to the society of the sixth century B.C. Politically it was situated in the context of state formation and the emergence of certain institutions.

20.2.1 The Political System

The political system at the time of Mahavira and Buddha was characterised by the existence of two distinct forms of government: monarchical kingdoms and clan oligarchies or *gana-sanghas*. The geographical location of these units is itself interesting with the monarchical kingdoms occupying the Ganga-Yamuna valley and the *gana-sanghas* being located near the foothills of the Himalayas. The *gana-sanghas* were inhabited by either one or more Khatriya clans such as the **Sakyas** or **Mallas**, or the **Lichcchavis**. The *gana-sanghas* were organised on the lineage principle with the entire clan participating in the exercise of power.

There was constant conflict between the various political units and the picture that emerges from the Jain and Buddhist literature is that it was a period of expanding horizons and political consolidation which ultimately ended with the establishment of the Mauryan empire.

It is possible to document the process of state formation, especially in the case of Magadha, from the Buddhist literature. Bimbisara, the 5th century B.C. Magadhan ruler, began a systematic and intensive phase of state organisation. The earlier pastoral-cum-agricultural economy with tribal organisation had given way to a more

settled agrarian-based economy which became a major factor in state formation. It made possible the support of a large standing army which was imperative for the expanding frontiers of the kingdoms of the Ganga valley and as an instrument of coercive control within the kingdom. Simultaneously, the agrarian based economy encouraged the formation of an impressive officialdom which is an indispensable aspect of state formation. The standing army, formally divided into various specialised groups, replaced the tribal militia of the earlier society and became an instrument of coercion directly in the control of the king. The growing armies of the aggressive expanding monarchies even attracted the ambitious youth of the *gana-sanghas* who saw in them a possible outlet for their military skills especially since the *gana-sanghas* themselves were collapsing one by one.

20.2.2 Territorial Expansion and Collapse of Gana-Sanghas

The process of territorial expansion and the consolidation of the early Indian State was operating at two levels in the age of the Buddha. The monarchical kingdoms of the Ganga valley, especially Kosala and Magadha, were each expanding at the expense of their immediate and weaker neighbours. But at the same time they were locked in a struggle for supremacy among themselves, in which Magadha ultimately trimphed. The *gana-sanghas* were the first to collapse and the smaller ones like the *Sakyas* and *Mallas* had already caved in during the lifetime of the Buddha. What was at stake in the conflict between the *gana-sanghas* and the monarchies was not just a different political form but also a whole way of life based on communal control of the land by the clan. However, the collapse of the *gana-sanghas* became inevitable in the face of the rapid changes taking place in 6th and 5th centuries B.C.

Buddha, the Enlightened one meditating in the lotus pose.

20.2.3 Political Philosophy

The most notable aspect of political philosophy in the age of the Buddha and Mahavir was the completely pragmatic approach to power. Kingship is marked by the absolute and arbitrary exercise of power with no evidence of effective checks upon the king's ability to impose his will on the dominion. The king had total control over his people and is often depicted as using power in a wilful and capticious manner rather than in a legitimate and controlled capacity. Even the law was not applied consistently but in a highly personal and arbitrary way. The literature indicates very clearly that in the process of change old institutions had collapsed but had not yet been replaced by others; the collective power of the people of the earlier society which had been expressed through tribal institutions, were no longer feasible in the expanding territorial units. Power thus became less an instrumental value viewed from the point of view of the community as a whole, and instead became an end in itself. This had important consequences for Buddhist social philosophy (as we shall see later in this Unit).

20.2.4 New Organisations of Production

Historians differ about the extent to which iron contributed to the emergence of new relations of production in the age of Buddha and Mahavira. However there is a fair degree of consensus on various elements that marked the new relations of production. There was a noticeable expansion of the economy and within that of agriculture. Rice cultivation based on transplantation led to a virtual demographic revolution. The Jain and Buddhist texts mention numerous settlements attesting to an expansion of settlements, the extension of cultivation, and of people, into hitherto unexploited lands. Along with an expansion of cultivation, and of people, into hitherto unexploited lands. Along with an expansion of agriculture and settlements there was increased craft production; numerous crafts are mentioned in the texts as also coinage signifying a money economy, trade and trade routes, and corporate commercial activity in the form of *srenis*. The age of the Buddha has also been characterised as the period of the second urbanisation.

From the texts it is also clear that the *gahapatis*, a category of persons mentioned often in the accounts in the context of economic activity played a crucial role in the expansion of agriculture. Some of them were in control of substantial tracts of land. The *gahapatis* were the primary tax payers in the monarchical *janapadas* and in this capacity they were regarded as intrinsic to the sovereignty of the king.

20.2.5 Social Stratification

The growing complexity of the economy was expressed in the emergence of a sharply stratified society. While some sections of society had large concentrations of land, there were others who had no access to the means of production. The period is marked by the appearance of such categories as *vaitanika* (wage earner) and *Karmakaras* (labourers who hired out their labour). *Karmakaras* are mentioned often along with *dasa* (servile labourer) and together they implied elements of servitude and made them unfree in some way. The term *dalidda* (pali for *daridra*) denoting extreme poverty, also appears for the first time while its counterposition with wealth suggests sharp economic contradictions in the new society. Economic contradictions were accompanied by social contradictions — certain families were regarded as of high status, others were regarded as low; the Brahmanas were staking their claims to pre-eminent status based on birth but there is evidence of such claims being vigorously contested.

To sum up, in the sixth century B.C. was one which was in the throes of rapid change. Apart from the emergence of inequality, the transformation and reformulation

of political units and social and economic institutions entailed the breakdown of clan and kin organisations and the collective units of the earlier periods. In its place what was visible was individuals, individually and greed. There was unbridled power in the hands of some, while no norms had yet evolved which could mediate between the exploiters and the exploited or between the king and his people. Jainism, Buddhism and other 'heterodox' philosophies were the creative response of thinkers to such a society.

20.2.6 Samanas and Brahmanas: The Religious Philosophies

All the major ideas of Indian philosophy can be seen, at least in rudimentary form, in the 6th century B.C. The philosophers articulated their world view through their ideas on the one hand and through the institutional practices within which they created in their organisations on the other. The most significant feature common to the philosophies was the *renunciation tradition*. The period was characterized by the *paribbajakas* or *samanas* who had renounced their household status. They wandered above from place to place with the object of meeting and having discussions with others like them. It is through this ceaseless movement that they propagated their ideals and built up their followings.

What united all the *samanas* together was their opposition to the established tradition of the *Brahmanas* based on the cult of sacrifice, central to the ideology of the latter. They were also opposed to the claims of the *Brahmana's* preeminence in society and for these reasons they had been described as non-conformist sects. The range of ideas indicates the complexity of attempting to understand the rapidly changing society around these philosophers. It has been argued that the breakdown of the earlier simple communal existence had already created a sense of alienation which provided the common backdrop against which the individual philosophers grappled with the problems of human existence. And against such a backdrop Jainism and Buddhism emerged in Indian society. In the following sections of this unit we shall be dealing with the religions of Jainism and Buddhism.

Check Your Progress 1

i) The political system at the time of Mahavira and Buddha was characterised by the existence of

    a) monarchical kingdoms

    b) clan oligarchies

    c) Both of the above

    d) None of the above

i) Explain three main features of state formation in age of Mahavira and Buddha.

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....

iii) Who among the following claimed the highest status in the society based on birth in the age of Mahavira and Buddha?

    a) Karmakaras

    b) Dasa

    c) Brahmanas

    d) All of the above

20.3 JAINISM: BASIC TEACHINGS

Jainism is a living religious faith in India. Though the followers of this religion are found all over the country, they are concentrated mainly in the Western India, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Historians have noted the fact that both Jainism and Buddhism originated with Kshatriya belonging to the *gana-sanghas*, both were associated with non orthodox thinking which rejected *Vedic* authority, *Brahmanic* and the caste orders, and founded orders comprising *bhikkhus* who renounced the world.

20.3.1 The Founder of Jainism

Both Jainism and Buddhism are fundamentally offshoots from ancient Hinduism. Historically Jainism is older than Buddhism. The great Prophet of Jainism, Mahavira (599-527 B.C.) who was the last in the great succession to give Jainism the latest form, was the older contemporary to Buddha (560-480 B.C..

There are twenty four great circles of time believed in by the Jain; and in each circle one great prophet comes to the world. According to the Jain tradition these great prophets are known as the *Tirthankaras*. Mahavira is remembered as the last of the 24 great teachers or *Tirthankaras* or "ford-makers" of the Jains.

Mahavira was a prince. He abandoned a comfortable pleasurable life and became a wandering ascetic when he was about 30 years old. His father was a ruling Kshatriya and chief of the Nata clan. Mahavira grew up as a boy, as a youth, loving and dutiful to his parents; but ever in his heart is the vow that he had taken to become a Saviour of the world. After the death of his parents, he renounced the world. He retired into the forest. There for twelve years he practised great austerities, straining to realise himself and to realise the nothingness of all things but the self; and in the thirteenth year illumination came upon him and the light of the Self shone forth upon him, and the knowledege of the Supreme became his own. He shook the bonds of *Avidya* (ignorance) and came forth as teacher to the world, teaching for forty-two years of perfect life (Besant, 1968: 87). He spent the rest of his life teaching his philosophy in the Gangetic kingdoms which were the site of Buddha's spiritual career also. He died of self starvation, an accepted way of ending an earthly existence among the Jains. Mahavira added certain features to an earlier set of beliefs among the *Nirgranthas* rather than creating a new body of teachngs. Jainism is fundamentally atheistic, in that while not denying the existence of the gods, it does not give them any important part in the universal scheme. The world, for the Jain is not created, maintained, or destroyed by any personal deity but functions only according to Universal Law.

20.3.2 Central Doctrine

There are two main sects in Jainism — the Digambara "sky-clad" (and thus naked) and the Svetambara, "white clade". (We shall discuss these sects in Section 20.4.2). By the time of separation of these two sects, the doctrine had been fixed for the whole community; this accounts for the fundamental agreement in the main tenets professed by the Svetambaras and the Digambaras (Caillat, 1987: 507). In this section we shall discuss the central doctrine of Jainism which has been accepted by both the groups.

One might almost sum up the central doctrine of Jainism in one phrase that man by injuring no living creature reaches the *Nirvana* which is Eternal peace. That is the phrase that seems to carry with it the whole thought of Jain is: Peace — peace between man and man, peace between man and animal, peace everywhere and in all things, a perfect brotherhood of all that lives (Besant, 1966: 83).

The central doctrine to Jainism is that all of nature is alive—everything from rocks to the minute insects have some form of a soul, called *jiva*. The archaic concept of the soul is carried to its extreme conclusion in this teaching. Jainism thus "spiritualises even the material". The souls have always been in existence in an eternal cosmic pool of souls and were not created by any divine force. Like the *atman* (of Hinduism) all *jivas* are eternal but in contrast to Upanishadic Hindu thought there is no infinite cosmic *atman*. However, the Jains accept both *Karma* and *Punarjanm* (reincarnation) that determines the new embodiment of a being in accordance with earlier deeds.

As important as the concept of *jiva* is that of "non-violence" — *ahimsa*. According to Mahavira's "pure unchanging eternal law all things breathing, all things living, all things existing, all beings whatever, should not be slain, or treated with violence, or insulted, or tortured, or driven away". But self mortification and rigorous ascetism were recommended as a means of achieving liberation surmounting all passions and earthly ties where being dissolves into the impersonal universal whole. When this state is achieved the cycle of rebirth ends. Only the soul of the ascetic could actually achieve liberation. This is evident from the title of Mahavira — *jina* — one who conquers. It was associated with victory over earthly feelings and possessed ascetic implications.

An important economic result of Jain non-violence was that even lay members of the community rejected agriculture for fear of ploughing under living things and turned instead to commerce and banking regarded as non-violent occupations.

20.4 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF JAINISM

In this section we shall be dealing with the growth and development of Jainism over a period of time. Here, we shall cover the spread of Jainism, development of sects and sub-sects in Jainism and the Jain scriptures.

20.4.1 Growth of Jainism

In a short span of time Jainism spread over to various parts of India. Initially, the followers of Jainism lived mainly in the ancient Kingdoms of Videha, Megadha and Auga in east India and westward as far as Kasi (modern Varanasi) and Kosala. The influence of Jainism also spread to Dasapura (Mandasor and Ujjain). It also spread over to Nepal and in some parts of South India. In the 2nd Century B.C. the king of Kalinga (modern Orissa) professed Jainism. He also excavated Jain

Statues of Mahavira, in the lotus posture (L) and as a spiritual personage in the standing posture (R).

caves and set up Jain images and memorials to monks (Encyclopaedia of Britannica 1985: 275).

Jainism got great patronage from King Samprati, the grandson of Great Asoka. such patronage facilitated the spread of Jainism in South India. Tamil literacy classics such as *Manimakalai* and *Cilappalikaram* attest to the high degree of Jain influence in South India itself. From the 5th to the 12th Century the Ganga, Kadamba, Cavlukya and Rastrakuta dynasties of South India accorded royal patronage to Jainism and facilitated the spread of Jainism.

During the Gupta period (AD 320-600) Jainism became stronger in the Central and Western India. From 7th Century the Jain Svetambara order gained strength in Gujarat and Rajasthan due to royal patronage. Again from about 1100 Jainism gained prominence in the court of Caulukyas of Gujarat. Jainism still plays a crucial role in the religions faith of the people in these parts of India. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1985: 276).

20.4.2 Sects in Jainism

All living religions accommodate various views within their broad fold. In the process of such accommodation various sects and subsects emerge. Literature reveals that the first schism (*nihnava*) in Jainism took place during Jina's life time. Seven more such schisms took place in Jainism before the gradual emergence of two principle sects in Jainism — the *Svetambara* (white clad) and the *Digambara* (sky clad). The split occurred about 609 years after Mahavira (however, there are controversies over the actual date) mainly on the issue of whether a monk should wear cloth or not. Another difference was that of the *Digambara's* belief that women cannot attain salvation.

In the process of growth of Jainism over centuries the main sects of this religion have also been divided into various sub-sects (*gaccha*. In the 16th century "*Sthankavasis*" a sub-set of the Svetambaras emerged in western India. This sect rejected the practice of image worship of Jina. In the 16th century itself a sub sect of the *Digambara* known as *Taranapantha* was organised which also denied the sanctity of idol worship in Jainism. It is significant that of the 84 *gacchas* of the *Svetambar* developed over the centuries only few have survived. The most important of these sects of Svetambara are the *Khasatara, Tapa* and *Ancala* gacchas. Some important *Digambara* sub-sects are *Nandi, Kastha, Dravida* and *Sena*.

20.4.3 Jain Scriptures

The Jain sacred literatures were initially perserved orally from the time of Mahavira. These literatures were systematised by the Jain council from time to time. The first systematisation of the Jasin canonical literature took place in a council at Pataliputra (Patna) by the end of 4th Century B.C. and again in two other council in the early 3rd century B.C. in Mathura and Valabhi. The fourth and last Jain council took place at Valabhi in 454 or 467 A.D. This council is said to be the source of the *Svetambara* Jain scripture. The *Svetambara* canon consists of 45 *Agamas:* 11 *Anga* (parts) (originally consisted of 12 *Angas*, the 12th having been lost) 12 *Upanga* (sub-parts) 4 *Mula-Sutra*, 6 *Chedasutras*, 2 *Chulika-Sutras*, 10 *Prakirnakas* (mixed texts). This makes the canon of the Jain (*Svetambara*) religion.

Thus the *Svetambaras* follows the *Agama* as their secret scripture. The *Digambaras*, however, are of the opinion that the original canon of Jainism is lost and that the substance of Mahaviras' message is contained in the writings of ancient religious figures. They recognise two works in Prakrit: the *Karmaprabhrta* chapters on *Karman* — composed by Puspandanta and Bhutabalin and the *Kasayaprabharta*

— chapters on *Kasayas* composed by Gunudhara. They also respect some other Prakrit works.

Check Your Progress 2

Tick mark the correct answer.

i) Jainism ....

    a) accepted Vedic authority

    b) rejected Vedic authority

    c) remained indifferent to Vedic authority

    d) all of the above are correct.

ii) The central doctrine of Jainism is that

    a) all of nature is alive.

    b) only human beings are alive

    c) nothing is alive

    d) mocks etc. become alive after worship.

20.5 RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THE JAINS

In the earlier section we discussed the central doctrine of Jainism and its growth and development over a period of time. Let us examine the religious practices and ways of life of the Jain.

20.5.1 Religion among the Jains

The religious practices among the Jains are broadly influenced by two interdependent factors, namely the specific Jain convictions and the Hindu social milieu. Usually Jains should be members of four-fold congregation (*sangha*) composed of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. **They have deep faith in the *triratna* — the right faith, right knowledge and right conduct.** They believe that the strict adherence to *triratna* will bring liberation form bondage for them. Though the external and internal liberation can be obtained by the monks (*nirgkantha*) the householders are permitted certain ceremonies viz., worshipping of images etc. Significantly the Jain church has not been able to ignore the devotional aspiration of the laity, who are also attracted Hindu ritual. Hence although temple worship with burning and waving of lamps, plucked flowers and fruits, preparation of sandol past etc.) implies violence, cultic practices are tolerated, being considered ultimately to the worshippers progress. The monks and the laymen are to take some vows. The monks and the nuns pledge to abstain from (a) injuring life (b) taking food and drink at night (since it may lead to injury to insects which might go unnoticed in the darkness. The Jains four fold congretion can be brought under two great bodies; the laymen/laywomen (*Shravaka*) and the ascetic (*Yati*). The lay believers (*Shravaka*) are also to take a few important vows. These include non-violence, truthfulness, charity etc. These householders also perform some obligatory duties following the examples of life style of the monks:

i) cultivate right state of mind

ii) regularly practice meditation

iii) observe fasts on the eighth and fourteen days of the mon's waxing and waning period

iv) confess their faults etc. (Caillat, 1987 : 510).

The Jains have the strict rule that no intoxicating drug or drink may be touched; nothing like bhang, opium, alcohol etc. is allowed to be consumed. They follow strict vegetarianism. Even honey and butter also listed in the category of forbidden food, since in the gaining of honey lives of bees are often sacrified and so on. Regarding regular life for the laymen the Jain rules laid down that: He must rise very early in the morning and then he must repeat silently his mantras, counting its repetition in the fingers; and then he has to say to himself, what I am, who is my *Ishtadevata* and who is my *Gurudeva*, what is my religion, what should I do, what should I not do? (Besant, 1968: 97).

20.5.2   The Jain Ways of Life

The Jains are a comparatively small community. However, they are a powerful community not by its numbers, but by its purity of life and also by the wealth of its members — who are mostly merchants and traders. Though the four *varnas* of the Hindus are recognised by the Jains, the vast mass of them are the *Vaishyas* — the traders, merchants and the manufacturers. In northern India the Jaina and the Hindu Vaishyas intermarry and interdine. They usually do not regard themselves as of different religion. The Jain ways of life are distinctive and many of which have similarity with those of Hinduism.

Their family life is similar to that of the traditional Hindu joint family. They strictly follow monogamous form of marriage. However, they have a well defined code of conduct, that makes them distinctive.

Jains are self conscious and they should never loose control over their mind and body. From childhood, a child is taught to check thoughtlessness, continual carelessness and excitement which are the great banes of human life. The children are thus educated and socialised to be thoughtful, caring, considerate and submissive. Thus Jain laymen/lay women are by nature quite, self-controlled, dignified and reserved.

The life style of the ascetic Jains are more strict. Fasting is a part of their life just like the fasting of the great ascetic of the Hindu. There are both men and women ascetics among the *Svetambaras*. They are to follow strict rules of begging and renouncing of property. However, they must not renounce the body. They must beg food enough to support the body, because only in the human body one can be gain liberation. They are to attach prime importance to the teachings of the Guru. Hence they must not renounce the Guru, because without his teaching progress will be impossible. Hence the ascetic worldview is confined to four things — the body, the Guru, disciplines and study.

The female ascetics are also to follow the same strict rule of conduct. It is the duty of the female ascetics to see that Jain women, wives and daughters are properly educated. They lay great stress on the education of the women. It is significant that there are no female ascetics among the *Digambaras*.

The ascetic dies by self-starvation when an ascetic realises that his body cannot make any further progress, he is to put it aside and pass out the world by death by voluntary starvation (Besant, 1968: 99-100).

20.5.3   The Jain Festivals

The major festivals of the Jains are related to the auspicious occasions of the life of great masters of Jainism. These occasions are (i) descent in the mothers womb

(garbha-dharana, cyavana) (ii) birth (Janma) (iii) renunciation (diksa) and (iv) attainment of omniscience (Kevalajnana) and (v) death and final emancipation of Jina.

Pajjusana (also known as *Pryusanna*) is the most popular festival of the Jain. It is performed in the month of Bhadrapad (August-September) with the aim of purification by forgiving and rendering service with whole hearted effort and devotion. In the last day of this festival the Jains distribute alms to the poor and take out a procession with the image of Mahavir. During the festival annual confession is made to remove all ill-feelings.

A fasting ceremony known as *oli* is observed by fasting twice a year. This is observed nine days each during the month of Caitra (March-April) and Ashwin (September-October). In the *Diwali* day the Jains celeberate *nirvana* of Mahavir by lighting lamps. The *Jnana Panchami*, five days after the Diwali, is celebrated by the Jain with temple worship and especially with worship of scriptures in manuscript form.

In the full-moon night of the month Caitra the Jains celebrate Mahavir Jayanti, the birth day of Mahavira.

It is significant that in common with the Hindus the Jains celebrate many of the Hindu festivals like Holi, Makara-Sankranti, Navaratri (in north) Pongal, Kartika, Yugadi etc. (in South).

The Jains take part in temple worship and worship is an obligatory rite to them. They worship not only the image Mahavir, but also of all liberated souls, monks and the scriptures in various occasions. Idol worship, chanting of hymns, consecration of images and shrines are parts of Jain rituals. All these show the reflection of Hindu influence of Jainism. It is significant that it only the *Svetambaras* decorate the temple idol with clothings and ornaments. The *Digambara* authors put more emphasis on mental culture than on idol worship.

20.5.4 Jain and Hindu Religious Practices

There are certain important similarities in the beliefs, rituals and religious practices between Hinduism and Jainism. The Jain philosophy of *karman* is similar to the Hindu doctrine of *karma* and rebirth. Hinduism has also been widely influenced by the doctrine of *Ahimsa*. Mahatma Gandhi applied Mahavir's doctrine of *Ahimsa* in all spheres of life in India, social, economic and political.

The dietary restriction among the Vaisnavas of Hinduism is also a result of Jain influence in Indian society. It is significant that Jainism also received various elements of Hindu rites and rituals. The Jain rituals are modelled mainly on 16 Hindu *Samskara* (for details you may see Box 1 of Unit No. 19 : Hinduism).

Jainism has also influenced by the Hindu caste order. During the medieval period several castes arose among the Jains. However, it is to be noted here that caste system is not followed by Jain monks. The Jain caste names are sometimes common with the Hindus, some are named after places while others are exclusively Jains. Though features of Hindu caste system, such as hierarchy also appear in Jain castes, social differentiation is not so clearly marked. Some castes are common to both *Svetambaras* and *Digambaras,* while others are exclusive to one or the other (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1985: 280). In this context is again significant to mention here that since most of the Jains belong to the business communities in India, they are widely considered akin to the Vaishya castes. Indeed social reciprocity is higher among the Vaishya Hindus and the Jains.

20.6 BUDDHISM: BASIC TEACHINGS

In this section we shall be talking about the founder of Buddhism and its basic teachings.

20.6.1 Founder of Buddhism

Buddha was the founder of Buddhism. His family name was Gautama and Siddhartha was the name given to him by his parents. He was the prince of the Kingdom of *Sakyas* and *Kshatriya* or warrior by caste. Sidhartha had a spiritual and humanistic outlook since his childhood. He was married at the age of 16 years with Yosadhara. The turning point of his life came at 29, when he realised that men are subject to old age, sickness, and death — that human life is suffering. He himself resolved on the great renunciation, to give up the princely life and become a wandering ascetic. He departed from the palace leaving his wife and infant son behind. He met various teachers in search of truth. Being unsatisfied he practised severe austerity and extreme self *mortification* for nearly six years. He, however, again abandoned this pat and selected his own path (middle way — a path between a wordly life and extremes of self denial) to enlightenment. This he accomplished while seated crosslegged under a banyan tree at a place now called Buddha Gaya in Bihar, where Siddhartha Gautam became a supreme *Buddha* (the Enlightened one) in 528 B.C.

20.6.2 The Essence of Buddhism

The essence of the Buddha's early preaching was said to be the *Four Noble Truths:* acceptance of sufferings, knowing the cause of sufferings, bring to an end of sufferings and the eight fold path as a mechanism for release from sufferings. Let us examine these truths in greater length.

i) Life is fundamentally disappointment and suffering

Many experts have pointed out that the basic propositions of Buddha's philosophy are psychological and not metaphysical. The central proposition upon which all others are contingent is that of *dukha*, or pain or human misery, which no one can escape from. The first sermon of the Buddha at Sarnath begins with the inevitability of suffering:

> "This O monks is the sacred truth of suffering. Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, being united with loved ones is suffering, to be separated is suffering, not to obtain what one desires is suffering, clinging to the earthly is suffering".

Thus the starting point of Buddhist philosophy is thus a recognition of what has been termed the *"tyrancy of pain"*. But while the origin of pains were specific to the different experience of individuals the Buddha dwelt on the universal aspects of the agony he found everywhere. While the generalised idea of misery could be drawn from the tyrannical acts in the unsettled conditions of his age, they were formulated as psychological universalities afflicting all human beings cutting across all lines. This focus explains the significance of the three signs witnessed by the Buddha, of disease, old age and death, which recurs in all the narratives of the Buddha. It is

ii) Suffering is a result of one's desires for power, pleasure and continued existence

The centrality or pain is linked to the second proposition in the four noble truths where the cause of suffering is located in *tanha* the "thirst for pleasure, thirst for being, the thirst for power". The universal all consuming thirst itself may well be a product of the insatiable greed for wealth and for territory. Some passages in the Buddhist texts capture the insatiable greed of men most aptly thus: "the rich in this world give nothing of the goods that they acquired to others; they eagerly heap riches together and further and still further go in their pursuit of enjoyment. Althoug the king may have conquerred the kingdoms of the earth and be ruler of the land this side of the sea he would still cover that which is beyond the sea". Finally only by cutting of individually and the abandonment of selfhood will there be end to *tanha*.

Dukkha and *tanha* arise out of ignorance about the nature of the universe; both are part of a world which is in perpetual flux (*anicca*), in the process of continuously changing. Buddhist philosophy has thus aptly been characterised as the "metaphysics of perpetual change", further in the Buddhist view the world is *anatta*, it is soulless. According to the Buddha there is no stable entity, no soul which transmigrates, although the process of *causation* and *karma* ensures rebirth. However, what transmigrates is individual consciousness; as a person dies his/her consciousness and the desire for fulfilling the unsatisfied cravings propelling it forward enters another life, another body, in the same way as one lamp fades out and kindles another.

iii) To Stop Disappointment and Suffering One Must Stop Desiring

The cessation of sorrow is the aim of Buddhist philosophy and is attainable by the code of personal ethics. The criterion of Buddhist ethics is self-control which when it reaches its highest point leads to *nibbana*, the blowing out of the individual. This is the only stable entity, a state of rest, in a world of ceaseless flux. It is a state of bliss reached by the Buddha and other *arhants* (who attained Nirvana) or perfected beings.

There are other features of Buddhism wich are unique to it; these include a steering away from issues regarded by the Buddha as irrelevant (*avyaktani*), taking one away from the path to be pursued — the most important being the existence of god. The existence or non-existence of god in no way altered the basic propositions of Buddhism. In keeping with this position was the emphasis on self reliance in early Buddhism wherein the Buddha exhorted his followers not to look for support outside of themselves but be "lamps unto themselves". Equally significant was the centrality of compassion for fellow beings.

iv) The Way to Stop Desiring and Suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path

Suggested by Buddha, these paths are right views, right intentions, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

20.6.3 Buddhist Social Order

When someone joins the Buddhist order he or she is required to subscribe to no creed. In one part of the ceremony of initiation he says:

I go for refuge to the Buddha

I go for refuge to the Law

I go for refuge to the Order.

Buddha suggested his serious desciples to abandon the ordinary civil life since it was difficult to follow the Eight Fold Path in such a life. Hence two main types of followers are there in Buddhism: members of *monastic communities* and the *lay disciples*.

i) The member of the monastic commnity are to forsake family, occupation and society and lead a solitary life either as anchorities or as members of a monastic community. There are rigit rules of this monastic community: simple dwellings, three piece garments (an undergarment, a kind of coat and a cloak), shaved off head and beard. He must beg his food, must observe prohibition to meat diet. The monastic life must follow ten commandments. They *must refrain from* (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) unchastity, (4) lying, (5) intoxicants, (6) solid food after midday, (7) dancing, music and theatrical representation, (8) using garlands, perfumes and salves, (10) using hig and broad couches, and (11) accepting gold and silver.

There are further minutest details of the monastic life. *Pratimoksha* (the oldest Buddhist document) contains a list of about 250 contraventions by which a monk have to test his conscience twice every month. *Uparasatha* (day of fast) is used for this heart searching. Any one, without caste restriction, without the sin of parricide etc. without some form of serious disease and without lack of personal liberty can be a member of the monastic order.

Box 1

In the monastic order there are four stages to enter into *Nirvana*. It begins with the entrants, i.e. the novice who has stepped into the stream. In the second stage there are those who will return here on the earth only once more. In the third stage there are those who will not return here on the earth any more. They will be in a higher world 'heaven' and thence with enter into 'Nirvana'. The highest stage is that of the *arahat* (saint) who will pass immediately from his present existence into Nirvana (Hackmann, 1988: 307).

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ii) For the laymen/women Buddha also laid down certain instructions. They are advised to lead a moral life "in keeping with the demands of the time, and to fulfil all duties towards parents, teachers, wives, children, servants, subordinates, and ascetics". He suggested five commandments for the laymen disciples. They are advised to *retrain from* a) killing, b) stealing, c) unchastity, d) lying and e) intoxicants. Though for a laymen highest salvation was not possible through these prescribed methods, it would help them to procure a favourable reincarnation here on the earth. So it would be possible for them to become a member of the monastic community and ultimately attain the rank of *arahat* (Hackmann 1988 : 307). Such an ideal of reincarnation is associated with the doctrine of *karma* of Hinduism.

A laymen is not called to celibacy, but is required to be faithful to his wife. As an aspect of simple life the Buddhism does not suggest elaborate ceremonies.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Write a short note on the essence of Buddha's Four Fold Noble Truths in about seven lines.

....

....

....

....

....

....

2) Which one of the following is not a commandment for the laymen follower of Buddhism.

a) .Refraining from killing

b) Refraining from lying

c) Refraining from intoxicants

d) Refraining from dancing and music

20.7 BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY OF THAT AGE

How can we relate these ideas to the society in which Buddhist philosophy originated and what impact did it have upon that society? Further how different or shared were these ideas in relation to existing Brahmanical ideas? Let us examine some of these points here.

a) Break with Brahmanism

Most important, while there were a few ideas that Buddhist philosophy shared with the Upanishadic thought and with the sramanic (renouncer) tradition Buddha did not merely rehash ideas; his ideas marked in innovative and radical move in the direction of creating a new social philosophy with an enduring appeal for human kind. There was not only a break with Brahmanism but also an interrogation and rejection of its basic beliefs. A later Buddhist philosopher, Dharmakiriti, put this successfully when he characterised ignorance as accepting the authority of the Veda and someone as creator, the desire of gaining merit through the holy dip, the vanity of casteism and torturing the body to redeem sin.

The sharpest dimension of the break that the Buddha made with Brahamanism was in his understanding of social institutions. In the Buddist view since there was no creator all social institutions were arrangements which men made. Private property, the family, occupational categories and kingship originated in human social arrangements.

b) The Demystification of Kingship and Caste

Both these institutions were considered divinely ordained in Brahmanism. Buddhism opened up immense possibilities for recording social arrangements. The impulse and legitimation for reordering social arrangements could also come from the Buddhist emphasis on change. For example, if everything was permanently in a state of change, varna divisions and despotic kingship could also change. It was in conceptualising the new social arrangements that the bases of Buddhist social philosophy may be discerned. In response to the contradictions that the bases of Buddhist social philosophy may be discerned. In response to the contradictions of society in his age Buddhism also recognised the direction of historical forces. For example, while the breakdown of the *gana-sanghas* and the earlier traditions of clan-based societies could not be reversed, they provided models for the Buddhist *sangha*. In the Buddist *sangha* all were equal regardless of their origins; there was no individual property and all decisions were taken through consensus or voting. The *sangha*, in the words of D.P. Chattopadhyaya, was the embodiment of the

"imaginary sustance of the tribe, a symbol of people's memories and of their aspirations;" it was the vision of an alternative society.

However, this egalitarian order applied only to the *bhikkhus*, i.e. to the *samana* who renounced both family and property to pursue salvation goals. In the world outside the *sangha* Buddhism did not envisage radical rearrangements. Buddhism introduced norms which by emphasising charity, self control, and moderation, moderated the excesses of an exploitative economic order. Buddhist ethics required a reciprocal 'giving'; masters should treat those who worked for them well in return for which their servants would word hard for their masters. These norms would however require no re-ordering of the existing economic order in which some had too much, others too little. Similarly kingship was to be exercised according to *dhamma* moderating the despotic goverance of existing rulers.

c) Arrangements for Redistribution of Surplus through Dana

In keeping with the dual arrangements of Buddhist social philosophy, one for the world of the *sangha* and the other for the world outside, it was the central place given to *dana*, or alms giving. This was the link between the two worlds — pious laymen maintained the *sangha* and others who had renounced the world. *Dana* was also a way of ensuring that society maintained its marginalised groups, renouncers and the indigent. In substituting *dana* for the Brahmanical *yagna* the Buddha was providing a structural inversion; while the *yagna* ensured that no surplus could be built up, *dana* effected its redistribution.

To sum up the social philosophy of Buddhism, it can be seen that while Buddhism did not envisage the complete eradication of inequalities on society, Buddist social ethics provides *a code for civilised living rather than creating for an equalitarian society*. As the "middle path", it sought to contain the excesses of an exploitative order. It also interrogated Brahmanical values especially hierarchies based on birth and the sacred legitimation of secular institutions. It thus became the first and in some ways the most lasting critique of Brahmanism. It is not surprising therefore that oppressed groups in India have seen in it the vision of a new society. It has also appealed to rationalist humanists both in age of the Buddha and the present. For these and a number of other reasons Buddhism became popular not merely within India but in south, south-east and east Asia — by far one of India's most significant contributions to the world.

20.8 THE GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND DECLINE OF BUDDHISM

Within a few centuries following the age of the Buddha the philosophy that originated with him spread out from its earlier location in eastern India. As it spread, its philosophical content expanded and was transformed through its creative interaction with its new environments and the changed social processes. Kings and other elites provided support for its expansion; by the second century B.C. it had spread into Sri Lanka and south east Asia; by the 4th and the 5th centuries A.D. it was well established in east Asia.

20.8.1 The Hinayana, Mahayana and Vijrayana

Buddhist philosophy *did not remain static* during its long history. In the centuries following the promulgation of the original teaching and the formation of earliest community, India Buddhism underwent a massive process of missionary diffusion throughout the Asian world, assimilating new values and undergoing major changes in doctrinal and institutional principles. Today, under the impact of conflicting ideologies and of science and technology, Buddhism as a religious belief system has undergone

several changes. Its original propositions had focussed on each individual working towards salvation through the path formulated by the Buddha. Although these formulations were not really esoteric, they were not so easy to continuously observe so as to reach the goal of becoming the perfected being, or the *arhant*. Fairly early, certain ancillary supports began to be incorporated into Buddhism such as showing reverence to the symbols associated with the Buddha, and other popular cults such as the worship of Tumuli. However the most striking development took place around the Ist century B.C. or Ist century A.D. As Weber has pointed out, in order to become popular an abstract religion has two courses; it can become 'soteriological', that is, adopt the notion of a saviour or of salvation, or become magical, Buddism did noth — first, it adopted the notion of a saviour and later incorporated Tantrik elements. Finally the three different strands of Buddhism came to be known as Hinayana, Mahayana and Vijrayana for reasons that will become evident presently.

i) **Hinayana:** After the death of Buddha several Buddhist councils were held to decide the questions of faith and religious orders in Buddhism. This finally led to the distinction between those who believed they held the most ancient traditions (*Theravanndins*) and those who claimed their understandings represented the highest and most complete account Buddha's message (*the Mahayanist*). *The Theravada* or *Hinayana* (located mainly in the lands of South East Asia, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia) represents the sole survivor of the numerous ancient Indian schools. It has a fixed body of canonical literature, a relatively unified orthodox teaching, a clearly structured institutional distinction between the monastic order and laity. The *Tripitaka* (Three Baskets) consists of *Vinaya Pitaka* (Basket of Discipline), *Sutta Pitaka* (Basket of Discourses) and *Abhidhamma Pitaka* (Basket of Scholasticism) written in Pali language is the *Hinayana* canon of sacred literature. This tradition explicated necessary regulations for the community, meditative techniques and rituals and the stages leading to *arhatship*.

ii) **The Mahayana** (located in Nepal, Sikkim, China, Koroea and Japan) is a diffuse and vastly complex combination of many schools and sects, based on a heterogenous literature. The main thrust of their principle is that of being against the principle of Hinayana. However, in China and Japan its literature 'ranges from the most abstruse philosophy to popular devotional theism and magic. Institutionally it has appeared both in monastic and in radically laticized forms and it has occasionally served well defined church—state configurations.

The ideal of the Mahayana school was that of a *Boddhisattva* (Enlightenment being), whose compassionate vow to save all human beings was contrasted with the aloof self-concern of the Hinayana *arhat* (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1985: 603).

Box 2

The incorporation of the idea of a saviour was facilitated by the belief in *Boddhisattvas*, a series of previous personages of the Buddha before he achieved an *arhant* status in his last life. The *Boddhisattva* was a potential Buddha or a potential *arhant*. The focus on compassion laid by the Buddha resulted in the ideas that accumulated merit of a Boddhisattva could be transferred to help those who were struggling to escape from their various states of miseries; that once one became an *arhant* one was of no use to anyone else so that the *arhant* status should be postponed rather than achieved immediately, and finally that a future Buddha would as a saviour, make salvation possible for a large number of ordinary individuals. This form of Buddhism came to known as Mahayana, or the great vehicle, which would carry many people into salvation in contrast to the earlier form of Buddhism called Hinayana, the lesser vehicle, as it could not carry so many people to salvation.

The following are some of the ways in which Mahayana Buddism differs from Hinayana. In the Hinayana deity worship had no place and no doctrine of God. The Mahayana introduced the idea of deity into this religion. The popular form of theism of Mahayana was the doctrine of *Boddhisattva* (one whose nature is pervaded by *bodi*). According to this doctrine through the history of human being a large number of noble men tread the path of Buddha and all of them had to follow the stages of *Boddhisattva* before they could attain the status of Buddha. However, a large number of them stopped at the Boddhisattva stage (and did not take up the final step to achieve the status Buddha) because they were filled with infinite pity for the suffering of the world. They prefer to wait to help those who are in need. Thus the Boddhisattva intervenes and saves from danger and death. He protects the weak and the helpless, frees the captive, fights plague and famine, consoles the sorrowful and comforts those who are ready to despair. Thus with this peculiar creation of *Boddhisattva* by the Mahayana the centre of gravity of Buddhist doctrine was completely shifted.

iii) The **Tantrayana** or **Vijrayana** (prevalent in Tibet, Mongolia, and some parts of Siberia) dominantly identified with Tibetan Lamaism and its theocracy.

The third stage in Buddhist philosophy was the incorporation of a magical — mystic dimension where the followers of Vajrayana believed that release or salvation could be best achieved by acquiring magical powers which was called *Vajra*, meaning thunderbolt or diamond. This form of Buddhism was focussed on feminine divinities who were the force or potency (Sakti) behind the male divinities. These feminine 'spouses' or the Buddhas or *Bodhisattava* of the new sect were the saviouresses (Taras) of their followers. Those who reached a high state of detachment and mental training acquired supernatural power and were capable of following these magical practices. The *Vajrayana* school flourished in Bengal, Bihar and in Tibet where it has survived. One of the formulae of Tantric Buddhism still chanted is "Om mani padme hum"; such formulae were expected to bestow magical power on the worship and lead to the highest bliss.

20.8.2 Neo-Buddhist Movement in India

Buddhism is against the Brahmanic social order. It is against the caste based social inequality. As it emerged as a response against the Brahmanic cult in the ancient India, in contemporary India. Buddhism has been used as the instrument of eradication of ascribed social inequality. Hence the most significant Buddhist mass revival of the new age was led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in India. He found in Buddhism the massage for the uplift of the oppressed in India. He used and interpreted Buddhism as the ideology to bring social equality and justice for the oppressed mass, especially for the Scheduled Castes. After many years of spiritual search, he became convinced that Buddhism was the only ideology that could effect the eventual liberation of India out Castes. On 14 October 1956 he performed a mass 'consecration' of the Scheduled Castes to Buddhism in Nagpur, Maharashtra. The new converts were mostly from the Scheduled Mahars Castes (a Scheduled Caste) (Gamez, L.O. 1987: 381). This mass conversion aimed at the rejection of the untouchability, participation of the oppressed castes towards undertaking more social and political activities for their liberation from the exploitative forces. One aspect of conversion movement was to radically undermine the Hindu dominant culture by rejecting its basic tenets of hierarchy, purity and pollution. This understanding of Hindu culture created a tendency of negation among the Dalits of Maharashtra. This negation was very important in as much as it developed negative consciousness which drove the Dalit of Maharashtra to undertake more creative and organised political action for their emancipation. Ambedkar's idea behind conversion was to make it a part of the larger political movement based on the material contradictions inherent in Indian Society (Guru, 1989: 419-420).

20.8.3 Decline of Buddhism in India

Before analysing the process of decline of Buddhism in India we should know the similarity between Buddhism and Hinduism and also the influence of Buddhism on Hinduism. It is significant that these aspects have contributed significantly for the decline of Buddhism in India. Originally there are certain similarities in the fundamental doctrine of Hinduism and Buddhism. The idea of transmigration of soul or incarnation is common to both the religious. Both these religions are against taking animal life. It was no doubt, permitted to Hindus by epics and in fact prevailed in Vedic times but was given up under the influence of Buddhism. Buddhism also brought phenomenal change on the mode of worship and rituals of Hinduism. Vedic sacrifices were mostly superseded by other form of worship associated with temples and veneration of images. This is however, to note here that Buddha only suggested sermons and meditation to his followers. However, the ordinary follower of Buddha in the due course of time accepted the worship of relics of Buddha and his chief disciples. The Buddhist tradition of worshipping of great teachers helped the process of deification of Rama and Krishna. Even in Hinduism Lord Buddha has been regarded as the 10th incarnation of Vishnu.

Significantly the *Mathas* of Hinduism owe their origin to Buddhism. For the first time in the history of Hinduism *Mathas* were established by Sankara, the South Indian revivalist, in the 9th century A.D. modelled on the pattern of Buddhist monasteries. The *mathas* at Saingiri, Puri, Dwaraka and Badrinath which are established by Sankara, helped in the revival of Hinduism by enforcing the disciplinary concepts of Buddhism. These *mathas* still attract thousands of Hindu pilgrims.

Buddhism received a set back in the land of its birth. Many of the noble ideas of Hinduism were incorporated in the broad fold of Hinduism including Buddha himself as the reincarnation of Vishnu. Hinduism struggled with Buddhism from the 4th to 9th century. The greatest danger of Buddhism came from its emphasis on tolerance and obliteration of differences. The very fact that Buddhism and Hinduism came nearer to each other led to the disintegration of the former. Decadence of Buddhism in India was hastened by its alliance with forms of magic and erotic mysticism called *Saktism*. Hindus had, in the meanwhile, absorbed all the good points which Buddhist had to offer. Sankara, led a cruisade against Buddhism in 8th and 9th centuries. He took the Buddhist institution as his model and arranged the ascetic orders of Hindus accordingly. His philosophy was also based on Mahayana Buddhism. The final disappearance of Buddhism was, however, mainly due to the destruction of its great monasteries by the Muslim invaders...it must be understood that the decline of Buddhism from India was not its annihilation of explusion but absorption (Chopra, P.N. 198: 48-50).

Check Your Progress 4

1) In the new social philosophy of Buddha there was a

   a) reconciliation with Brahmanism

   b) improvement upon the Brahmanism

   c) break with Bramanism

   d) a parallel development of Brahmanism

2) Write a note on feminine divinities in Buddhism in about six lines.

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20.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed Jainism and Buddhism. We started with the discussion in the background of the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism. There we discussed the political system and the political philosophy, the economic and the social orders and the then existing religious philosophies, in the context of which Jainism and Buddhism developed. While discussing Jainism we highlighted the aspects related to the founder and essence of Jainism. The Jain ways of life, Jain festivals and the similarities between Jainism and Hinduism are also discussed in this unit. While discussing Buddhism we highlighted its basic teachings, the relation between its basic philosophy and the society of that age and its growth and development over a period of time. The similarities between Buddhism and Hinduism and the decline of Buddhism in India were also discussed in this unit.

20.10 KEY WORDS

Heterodox	:	Ideas opposed to usual practising religious beliefs.
Ganga-Sanghas	:	Geographically located units and inhabitated and ruled by the Khshatriya clans.
Oligarchies	:	A form of government in which ruling power belongs to few people.
Orthodox	:	Conforming to the established religious doctrine.

20.11 FURTHER READINGS

Besant, A., 1985. *Seven Great Religions*. The Theosophical Publishing House: Madras.

Chopra, P.N. (ed) 180. *Buddhism in India and Abroad*. Min. of Education and Culture. Govt. of India: New Delhi.

20.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

i)   c.

ii)   a)   Emergence of settled agriculture.

 b)   large standing army for the expending frontiers of the Kingdom and effective control within the state.

 c)   formation of an impressive officialdom.

iii)   c.

Check Your Progress 2

i)   c.

ii)   a.

1) According to Buddha life is

    a) fundamentally disappointment and suffering

    b) suffering is a result of one's desires for pleasure, power and continued existence

    c) to stop disappointment one must stop desiring

    d) the way to stop desiring is the noble Eight fold path — right views, right intentions, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

2) d

Check Your Progress 4

i) c.

ii) The followers of Vajrayana believe that salvation could be best achieved by acquiring magical power. This form of Buddhism focuses on the feminine divinities who were the force behind the male divinities. These feminine 'spouses' of the Buddhas of the new sect were the savioursses of their followers.
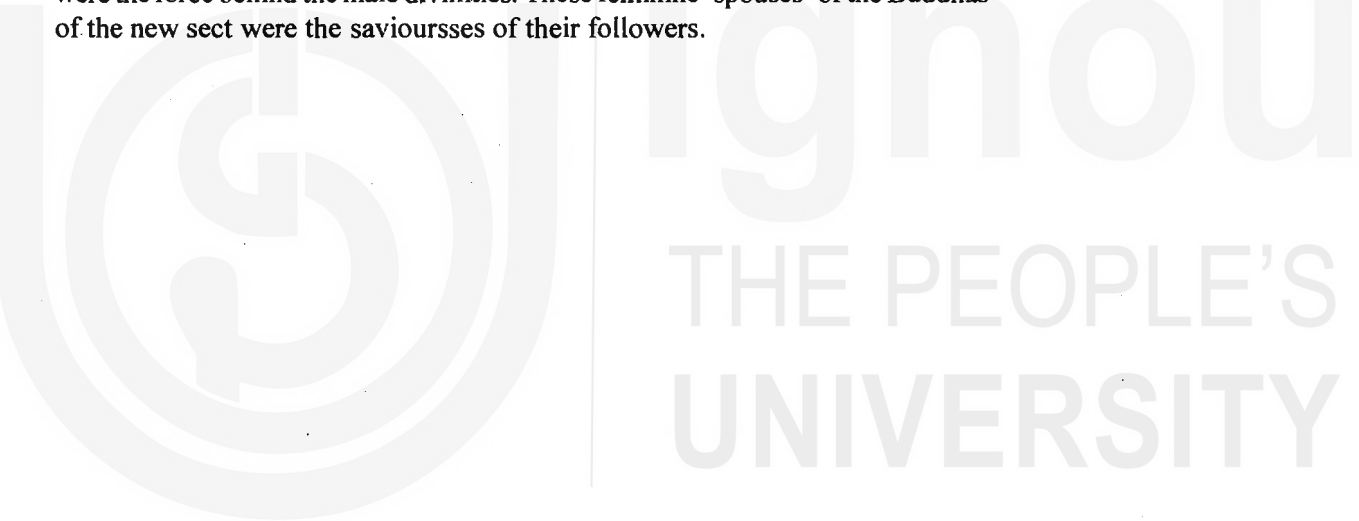
UNIT 21 CHRISTIANITY

Structure

21.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit are to acquaint you with the religious belief system and social order of Christianity. After reading this unit you should be able to

- discuss the chief sources and beliefs in Christianity

- examine the teaching of Jesus Christ

- explain the Christian social order

- describe Christian view on the Church and the world

- discuss various aspects of Christianity in India.

21.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated, India is a plural society. One of the significant elements of this plurality is that of the religious belief systems and religious practices. Religion is an important dimension of group formation. The world view and the behavioural patterns of a social group are largely shaped by their religious practices and beliefs. Christianity is an important world religion. A sizeable section of the Indian population follows Christianity. It will be sociologically significant to analyse and know the basic tenets of Christianity and social organisation of its followers.

In Unit 17 of ESO-02 we discussed the Christian social organisation with special reference to India. In this unit we shall introduce you to the basic tenets of Christian religious belief. We also will introduce you briefly to the socio-religious aspects of Christianity in India. After reading this unit, you should be able to know the Christians belief system and about their life on earth and hereafter. The Christian way of life and the ideal Christian society are also discussed in this unit. How the faith of Christians is nourished and how they derive spiritual inspiration about the consequences of the adaptation of the Christian community to the world, and some broad ideas about Christians in India are discussed at length in this unit.

Though the Christians are heavily concentrated in the countries of the European and American continents, the followers of Christianity are found in almost all the countries of the world. They are subdivided into a large number of churches and denominations based on organisational and doctrinal differences. These subdivisions can be subsumed under the three broader categories of (1) the Roman Catholic Church, (2) the Eastern Orthodox Church and (3) the Protestant denominations. The first two categories date from the early period of Christianity and the third category of churches sprung during the last few centuries owing their origin to dissident groups from the parent bodies. The basic elements of Christianity described in this lesson are, however, common to all the above categories of churches. Besides these Christian churches, there are certain cults such as *Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism* or *"Latter-day Saints", the Unification Church or "Moonies"* and so on, which though akin to Christianity, differ from the Biblical Christianity in important respects.

In describing Christianity from the sociological perspective, in this lesson, some of the functions which a religion is expected to perform will be kept in view. These functions include the assistance which religion provides the individual in gaining added power and satisfaction, the explanation of the problem of evil, the offer of the hope of better life in the future, the formulation of a plan for salvation, the improvement of the quality of the present life and an outline of an ideal soceity.

21.2 SOURCES AND BELIEFS

Christianity is the religion founded by Jesus Christ, but it has its roots in the Judaic tradition. It is counted among the revealed or divinely inspired religions. The divinely inspired religious precepts are contained in the holy book of the Christians known as the Bible. The Bible is divided into two books: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Most of the books of the Bible are written mostly by different authors at different points of time starting from the ancient times. The books of the *Old Testament* dealing with the period before the birth of Jesus Christ were originally written in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic, and the books of the *New Testament* dealing with the life and teachings of Jesus and the Acts of his Apostles which depict the formative period of Christianity, were originally written mostly in Greek or partly in Aramaic. The first four New Testament books telling of the life, death and resurrection of Christ are known as the *Gospels*.

21.2.1 The Founder of Christianity

Central to the Christian faith is the identity of its founder, Jesus Christ. Christ was a historical figure born about 2,000 years ago. He lived a short span of 33 years and his public life covered only the last three years during which he healed people, performed miracles, even raising people from the dead, and taught his disciples how to live lives that would be pleasing to God. But the most remarkable feature of Jesus' life, according to Christian belief, is that after he was crucified, dead and buried, he rose again on the third day and appeared to his Apostles and disciples before ascending into heaven. Jesus claimed that he was son of God and behaved

as such by forgiving sinners on his own authority, which was a sore point with the Jewish religious leaders. But his disciples believed that he was God. Therefore, one of the basic tenets of the Christian faith is the belief that Jesus Christ is true Man and true God.

During his life Jesus made many disciples and followers. They, however, did not form themsevles into a separate community or church. It was obvious that until his death and resurrection Jesus did not complete his religious mission. As a matter of act, the arrest of Jesus by his enemies and his ignominious death on the cross came as an apparent anticlimax to the work of propagating his faith. On the day before his death, when Jesus was arrested, his Apostles who were his constant companions, panicked and deserted him. Even his favourite Apostle, Simon Peter who was following him from a distance, denied having known Jesus when questioned by others on three occasions. The Apostles who believed in Christ as the Son of God were disenchanted when he seemed powerless at the hands of his enemies. At his death they hid themselves for fear of being apprehended.

After the third day Jesus rose from the dead. From then on until the fortieth day when, according to the Bible, Jesus ascended into heaven, he appeared to his Apostles and other disciples several times. It is during that time, having accomplished his mission, Jesus commissioned his Apostles to spread his faith to all nations saying: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Mathew 28: 18-20).

Jesus on the cross, with his mother Mary in the foreground.

21.2.2 The Biblical Concept of God

In this context it may be pointed out that the Biblical concept of God is rather complex. God is one but has revealed Himself in the Bible as three persons — *the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*. Such a conception of God is described as the mystery of the *Unity in Trinity* and *Trinity in Unity*. According to the Bible Jesus is God, the Son, born of the Virgin Mary who conceived by the Holy Spirit. The incarnation of Jesus as man, according to the Bible, is a part of the divine plan for the atonment of the sins of mankind.

In order to understand why it was necessary for God to become man so as to save mankind, one needs to know that the Bible teaches about the origin of *sin* and *evil* in this world. According to the Bible, God created heaven and earth and he made Adam and Eve the first ancestors of mankind in his own image. But Adam and Eve were disobedient to their creator thereby bringing sin and evel into this world. As a result all mankind became heir to the original sin and lost the privilege to be regarded as children of God. It was only the suffering and death of a sinless man, Jesus, which could atone for the sins of mankind. And God so loved mankind that he sent his only beloved son to save mankind from eternal damnation. Jesus is therefore called the Saviour of mankind. The Bible states that whoever believes in him will be saved (John 3:16).

21.2.3 The Biblical Concept of Body, Soul and Salvation

The Bible teaches that man has body and soul; whereas the body perishes with death, the soul survives eternally. Salvation in Christianity means the survival of the soul or the individual personality in a happy existence in heaven after death. Contrary to the belief in the transmigration of souls, Christianity teaches that human beings live only once on the earth and so have only one chance to make sure of a happy after-life. Although the original sin-condemned man to eternal damnation, Christ's suffering has redeemed mankind. But any individual can attain salvation only if, he or she were to accept Jesus as Saviour. The Bible is clear on this point in quoting Christ's own words: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John, 14:6). This and other references in this lesson are in the Books of the New Testament in the Bible.

Box 1

The unfolding of the scheme of salvation in Christianity also establishes the link between the Old and the New Testament of the Bible. The Old Testament is an essential part of the Jewish tradition. Jesus Christ was a Jew who followed the Jewish tradition whick provides the point of reference for his teaching. The basic link between the Old and the New Testament lies in the fact that the Old Testament is always looking forward to One who was to come about, whom there are several promises, prophecies are descriptions which are fulfilled in Jesus. So from the point of view of Christians, the New Testament bears witness to the unique event foreseen in the Old Testament. Moreover, the Old Testament is a constant reminder that God punishes the evil and rewards the good and that he never forsakes those who believe in Him. Together, the Old and the new Testaments constitute the progressive self-revelation of God.

21.2.4 Organisation and Communion

The organisation of the early churches was based on the belief in Jesus as the 'Risen Lord'. In the beginning the Christians gathered daily for their worship, but in due course, one day in a week called the 'Lord's day' (Sunday) was set aside

for the worship service. This practice is generally followed in the Christian churches even today. The core of the worship service consists of religious instruction, preaching, prayer and the breaking of bread. The breaking of bread or the 'Lord's Supper' has a special significance in Christian worship. This practice follows from what Jesus did at his last supper with his Apostles on the night before his death. He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his Apostles syaing, "This is my body given for you; this is remembrance of me". In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you". (Luke 22 : 19, 20). This incident symbolises Christ's suffering and death on the cross which is the central act of salvation, freeing mankind from sin.

The replication of the 'Lord's Supper' at the worship is believed to realise once again, Christ's presence (called the living presence). In the eating of the bread and drinking of the wine a direct and intimate union with Christ is achieved. This part of the worship service is also known as Communion or Eucharistic rite.

In general, the religious services of Christians are mainly aimed at Worshipping God in spirit and truth (John 4"24), that is, worshipping the Father through Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Indicate the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible in about eight lines.

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ii) Narrate the concept of body and soul as depicted in Christianity in about five lines.

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iii) Jesus rose from the dead after the

a) fifth day

b) fourth day

c) third day

d) second day

21.3   TEACHINGS OF CHRISTIANITY

Although Jesus did not reduplicate the Judaic tradition, he abrogated some of the Jewish conventions, gave a radical twist to the old ethical principles and spelt out the fundamental principles of the ideal social order.

21.3.1   Purity of a Person and the Moral Deeds

Among the archaic Jewish practices which Jesus brushed aside, reference may be made to the rituals to ward off pollution. When the Jews complained that his disciples did not adhere to their traditional custom of ritual "cleaning" of hands before meals, Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' (Mark 7 : 14,15). Jesus thus teaches the important truth that it is not outside rituals or ceremonies or eating of special foods that make a person clean before God. It is the purity of a person's heart and mind that makes one clean in God's sight.

According to his instructions the norms of proper conduct are not to be anchored on the morality of this world but rather on the other-wordly criteria of fulfilling the will of God and of pleasing Him. 'Therefore, a Christian is not supposed to expect reciprocity or popularity from his good deeds; his rewards come from wheat pleases God to bestow upon him both in this and the outer world.

In doing moral deeds or giving charity, a person should not draw attention to oneself so as to be honoured by others; God rewards such deeds done in secret (Mathew 6 : 1-4).

21.3.2   Forgiving Sins and Evils

Jesus impresses upon his followers that let along murder, even the expression of anger against others amounts to sin and that God does not accept prayers and gifts unless we first reconcile ourselves with each other (Mathew 5 : 21-23). So also God forgives the sins of persons who forgive others who sin against them (Mathew 6 : 14, 15).

It is the way of the world to pay back the agressor in his own coin. But Jesus tells his followers, "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on thr right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Mathew 5 : 38, 39). So also, consider what Jesus has to say, "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous (Mathew 5 : 43-45).

These precepts of Jesus seem to be so unreasonable and impractical. But his own conduct during the most trying time of his life is a telling demonstration of his preaching. When Jesus was falsely charged and sentenced to death, he neither resisted his captors nor defended himself before the court. What is more, when he was crucified during his dying moments, he uttered from the cross these stunning words of mercy to his enemies: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23 : 24). Thus Jesus not only taught his followers a new way of life but also in his exemplary life showed how it could be accomplished.

21.3.3   Evangelisation and Baptism

Christ's mandate to his disciples to spread his message of love and foregiveness throughout the world is considered to be an obligation on the part of all Christians to do likewise. The act of spreading the gospel of Christ is termed evangelisation.

However, the decision of accepting the message or of becoming a convert to Christianity, should be left to the persons who receive the message, which is regarded as the work of the Holy Spirit.

The acceptance of the Christian faith by renouncing their old religious beliefs and practices meant for the converts a rupture from their old communities as well. So the new Christians formed themselves into communities or churches of their own. The churches drew people from different religious and ethnic groups, who were welded into a new Christian identity. The new recruits to the faith were admitted with a simple ceremony called Baptism.

Check Your Progress 2

1) According to Christian thought the norms of proper conduct are to be anchored

   a) on the moality of this world

   b) on the other wordily criteria without fulfilling the will of God

   c) on the other wordly criteria of fulfilliing the will of God

   d) on self-interest.

2) The act of spreading the gospel of Christ is termed

   a) Universalisation

   b) Christianisation

   c) Evangelisation

   d) Spiritualisation

3) What is the significance of Lord's Supper in Christianity? Answer in about five lines.

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21.4 CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ORDER

Social order of every religious group is organised based on certain principles. These principles provide the base of togetherness and commonness of ideas and coexistence. It would be interesting to see how the Christian social order is organised. From the teachings of Jesus it is possible to identify some of the basic principles of the Christian social order.

21.4.1 Universal Brotherhood

The fundamental principle of the ideal society according to Jesus is the idea of universal brotherhood. But just as the justification and motive for the ideal conduct stem from the desire to please and fulfil the will of God, the basis of universal brotherhood is also the love of God. The idea that the love of man flows from the love of God was made clear by Jesus when he was answering a question by a Jewish jurist. In replying to the question, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law"? Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind". This is the first and the greatest commandment.

And the second is like it. 'Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments' (Mathew 22 : 35-40). The term neighbour used in this context, as Jesus explained (Luke 10 : 28-37) transcends the traditional connotation of spatial proximity, but embraces the broader meaning of fellowmen/women irrespective of the spatial or social connections. The love of fellowmen is not ordinarily ingrained in social structures which always made a 'distinction between 'we' and 'they'. It is the love of God which makes the Christian ideal of loving one's fellowmen/women, attainable.

21.4.2 Egalitarian Outlook

A second important principle of the Christian social order is the egalitarian outlook. The Christian church brought together people from different races, cultures and classes and forged a new spirit of coherence, unity and equality among them. Paul, the most prominent among the organisers of the early church emphasised, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3 : 28). The early Christians who were liberated from the fetters of their former communities, addressed one another brothers and sisters, shared their provisions or contributed their income generously for common use and formed themselves into an egalitarian community.

The egalitarian ideal is further supported in the new kind of leadership and authority enjoined upon his followers by Jesus. Ordinarily, a leader tries to wield his power and authority to command compliance by persons whom he leads, and people seek the office of leadership for the privileges which accrue from it. But Jesus taught that all power and authority comes from God and the function of the leader is to serve the people under his charge.

21.4.3 Service of the Underprivileged

Yet another major principle of the ideal society according to Christ's teaching is the concern and commitment for the service of the underprivileged. During his lifetime as man, Jesus showed great compassion for people in distress. Exhorting his followers to do likewise, he pointed out that the heavenly king namely God, would apply reward those who took care of the poor, the strangers and the oppressed. Acts of kindness done to such people were equivalent to showing kindness to God Himself.

The ideal society in Christianity, which stands for universal fellowship, equality of members, a service oridented leadership and a speical solidarity with the disadvantaged sections, is ultimately based on the belief in and love of God. Such a society is termed the reign of God or the kingdom of heaven.

Activity 1

Based on your observation and experience of the Christian society write a note of about two pages on the 'Christian Social Order in our Society".
Exchange your note, if possible with your colearners at the Study Centre.

21.5 THE CHURCH AND THE WIDER WORLD

The church plays a key role in the Christian society. It determines largely the Christian world view. It is of great sociological significance to see how the church encounters itself with the wider society and the world. The church is the actualisation of the ideal society according to the teachings of Jesus. At the same time, it has to function within the wider society whose values and patterns of social relations are inconsistent with the Christian social order. Right from the beginning, the Christians were painfully aware of this contradiction and had to suffer on account of it. While

regarding the ideal Christian society as the heavenly kingdom, they referred to the existing social order as the worldly society or the 'world'.

The disjunction between the church and the 'world' (wider society) raises several questions; how does the church adapt itself to the 'world'? What impact has the church made upon the world? What impact the world has made upon the church? Indeed, these are the sociological issues of adaptation and assimilation.

21.5.1 Adaptation to the World

In its adaptation to the 'world', there is no question of the church's accepting the world totally in spirit and in fact, for that would amount to a negation of the

Jesus in the centre of the photo, with vignettes from his life and teachings depicted all around him.

Christian ideal. It was also not possible to reject the world totally as that would involve in a head-on collision with the powerful political and religious authorities leading to a bloddy revolution which is against the spirit of Christianity. The early church actually took course in between the two extremes. It rejected the world in spirit but accepted it in fact. In a sense this approach agreed with what Jesus did; he did not try to destroy the old order but attempted to transform it. It was, however, implied that the Christian way of life was superior to the wordly life and should there be serious conflict between God's commandments and the civil law, a Christian is obliged to obey God rather than man (Acts 5 : 29).

21.5.2 Civil Authority

In the compromise that was struck between the church and the 'world', it was recognized that the political powers and civil authorities were ordained of God and hence merited obedience (Romans 13:1), and the Christians carried out their civil obligations including the payment of taxes faithfully. Similarly, although everyone is considered equal in Jesus Christ, as a seeming accommodation to the prevailing patriarchal and feudal practices, the wife was enjoined to obey the husband and the slave to obey the master, although the persons in authority, were also required to treat their subordinates with love and consideration (Ephesians 5:2-25, 6:5-9).

With the spread and gaining influence of the church, Christian values and ideals began to percolate into the larger society. The humanitarian ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity which gained acceptance in the Western civilisation, owe their origin to the teachings of Jesus.

21.5.3 Society's Impact on Church

If the Church has influenced the wider society, sometimes the latter also has had its impact upon the former. This happened in Europe especially during the Middle Ages when the entire European society became Christian and the Church acquired considerable political and economic power. In that process the church became infected with wordly values.

21.5.4 Sects and Sub-divisions

The complex form in which the Christian church finds itself at present with its many subdivisions can be attributed to the rise of pressure groups when the parent bodies deviate too much from the biblical path. Such dissident pressure groups which are called sects are either (1) integrated into the parent body or (2) they secede or are expelled from the main church, when the dissident groups establish churches of their own.

i) The first type of phenomenon is represented by the monastic movements of the 4th, 5th and the 6th centuries, which were attempts on the part of some of the members to live in line with the teachings of Jesus when the parent bodies (the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches) were more inclined to the wordly life. The monastic movements were ultimately integrated into the parent bodies which underwent a renewal as a result.

ii) The second type of phenomenon can be illustrated with the 16th century Reformation movement in Europe, when several dissident groups left the Roman Catholic Church and underwent a renewal as a result of that challange. The Protestant churches recognize the authority of the Bible alone, whereas the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches also recognized their church traditions as authoritative, besides the Bible.

> **Box 2**
>
> Thus the compromise between the church and the 'world' also leads to the ever present processes of dissidence, renewal or secession. However, in all these changes the Bible serves as the steadying force. Besides lending stability to the churches, the Bible is also responsible for bringing about a basic unity in beliefs and values among the different churches. There are however, differences among the churches in the interpretation of the Bible. As a student of sociology, you should be interested to know the dynamics of group formation. This section must have given you some insights on the group formation in Christianity. You may also be interested to know the institutional network through which the Christian society operates. You may also be interested in the aspects of festivals and ritual of that society. To know, all these aspects you may like to see Unit 17 of ESO-02.

21.6 CHRISTIANITY, MODERN SOCIETY AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION

Christian movement delineated a condition for the selection of human beings and also for the creation of a soceity for peaceful survival of human being based on new values. Christianity has been one of the important factors of modernisation and economic development through the societal values it has legitimised. However, at every stage of the social evolution and modernisation as such, the Christian religious system and its values stood in complex relations of interdependence with other factors viz., economic and political institutions, the social institutions like family and kinship, the system of stratification etc.

i) Institutionalisation

In this context it is essential to have an idea on the forms of Christian institutionalisation. The *first* pattern of the institutionalisation assumed that the existence of the religious association of the Christian is essentially a separate entity without stablished relations to the rest of the society. The example can be that of the Pietistic sects.

The second type of institutionalisation is that of the Catholic Church. "This is interpreted in the sense of an established church, which is the state religion of a politically organised society". The church and the state are the distinct organisations. Hence the church achieved a transcendental orientation and became to be concerned eventually with its particular version of monasticism and to give the orders a kind of primacy, over the secular priesthood. This in a sense gave by default a special position to the secular political authority, since there was no papal monarchy to match the secular.

The third type of institutionalisation is that of the emergence of the Protstant sects. Here the break is fundamentally with the sacramental system, making the "true" Church invisible and salvation dependent, from the human side, on faith above... The shift to the Protestantism essentially meant the *abandonment of this tutelage with its special kind of religious paternalism*. The main branch of Protestantism, i.e. the Calvinists, laid great emphasis on the wordly activism for the creation of the kingdom of God on the earth.

The Protestant reform movement opened the door for modernisation and economic development through its general trend of social and cultural change. The Protestant followed science, trained in law. The reform movement of the Protestant became intimately related to the development of nationalism — vernacular translations of

the Bible multiplied and some protestant areas achieved distinction very rapidly in economic development — (Weber, W. 1972 : 246).

ii) Protestantism and Economic Development

Max Weber locates a casual link between the Protestant ethic and the development of capitalism in Europe. In his famous treatise on *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber points out that the Puritan sects of the Protestantism rationalised their religious beliefs and values towards "this wordly asceticism". This rationalisation was possible through the concept of calling — (task set by God) which was a product of Reformation movement. To Weber the major callings for the Protestants of Puritian sects are:

a) There exists an absolute transcendent God who created the world and rules it, but he is incomprehensible and inaccessible to the finite mind of man,

b) This all powerful and myusterious God had predestined each of us to salvation or damnation, so that we cannot by our works after a divine which was made before we were born,

c) God created the world for his own glory,

d) Whether he is saved or damned, a man is obliged to work for the glory of God and to create the kingdom of God on earth,

e) Earthly things, human nature, and flesh belong to the order of sin and death and salvation can come to man only through divine grace (Aron, 1967 : 221-222).

These callings helped the Calvinist Protestants to be self-disciplined, dedicated to work, honest and follow the path of "this wordly asceticism". For them work is worship and there is no space for idleness or laziness. This specific character of Calvinistic belief accounted for the relation between Calvinist doctrine and the spirit of capitalism which was characterised by a unique devotion to the earning of wealth through legitimate economic activity. This is rooted in a belief in the value of efficient performance in the chosen vocation as a duty and a virtue. The affinity between the two and the emergence of capitalist economic regime as defined by Weber existed only in the West. However, such an affinity is particular only to the Protestant ethics. It is not found in the Catholicism; not in any other religion like Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism, Judiaism and Buddhism of which Weber made a comparative analysis. For further detail you may see again Unit 15, Block 4 of ESO-03.

21.7 CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

In Unit 17 of ESO-02, we discussed in detail the Christian social organisation in India. You are advised to go throug that unit to know about the institutions like family, marriage and inheritance in the Christian society in India.

Christianity was introduced into India almost from its inception by Thomas, one of the Apostles of Christ. According to tradition Thomas landed on the coast of Kerala in 52 A.D. and set up seven churches in different areas. Then he travelled to Madras where he was martyred at *Mylapore* in 72 A.D. The descendants of the early Christians of Kerala were known as St. Thomas Christians. They are also called Syrian Christians, not because they came from Syria; but because they follow the Syrian liturgy as distinguished from the Latin liturgy, in their worship. The Syrian Christians formed part of the society in Kerala as a prosperous community and were ranked among the higher castes. They did not seem to have made much effort in spreading their faith in other parts of the country.

21.7.1   Advent of Europeans

The spread of Christianity in India came with the advent of the Europeans from the early 16th century. The Protuguese missionaries were followed by tne Dutch, the French and the British along with other European and American missionaries. The Indian Christians belong to different churches and denominations after the religious background of the missionaries who converted them. On the other hand, since the missionaries from different countries worked in different areas of India where their respective country had political influence, the Indian Christians of different religious denominations were also spread in different parts of the country.

Although the Britishers among the European nations wielded the greatest political influence in India, they were initially circumspect in permitting missionary activity. The missionaries, during their regime worked mainly in the tribal areas and among the former untouchables. The Portuguese missionaries had the biggest success in converting Indians to the Roman Catholic faith especially in the west and east coasts of South India, so much so, at present about two-thirds of the Christians in India are to be found in the southern states and that the Roman Catholics outnumber all the other denominations of Christians put together.

21.7.2   Christian Population

According to the 1981 Census the Christians in India numbered 16.77 million or 2.43 per cent of the total population. They are found in every state and almost in every district of the country, but most of them are concentrated in a few pockets or regions. Their major concentrations are found in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa and most of the states of the North Eastern Hill areas comprising Nagaland. Mizoram, Meghalaya and Manipur, Tripura etc.

21.7.3   Denominations and Sects

The multiplicity of divisions in the world body of Christians is also reflected among Christians in Inida. Most of the Protestant denominations are divided into two main churches termed the Church of North India and Church of South India. Other Indian Christians include the Roman Catholics, the Anglicans and Syrian Christians who have maintained separate identities. The Roman Catholics who comprise the largest group are further divided into those who follow the Latin rite and those who adhere to the Syrian rite.

These different churches have their pockets of concentration in different areas which are often mutually exclusive, reflecting the history and circumstances of their conversion.

21.7.4   Missionaries and Welfare Activities

Consistent with the social philosophy of their religion, the Christians in India are well represented in the social welfare activities in the country with particular concern for the service of the underprivileged. Their work in the fields of health and education is well recognized. The fact that Kerala is the most literate state having the best health-care delivery system in the country is no less due to the pioneering efforts of the Christian churches than to the impetus given by the enlightened rulers of the region.

> **Activity 2**
>
> Write a note of about one page on social activities of the Missionaries based on your observations and experience. Exchange your note with other students of the Study Centre, if possible.

As a student of sociology you would be interested to know how Christianity has been influenced by the plurality of India civilisation and culture. In unit 17 of ESO-02 you should be able to get some glimpses of these aspects.

Check Your Progress 3

i)   Mention the three fundamental principles of ideal society as propagated by Christianity.

    a) ....

    b) ....

    c) ....

ii) Describe the consequences of the adaptation of the Church to the World in five lines.

    ....

    ....

    ....

    ....

iii) Indicate major denominations of Christianity in India.

    a) ....

    b) ....

    c) ....

    d) ....

21.8   LET US SUM UP

This unit began with a discussion on the life and message of Jesus Christ. Christianity is the religion founded by Jesus Christ who is believed to be the son of God but became man, suffered, died and rose alive, in order to atone for the sin of mankind. The divinely inspired teachings or the Word of God as acceped by Christians, are contained in the Bible, the holy book of the Christians.

We explained in this unit the teachings of Christianity. The life and teachings of Jesus are central to Christianity. Jesus taught and lived a way of life which was contrary to the common practice. The ethical conduct and social life that he preached and practised was founded on the love of God and the love of fellowmen flowing from it. After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, a remarkable transformation took place among his disciples, which is attributed to the descent upon them of the Holy Spirit. Ever since, the Holy Spirit is believed to provide spiritual strength and inspiration to Christians who live according to the teachings of Jesus. The religious services of the Christians are mainly aimed at worshipping God, the Father through Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christian social order and the role of Church in the Christian society are also discussed in this unit. The community of Christians, the church, is modelled after the teachings of Jesus. However, the fact that the church has to adapt itself to the larger world with its contradictory norms of behaviour, poses peculiar problems to the Christians.

Lastly we discussed some aspects of Christianity in India. Christianity was introduced into India at its inception in the first century A.D., and a Christian community

flourished in Kerala. But its spread in different parts of the country took place with the advent of the European missionaries from 16th century onwards. Although the Christians in India form only 2.4 per cent of the population according to the 1991 census, they are found concentrated in a few regions of India in considerable proportions. They have made a mark in the country in social service activities.

21.9 KEY WORDS

Apostles	:	Jesus Christ's twelve original disciples and Paul.
Baptism	:	A ritual by which a person is admitted to the Christian community.
Gospels	:	The first four New Testament books telling of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
Holy Spirit	:	The active presence of God in human life constituting the third person of the Trinity.
Incarnation	:	The union of divinity with humanity in Jesus Christ.
Liturgy	:	Body of rites prescribed for public worship.
Prophet	:	One who utters divinely inspired revelations.
Resurrection	:	The rising of Jesus Christ from the dead.
Trinity	:	The unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as three persons in one God, according to Christian dogma.

21.10 FURTHER READINGS

Clemen, C. 1988. *Religions of the World,* Reprient (English Translation) Manas Publications: Delhi.

Barton, A.G. 1990. *The Religion of the World*, Olympia Publications: New Delhi.

Macquarrice, J. 1966. *Principles of Christian Theology*, S.C.M. Press: London.

21.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i) The unfoldment of the scheme of salvation which is the integral part of the Christian religion, stretches over both the Old and the New Testaments. The Old Testament contains promises, descriptions and prophecies about the coming Saviour, which were fulfilled in Jesus whose life and teachings are dealty with in the New Testament. In this sense the New Testament bears witness to the Old Testament. Jesus was a Jew and his teachings which are found in the New Testament, often refer to the teachings in the Old Testament.

ii) As mentioned in the Bible, man has body and soul. The body perishes with death but the soil survives eternally. Salvation means the survival of the soul in heaven after death. According to Christianity, human beings live only once on the earth and there is no re-birth.

Check Your Progress 2

i) c.

ii) c.

iii) The breaking of bread of 'Lord's Supper' has special significance in Christian Worship. The replication of the 'Lord's Supper' at the Worship service is believed to realise once again his presence (called the living presence) and intimate Union with Christ. This part of the Worship service is known as Communion.

Check Your Progress 3

i) a) Universal brotherhood,

b) Egalitarian outlook,

c) Service of the underprivileged.

ii) In the Christian belief there is neither the total adaptation to the world nor total reflection. There is a balanced approach. The early church reflected the world in spirit but accepted it in fact.

iii) a) Roman Catholic

b) Eastern Orthodox Churches

c) Syrian Chirstians

UNIT 22 ISLAM

Structure

22.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to

- explain the pre-Islamic conditions prevaling in Arabia and the advent of Islam

- discuss the meaning of Islam and its sources and tenets

- describe major schools of Islamic thought and sects

- explain the social organisation

- describe the Islamic society in India.

22.1 INTRODUCTION

In the plurality of Indian culture and civilisation Islam palyed a crucial role. The life style of the Islamic society is shaped by the tenets of Islam. As a student of sociology you should be interested to know the belief of that society. You would also be interested to know the movements and the conditions leading to the emergence of various sects in that society. We should also know the organisational arrangements of that society through which the belief system operates in daily life. Towards this effort in this unit, we shall discuss the tenets of Islam, the movements schools of thought and sects in the Islamic society in a socio-historical perspectives. We shall also touch upon the social organisations of that society briefly (for details see the course ESO-02, Unit 16 on, Muslim Social Organisation provided above Islam). We shall begin our analysis with an introductory note on the pre-Islamic conditions prevailing in Arab society to know the historical context of emergence of Islam. We shall also describe the meaning of Islam, its sources and tenets. Apart from this, we shall highlight the major schools in Islamic thought and its various sects. Various

social institutions like marriage, divorce, institution governing inheritance in communities following Islam will also be discussed in this unit. An attempt will be made in this unit to analyse the influence of Islamic teachings on social structure. Lastly, we will describe briefly the Islamic society in India.

22.2 THE ADVENT OF ISLAM

Before the advent of Islam, the Arab Society was confronted with many social problems. It was a tribal society. It was centred around a tribe or a kindred. It was a patriarchal society in which all rights were available to the male members and female members were not entitled to any right and were treated like a commodity. They were exchanged and even offered to the guest for sexual pleasure. Over all, the Arab society was confronted with many such evils and the society reached to the point of degenration. Social reformers and people of wisdom started thinking of bringing reform in the Arabian society. Prophet Mohammad was also perturbed by the decadence in the religious life of the Arabs. He sought an opportunity of chastening their morals by placing before them new values of life. He tried to bind people on the bases of faith rather than on the old bond of blood. This new community was the community of Islam which was based on the brotherhood. The word Islam literally means "Absolute submission to God's will", but this does not imply any idea of fatalism. In its ethical sense, it signifies striving after the ideal of righouteousness. The world Islam is also derived from a root word which means "peace". Thus, the true Muslim submits to God's will and obeys His Commandments, and lives at peace with his fellow men.

22.3 TENETS OF ISLAM

Islam does not profess to be a new religion formulated by the Prophet Mohammad but is the continuation of all former religious principles decreed by God throug His revelations to all prophets including Moses and Jesus. Islam demands faith in:

- God
- The Angels of God
- The Book of God
- The Apostles of God.
- The Day of Judgement or Resurrection

22.3.1 Islamic Concept of God

Every Muslim believes in God's oneness, that He is one and has no partner, that He is omnipotent, all-owerful, eternal and is every-qualified with the attributes of supreme greatness. All are humble unto Him. All should seek exaltation through Him and humility unto Him, for they all are mere subordinate creatures seeking His favour and most favoured by Him are the pious ones who obey His commandments.

22.3.2 The Angles of God

God has created the Angles. All Muslims must have faith in their existence but they are not to be worshipped. They are created and are free from carnal desires.

22.3.3 The Book of God

It is the belief of Muslims that God has sent Books in different ages in which God revealed. Muslims believe in *Holy Quran* which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

22.3.4   The Messengers of God

As Muslims believe in the Books revealed by God, they also believe in the messengers sent by God in different ages to reclaim mankind from infidelity, idolatry and superstition. The Holy Quran makes no distinction between the Prophets sent by God but according to them Prophet Muhammad is the last Prophet of God.

22.3.5   The Day of Judgement or Resurrection

The Muslimes also have belief in the Day of Judgement. The dead shall rise from their graves, and every individual shall give an account of his or her own actions. Muslims also have belief in Heaven and Hell.

22.3.6   The Duty of a Muslim

Apart from these beliefs, a Muslim should do the following duties.

i)   Recital of the creed

ii) Prayer to God five times a day — at dawn, midday, mid-afternoon, directly after sunset, and an hour-and-a-half later. A special midday congregational prayer with semon is binding on Fridays.

iii) Paying the *Zakat* or legal alms which is a form of charitable tax.

iv) Fasting during the month of "Ramzan", the ninth month of the Muslim calendar.

v)   *Haj* i.e. Pilgrimage to the 'Holy Kaba' in Mecca once in a life time by those who can afford it.

Through these practices of devotion, a Muslim becomes the master over his passions and desires and attains, through worship and observance of Islamic rules, the apex of dignity, human conduct and elevation of mind.

Mohammedan mother teaching a child to read the Holy Quran, the main scripture of Islam.

Thus according to Islam, a Muslim must have faith in the above mentioned beliefs and must practise the above mentioned practices in order to surrender before the "Will" of God and hence attain a place in the Heaven after his death.

Activity 1

Prepare a two hundred word note on the duty of a Muslim performed by your Muslim friends/colleagues/persons known to you. Exchange your note with other students in the Study Centre, if possible.

22.4 MAJOR SCHOOLS OF THOUGHTS, MOVEMENTS AND SECTS

No religious beliefs and practices operate in isolation. It has to encounter the world around. In this process it influences others and also get influenced. Let us know how Islam encountered the world. Even though the Quran being a guiding principle for the Muslims to carry out their life according to its teachings but as it migrated to other parts of the world its institutions were affected by conditions in different regions during the centuries of their existence. There is a *principle of movement in Islam*, and Muslim institutions and the Muslim way of life have changed in terms of space and time. Let us try to understand the nature and scope of this principle of movement in Islam.

In the absence of a clear and categorical answer from the Holy Book (Quran), the absolute word of God, the prophets' decisions — His percepts, His acts and practices' negative as well as positive — were regarded as decisive. An inherent conservatism canonised the *Sunna* — Custom, usage of the ancients; any stepping aside from it was a *'biddat'* innovation and had to win its way by its merits, in the teeth of strong prejudice. Islam did exchange this practice and replaced it by the traditions of Prophet Muhammand. After the death of Prophet Muhammad, *four* schools came into being to interpret and provide guidance in dispensing justice. As a matter of fact the use of judicial opinion was seriously questioned and its scope precisely defined in the ninth century A.D. Under the *Abbasids* the sources of Muslims law were discussed, and the four schools founded in this period defined the scope of legal friction and equity in the development of Muslim law. These four schools are discussed below briefly.

22.4.1 Major Schools in Islamic Thoughts and Movements

i) **Abu Hanifa (AD 699-766)**

He founded a School of Islamic jurisprudence and opined that when *Quran* and *Sunna* are silent about a problem, this school emphasized the role of *'Qiyas'*, reasoning by analogy, to guide the people to carry out the activities.

ii) **Malik Ibn Anas (AD 713-95)**

Another School of Islamic law was founded by Malik Ibn Anas. According to this school *Quran, Suna* and *Ujma* (all religious scriptures) should become the basis of the interpretation of new situation.

iii) **Ash-Shafi (AD 767-820)**

This School was founded with the intention that the traditions of Prophet Mohammad should become the main source of the interpretation instead of individual opinion, *istihasam*, as well as *istislah*. He fell back on the principle of agreement, *ijma*.

UNIT 22 ISLAM

Structure

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Thus according to Islam, a Muslim must have faith in the above mentioned beliefs and must practise the above mentioned practices in order to surrender before the "Will" of God and hence attain a place in the Heaven after his death.

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22.4 MAJOR SCHOOLS OF THOUGHTS, MOVEMENTS AND SECTS

No religious beliefs and practices operate in isolation. It has to encounter the world around. In this process it influences others and also get influenced. Let us know how Islam encountered the world. Even though the Quran being a guiding principle for the Muslims to carry out their life according to its teachings but as it migrated to other parts of the world its institutions were affected by conditions in different regions during the centuries of their existence. There is a *principle of movement in Islam,* and Muslim institutions and the Muslim way of life have changed in terms of space and time. Let us try to understand the nature and scope of this principle of movement in Islam.

In the absence of a clear and categorical answer from the Holy Book (Quran), the absolute word of God, the prophets' decisions — His percepts, His acts and practices' negative as well as positive — were regarded as decisive. An inherent conservatism canonised the *Sunna* — Custom, usage of the ancients; any stepping aside from it was a *'biddat'* innovation and had to win its way by its merits, in the teeth of strong prejudice. Islam did exchange this practice and replaced it by the traditions of Prophet Muhammand. After the death of Prophet Muhammad, *four* schools came into being to interpret and provide guidance in dispensing justice. As a matter of fact the use of judicial opinion was seriously questioned and its scope precisely defined in the ninth century A.D. Under the *Abbasids* the sources of Muslims law were discussed, and the four schools founded in this period defined the scope of legal friction and equity in the development of Muslim law. These four schools are discussed below briefly.

22.4.1 Major Schools in Islamic Thoughts and Movements

i) Abu Hanifa (AD 699-766)

He founded a School of Islamic jurisprudence and opined that when *Quran* and *Sunna* are silent about a problem, this school emphasized the role of *'Qiyas',* reasoning by analogy, to guide the people to carry out the activities.

ii) Malik Ibn Anas (AD 713-95)

Another School of Islamic law was founded by Malik Ibn Anas. According to this school *Quran, Suna* and *Ujma* (all religious scriptures) should become the basis of the interpretation of new situation.

iii) Ash-Shafi (AD 767-820)

This School was founded with the intention that the traditions of Prophet Mohammad should become the main source of the interpretation instead of individual opinion, *istihasam,* as well as *istislah.* He fell back on the principle of agreement, *ijma.*

iv) Ahmad Ibn Hambal (AD 780-855)

This School minimised the role of *ijma* and *Qiyas* in the interpretation of law and stressed the Quran, and Sunna as the primary roots of Islamic law.

v) Ibn-i-Taimiyya (13 Century)

After these schools, certain movements were started to interpret and provide solution to the problem arising out of changing situations to the Muslims. Ib-i-Taimiyya in the 13th Century provided the basis of the reorientation of Islamic belief and practices according to Quranic injunctions and the traditions of the Prophet.

22.4.2 Sects in Islamic Society

Followers of Islam are divided into various sub-divisions in terms of sects. Broadly speaking the Muslim world is divided into two fairly defined sections of Islam, namely, *Sunni* and *Shiah*, the first being by far the larger and more influential.

1) The Sunni

The Sunnis are the ardent followers of the faith in the *Sunna* or Traditions. But they differ from the Shias in points other than belief in tradition. They made the position of the *Khalifa* a matter for selection or choice by the selected people of the community. They assert that Muhammad never intended that a *Khalifa* should succeed him in any other way.

ii) The Shiah

This is another sect of Muslims who only differ from the *Sunnis* in terms of hereditary right of the descendents of Muhammad to be the only legitimate *Khalifa*. They say that the three *Khalifas* — Abu Bakr, Omar and Osman were imposters and usurpers, and only Ali and his heir should have followed the Prophet as leaders or Imam of the faithful. They emphasise the right of Ali from the fact of his nearness of relationship, he being not only the Prophet's *cousin*, but the husband of Fatima, the only surviving daughter of Prophet Muhammad.

A mosque (L) and the Holy Kaaba (R)

Check Your Progress 1

i) Describe the meaning of Islam in five lines.

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ii) Mention duties expected of a Muslim.

a) ....

b) ....

c) ....

d) ....

e) ....

iii) Indicate the major sects of Islam and points of difference among them in five lines.

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22.5 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AS VIEWED BY ISLAM

The belief system of the religious organisations are operated through certain social institutions. As a student of sociology, you should be interested to know the very nature of these institutions. There are three main *bases* of the Muslim social institutions:

- Family
- Marriage, divorce
- Institutions governing inheritance

In Unit 16 of ESO-02 we discussed the institutions of family, marriage and the laws of inheritance among the Muslims in India. In this section we shall try to present a broad view of these institutions within the Islamic religious and social order.

22.5.1 Family

Family has existed in all societies though it takes different forms in different cultures. The institution of family in Islam should be studied in the light of Islamic way of life and Islamic culture. Islam has given full importance to family and laid down certain rules and regulations to maintain its shape and to stop it from disintegration. About one third of the Quran and many traditions of the Prophet are related to the family and to process how a family can work properly and smoothly and how every member of the family can have equal rights.

In Islam the family is an extended family — taking within it members from three or four generations. Its structure has generally three folds. The first and most close consists of the husband, the wife, their children, their parents who live with them and their *servants*. The second group of the family consists of a number of close relatives with whom marriage is prohibited. It is not necessary for them to live together. They have claims upon each other. This relationship emerges from blood relations, relations by marriage and foster nursing. Relations based on blood include the following categories:

- Father, mother, grand-father, grand-mother and other direct ascendants.

- Direct descendants that is, sons, daughters, grand-sons, grand-daughters etc.,

- Relations of the second degree (such as brothers, sisters and their descendants),

- Father's or mother's sister (not their daughter or other descendants),

The relations based on relations by marriage include:

- Mother-in-law, father-in-law, grand-mother-in-law, grand-father-in-law,

- Wife's daughter, husbands' sons or their grand or great grand daughters or sons respectively,

- Son's wife, son's son's wife, daughter's husband, step mother, step father.

It is significant to mention there that a number of religions decrees asked people to consider their slaves and servants as part of the family and should be give them proper treatment.

The family, with all its contributory and co-existing factors, forms the nucleus of the total Islamic order. Those relations which are not included in these three folds forms the outer layer of the family. As they are included in the second or third lines of the inheritors, they too have their rights and obligations.

a) Objectives and Functions of Family

The main objective of family is the preservation of human society and civilisation. The whole socio-cultural structure is based on it. It is just like a mechanism which is self-sustaining in order to ensure social, ideological and cultural stability over entire society. The main functions and objectives of the family as described in *Quran* and *Shariah* are as follows:

i) Preservation and Continuation of Human Race

The mechanism of preservation and reproduction is based on the survival of human race and culture, and continuity in the functioning. For this purpose nature has provided differences, both psychological and physiological, between the sexes. Both the sexes are complimentary to each other. This process of procreation and all the facts effecting it, can only function when the whole process will have stable structure. Men, women and child, they all have a definite role to play while living in a society. They all need a stable and lasting institution so that they can perform their roles well. The family is considered as the main institution which can take care of the whole process. The Quran says:

> "O Mankind, be conscious of your duty to your Lord, who created you from a single soul, created of life nature, his mate, and from the two created and spread many men and women" (Holy Quran Ayat. - 4:1).

> "Your Women are a tillage for you; so come in to your tillage as you wish and take care of what is for you, and be conscious of your duty to God and know that you shall meet him" (Holy Quran Ayat - 2: 223).

Here "take care of what is for you" means the children expected from this relationship, their education, upbringing, moral training and socialisation.

ii) Protection of Morals

Islam forbids non-marital sex in all its forms. But marriage is a substitute which enables men and women to fulfil their urge which is quite natural and procreative.

iii) Psycho-Emotional Stability—Love and Kindness

To maintain psychological, emotional and spiritual fellowship is the another important objective of family. The relationship between husband and wife is spiritual and not of selfishness. This function of marriage and family is emphasised in the Quran in a number of ways. At one place, the relationship of husband and wife is described as that of body and garment. "They are like garment to you and you are (like) a garment to them" (Holy Quran-Ibid-2-187).

This expresses and emphasises their closeness and oneness much more grand than legal equality. As cloth protects the body in the same way husband protects the wife and they become guardians to each other.

iv) Socialisation and Value Orientation

Family is supposed to be the basic organ of socialisation. And this is referred by prophet at various places in *Hadith* when he has said that "of all that a father can give to his children, the best is their good education and training".

Although to take care of one's children, and younger brother and sister is the primary responsibility but the family covers a number of relatives far or near. Quran and *Shariah* has emphasised at several places at the care of parents and of the relatives who are poor and weak.

v) Social and Economic Security

Social and economic rights of the family members are saved by the institution of family, which is an important part of the Islamic system. The Prophet has said:

"When God endows you with prosperity, spend first on yourself and your family".

The husband is legally directed to look after his family even if the wife holds the property. Blood relatives should be helped and it is emphasised at a number of places. Any social contribution and *Zakat*, poor relatives have first claim over it.

22.5.2 Marriage and Divorce

For the preservation of family and to make this institution function smoothly, marriage is enjoined and encouraged vigorously. The Prophet emphasised the necessity of marriage saying "To live in marriage is to observe my way. He who turns away from this way is not of me".

The Islamic view of marriage is that it is a means of reproduction and not the means of satisfying sexual desire. This is made clear by a very short saying of Prophet:

"Marry and generate"

The Arabic word for marriage is *"nikah"* which means uniting. Except for some special reason, every Muslim is supposed to marry.

> **Box 2**
>
> Quran declares marriage as a contract, a contract between husband and wife. The marriage contract is entered into by the agreement from both the parties, that is the parties of husband and wife. This agreement is made in the presence of some witnesses, and this is only essential while making a marriage contract. At the time of marriage, a particular amount is settled for the woman which is called *mehr*, but the marriage is also valid even if the *mehr* is not settled or the amount of the money to be given is not fixed.

a) Prohibited Marital Ties

The Quran makes certain marriage relationship unlawful:

"Forbidden unto you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your father's sister, and your mother's sister and your brothers' daughters and your sisters' daughters, and your foster mother, and your foster sister and your mother-in-law and your step daughters. And that (it is forbidden into you) that you should not marry two sisters at a time.

A woman should not marry a man who is already married to her paternal aunt.

b) Types of Marriage

i) Polygamy

Before Mohammad, the number of wives depended upon the will of Arabian people and their social and economic conditions. They were free to marry at any time and this marriage was supposed to be valid. The new rules which came into practice, in the time of Prophet was the check on the number of wives. Quran restricted this number to four but side by side Quran makes it necessary to treat all the four equally.

ii) Banning of Polyandry
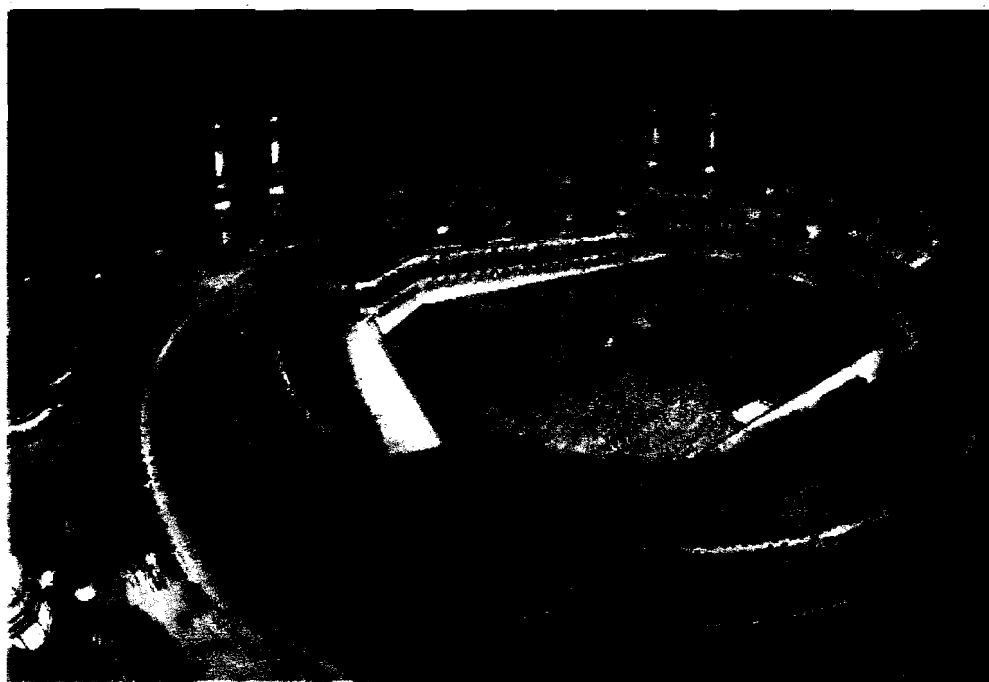
Kaaba, the famous pilgrimmage centre of the Muslims.

As a rule, Islam does not allow woman, in any case, to marry more than one husband at a time.

iii) Muta marriage

From pre-Islamic times, there exists another type of marriage called *Muta* marriage. The object of this marriage was to provide a man with a wife when he is away from home for any reason. The distinguishing character of this type of marriage is that this contract is purely personal and it is made without any consultation with the relatives of the woman. The children of such marriages are legitimate and they have equal share in the property of the father, but unlike the ordinary wife, the wife in such marriage has no legal right of maintenance over the husband. She does not even inherit the property of her husband, nor her husband has any share in her property.

In Iran and other Shiate countries, this is a very common practice to take a woman for a fixed period. This time varies from a day to a year or several years. However, all the sects of Muslims agree that this type of marriage is unlawful and illegal except *Akbarishiahs*.

c) Divorce

In Islam, marriage is just a civil contract. The Prophet framed the laws of marriage and divorce in such a way that it ensures the permanence of marriages without affecting the freedom of the individual. The total body of Islamic law is governed by the principle of flexibility that is why under certain circumstances it allows more than one wife, and favours the dissolution of marriage. Sometimes in married life such situations do arise when it becomes very difficult for both husband and wife to live together. In such situations either the dissatisfied husband or dissatisfied wife was compelled to exercise this right of divorce. But this step is taken as the last resort when all the attempts at reconciliation fail. The Prophet has condemned divorce in most serious terms by pronouncement that:

"Of all the things permissible the most displeasing to Allah is divorce".

Even when divorce becomes necessary, the parties are enjoined to honour each others rights. They should separate from each other to kindness and the man in no case allowed to take back any of the gifts or property he has given to the wife.

i) Husband's Right of Pronouncement of Divorce

Although Quran permits husband to pronounce divorce yet a lot of limitations are put upon the exercise of this right. Certain conditions were imposed by the Prophet upon exercising the right of divorce which on one hand put a check on the use of one sided and unwise power, and on the other hand it provided enough time for the husband and wife for an agreement if they so desire. The types of divorce which are recognised by the Islamic law, the one which has got the approval of the Holy Prophet is the *Ahsan* type of Talaq. This form of divorce, involves the following conditions each of which provides a way for reconciliation or prevent from permanent break up.

● The husband, in the first place, must pronounce only *one repudiation*, the object of this limitation being, that he may subsequently, *when better* sense prevails, revoke the repudiation.

● The repudiation must be pronounced when the wife is in a state of purity, and there is no bar to sexual intercourse, it being declared unlawful to pronounce repudiation when the wife is in menses.

- The husband must abstain from *connubial* intercourse with his wife after pronouncing repudiation for the period of three months.

The purpose of this tradition is to avoid hasty decision on the part of the husband. The time period which is provided to the husband through disinclination arising from the wife's impurity, and by fixing a long period of abstinence, is enough to reconsider his decision of divorce. In the meantime he can repent and can take back his wife before the expiry of the term fixed. But if the time period fixed passes and reconciliation is not made, the wife becomes unlawful to him.

ii) Wife's Right of Divorce

Like every other institution women are given an equally balanced position regarding divorce. The wife can ask her husband to give her a divorce but she has to return back *mehr* (the dowry). The technical term for the wife's right to divorce is called *Khula*. The wife can take a divorce under these conditions.

- The wife can take divorce if her husband is missing for seven years and cannot be located.

- If the wife fails to return the *mehr* which is necessary in Khula, there is yet another way by which a wife can get separation from her husband and that is *Mubarat*. In this type no compensation is necessary and complete separation can be sought just by mutual consent of the husband and wife.

- If husband ill-treats his wife, and is abusive and brutal she should complain against her husband and she can have the formal separation by the decree of court.

If the judge finds her complaints true, he asks the husband to repudiate her. In case husband refuses to do so the judge himself will pronounce a repudiation and it will operate as valid, and the husband will be liable to pay whole of the deferred dowry. This process is known as *Tafriq* or legal reparation in the Mohammadan law, and it is based on the words of Muhammad:

"If a Woman be prejudiced by a marriage, let it be broken off"

A divorce may be granted by the court for:

- Habitual ill-treatment of the wife,

- Non-fulfillment of the terms of marriage contract,

- Insanity,

- Incurable impotency,

- Any other similar causes which in the opinion of the court justify a divorce.

22.5.3 Institutions Governing Inheritance

Inheritance exists in every society in one form or the other where institution of private property is recognised as the basis of social and economic system. Inheritance is the process in which the property of the dead person is given in the possession of the living person. Islam introduces many reforms in the laws of inheritance. Islam defined and determined in clear terms the share of each inheritor. A check was imposed on the right of the property owner. He cannot dispose off his property according to his will. The social and economic rights of women were safeguarded by allotting a definite share in the property. She becomes the co-sharer with males. In this way the dignity of women is restored. The general principle of inheritance is first laid down in the following words:

For man has a share of the what parents and the near relatives leave, and for women a share of what the parents and near relatives leave, whether it be little or much: (Holy Quran-Ayat 4, 7).

If a person dies leaving behind a son and a daughter, the property of the deceased will be divided into three parts, out of which two parts will be given to the son and one to the daughter.

i) Shares and Quranic Heirs

There is a very exhaustive description of laws relating to inheritance in Quran. The first group of heirs of those relatives who are very close to the deceased and a specific share is allotted to them by the Quran. The Quranic heirs

- Heirs by affinity,
- Husband,
- Wife,
- Blood relatives,
- True grand father,
- Sons' daughter,
- Full sister,
- Consanguine sister,
- Uterine brother,
- Uterine sister,
- Share for Blood relations.
- Share by affinity: The husband's share is one half of the property of the deceased wife. In case of children it is one fourth.
- The wife is not entitled to one fourth, if the husband dies childless, otherwise it is one eighth.

Father's share is one sixth when the deceased leaves a son or a son's son, but when the deceased is not survived by a son or grandson, his father will, in addition to this share also get a share being a *Asaba*.

Check Your Progress 2

i) How has the relationship between husband and wife been described by the Holy Quran?

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ii) Mention the nature of Muslim marriage in four lines.

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iii) Describe shares by affinity in about three lines.

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22.6   ISLAM AND INDIAN MUSLIMS

India is a plural society. There has been the coexistence of various religious groups for centuries. In the process of this co-existence the Islamic society has been significantly influenced by the indigenous norms, values, customs and traditions.

Normally, Islamic society is divided into sects i.e. *Sunnis* and *Shias* as they hold divergent views of and interpretation over Islamic texts and traditions. In India, a vast majority of them are *sunnis*. But Indian Muslims are divided into various groups which reflect the influence of Hindu beliefs and practices specially those related to caste system.

22.6.1   Elements of Castes

Indian Muslims, although divided on the caste lines, yet, these divisions cannot be said to have the characteristics of a caste in the true sense of the term. These divisions are based on the basis of the occupations followed by each group. Different groups are identified on the basis of the occupations followed by them and the group does not specify the occupation as in the case of the caste system. Apart from this characteristic, other characteristics of the caste are not visible among the Muslims such as endogamy, hierarchy, untouchability, purity and pollution. There is however, a section of Sociologists in India who say that the Muslim society is divided on the caste line such as: Syed, Sheikh, Mughal and Pathan. They are also of the view that the elements of caste are apparently visible in the Muslim society. Though, there is no caste system among the Muslims, there are caste-like traits apparent in their social groupings.

22.6.2   Asharaf and Arzal

Some sociologists are of the opinion that there is no caste system among the Muslims but they are divided into two categories: *Ashraf* (honourable) and *Arzal* (unclean). Ashrafs are those who claim to be descendants of early Muslim immigrants and historically were near to the seat of power. *Arzal* means new converts and common people.

In spite of difficulties in applying the caste model on Indian Muslims, it cannot be denied that Indian Muslims have developed a sort of caste-like divisions among them owing to the impact of Hindu social organisation.

Check Your Progress 3

i)   Describe the elements of caste as found among Muslims in India. Use four lines for your answer.

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22.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, an attempt has been made to explain the basic principle of Islam. First of all, the pre Islamic conditions of the Arab society have been described. You must have got an idea, through this unit, about the sources and tenets of Islam. Like other world religions, there are certain sects and schools of thought in Islam also. This unit has thrown light on them. After the advent of Islam, the social institutions were reorganised around the principle of *Shariat*. This has also been covered by this unit. In the last section of this unit we discussed the Islamic society in India, briefly.

22.8 KEY WORDS

Sunna	: Customs, Usages.
Biddat	: Innovation. It sometimes it may mean deviation also.
Quias	: Reasoning by analogy to guide the people to carry out the activities.
Akbarishiahs	: A practice observed by Shia Muslims, particularly so in Persia, to keep a woman as a wife for a fixed period.
Asaraf	: Honourable
Arzal	: Unclean

22.9 FURTHER READINGS

Ameer, A. 1978. *The Spirit of Islam*, Idarah-1 Adabiyar: Delhi.

Kader, A.A. 1989. *The Conception of God in Islam*, The Islamic Centre: Washington.

Takle, J. 1988. *The Faith of Islam*, Deep & Deep: New Delhi.

22.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i) Prophet Muhammad propagated a faith in Arab known as Islam. The literal meaning of Islam is 'Absolute submission to God's Will'. It is derived from a root which means 'peace'. As a religion, it is a continuation of former religious principles decreed by God through his revelations to all prophets including Moses and Jesus.

ii) a) Recital of Creed,

b) Prayer to God five times a day,

c) Paying the *Zakat*,

d) Fasting during the month of *Ramzan*,

e) Haj i.e. Pilgrimage to the Holy Kaba

iii) Broadly speaking, Muslim world is divided into two major sects: *Sunni* and *Shia*. The *sunnis* are the ardent followers of *sunna* or traditions. The major difference

between these two sects is on questions of succession and *khalif*. The *Sunnis* believe that Muhammad never intended that a *khalifa* should succeed him and have equal faith in Abu Bakr, Omar, Osman and Ali as Khalifa, whereas, *Shias* believe that only Ali is legitimate successor and khalifa.

Check Your Progress 2

i) Quran declares marriage as a contract between husband and wife —the contracting parties. The contract is made in the presence of witnesses. At the time of marriage, a particular amount is settled for the woman which is called the *mehr*.

ii) The Islamic view of marriage or *Nikah* is that it is a means of reproduction and not the means of sexual satisfaction. The meaning of *Nikah* is uniting together. Every Muslim is supposed to enter this *sacred* contract.

iii) In the shares of affinity, the husband's share is one half of the property of the deceased wife but if she has children, it is one-fourth.

Check Your Progress 3

i) There are certain elements of caste among the Indian Muslims. The position of Saiyad, Sheikh and Pathan is determined on the basis of birth. There is a feeling of hierarchy among the superior Muslims (Asharaf) and Muslims considered to be low (Arzal), though Islam believes in the equality of its followers.

UNIT 23 SIKHISM

Structure

23.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with Sikhism, its religious belief system and development and functioning as a religious society in India. After reading this unit you should be able to

- explain the socio-cultural background of the emergence of Sikhism

- describe the model of Sikh society as shown by Guru Nanak

- discuss the development of Sikhism over a period of time

- explain the pattern of worship and ritual life among the Sikhs

- analyse the broad features of the religious reform movements as emerged in Sikhism.

23.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 19 of ESO-02 we discussed various aspects of the social organisation of the Sikh society in India. You may like to see that unit before you start reading this unit on Sikhism. As a student of sociology, you would be interested to know the socio-cultural background on which Sikhism emerged in India, its development and functioning. You also would be interested to know the reform movements as emerged in Sikhism. All these aspects are discussed in this unit keeping in view the plurality of Indian culture. This unit has been written from the socio-historical perspective.

It beings with a brief discussion on the socio-cultural background from which Sikhism emerged in India. In the initial section (Section 23.2) we also discuss the philosophical foundation of Sikhism as depicted in the life and message of Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak established a model of the Sikh society. We discuss that model in section 23.3. Sikhism has undergone various stages of development. We discuss these developments in the context of the arrival of the Gurus in Sikhism. Sikh society follows a distinct pattern of worship. They follow distinct rituals and baptism.

We discuss these aspects in section 23.4. Lastly we discuss Sikh code of conduct and movements of religious reforms in Sikhism. Here we discuss only the Nirankari, Namdhari and the Akali movements briefly as examples for your understanding.

23.2 THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF SIKHISM

In this section we shall deal with the social background of the development of Sikhism and the belief system around which Sikhism revolves.

23.2.1 Socio-cultural Context

Sikhism was born at a time when there was a growing conflict amongst the two dominating religious traditions of Hinduism and Islam of India. Guru Nanak the founder of the Sikh faith is generally depicted as a reconciler of the two conflicting traditions. This is how the Guru is still fondly remembered in Punjab:

"Nanak Shah Fakir, Hindu Ka guru, Musalman Ka Pir".
(Baba Nanak, the great man of God
The *guru* of the Hindus and the *pir* of the Musalmans).

While early chronicles of the Sikhs have generally described this faith as the off-shoot of the Bhakti movement, some modern Western scholars tend to describe this as a part of the Indian Sant tradition. Without denying that Guru Nanak and the movement that he started was greatly influenced by the Bhakti movement in which he was born, a careful study of the Sikh religion and philosophy shows that it had distinct features of its own. That is why it developed into a full-fledged religious movement soon after its birth. This is the reason why in this block, a separate unit has been devoted for discussing its teachings and their relevance for the followers of Sikhism in particular and for others in general.

The work Sikh is derived from the Sanskrit word Shishya, meaning disciple or learner. Thus those who followed Guru Nanak, the founder, came to be known as the Sikhs. In the Sikh faith reverence for the Guru (Preceptor) is the cardinal quality and devotion to their teachings a sacred duty. Great emphasis is laid in Sikh way of life upon practising moral and spiritual values. These values are mainly related to honesty, sharing and doing away with the distinction of high and low/rich and poor.

23.2.2 Guru Nanak's Life and Message

Sikh belief system was founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539). A precocious child, Nanak had a deeply meditative cast of mind and hence all attempts to engage him in wordly pursuits failed. Guru Nanak was a contemporary of three Lodhi rulers — Babbar Lodhi (1451-1489), Sikandar Lodhi (1489-1517) and Ibrahim Lodhi (1517-1526). The Guru also saw the foundation of the Mughal Empire being laid by Babar, who was succeeded by his son Humayun during the life span of Guru Nanak. In his hymns Guru Nanak refers to the times and makes pointed references to the omissions and commissions of the Lodhi and Mughal rulers. Guru Nanak refers to the army of invaders whom he calls as "crowd of sins in a bridal procession" demanding the hand of the bridge called India. Right from childhood he was engrossed in spiritual pursuits. Prevalent hypocracy in the name of religion greatly upset him. Nanak delighted in serving the poor and needed. A story is told that his father gave him some money and sent him to neighbouring town to do some profitable business. On the way Nanak met some Sadhus who had not eaten for many days. Nanak purchased eatables with the money his father gave and eated the hungry Sadhus. When Nanak's father asked him as to what he had done he replied, that he had made a "most profitable bargain". On noticing that Nanak was not interested in

business his father sent him to Sultanpur Lodhi, a town in the Kapurthala District of Punjab. Here Nanak was employed as a storekeeper by the local ruler. This duty was discharged by Nanak with great rectitude.

i) Enlightenment of Nanak

It was during his stay in Sultanpur that Nanak got his enlightenment. According to popular traditions one morning when Nanak went for a dip in the river Beas flowing nearby he was absorbed in thoughts of God and, as is narrated by the Biographers, in this state he was ushered into the Divine Presence. Blessed by the Almighty, Nanak came out of the rivulet to preach holy name of the God. The first words that Nanak uttered after his enlightenment were, "There is no Hindu, there is no Musalman". At a time when Hindus and Muslims were engaged in sectarian conflicts these words heralded Nanak's new mission of reconciliation of the two.

ii) Message of Nanak

Nanak, the Guru was accompanied by a Muslim musician named Mardana on long journeys to preach his gospel of love and truth. He travelled to different parts of India and other countries and visited religious centres of Hindus and Muslims. Through dialogues he convinced people that good actions alone could ensure salvation. While in Mecca he was asked who was superior, a Hindu or a Muslim, to which the Guru replied that without good actions both were of no consequence. "Truth is high but higher still is truthful living", said he.
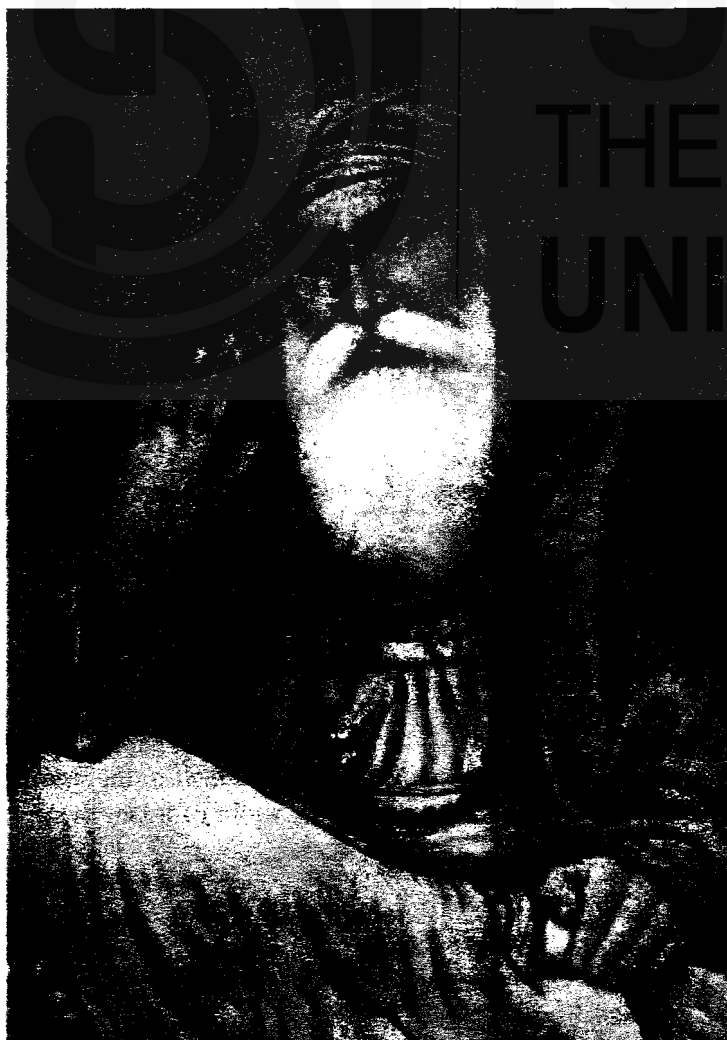
Guru Nanak the founder of Sikhism.

The Guru was moved by the sufferings of the population that he could not help taking even the creator to task:

"Though *Khurashan* has been shielded by Thee,
Though terror has struck at the heart of Hindustan,
Thou, O Creator of all things,
Takest of Thyself no blame;
Touh hath sent *Yama* disguised as the great Moghal, Babar.
Terrible was the slaughter
Loud were the cries of the lamenters.
Did this not awaken pity in Thee, O Lord?
Thou art part and parcel of all things equally, O Creator;
Thou must feel for all men and all nations.
If a strong man attack the another who is equally strong;
Where is the grief in this, or whose is the grievance?
But when a fierce tiger preys on the helpless cattle,
The Herdsman must answer for it".

The Guru was particularly moved by the helpless and pitiable condition of the young women who were reduced to slavery by the invading army and thus described the condition in one of his hymns:

"The tresses that adorned these lovely heads,
And were parted with vermilion,
Have been shorn with cruel thears:
Dust has been thrown on their shaven heads.
These beauties lent charm to the couches they reclined on,
Now they are dragged away, with ropes round their necks;
Barbarous soldiers have taken them prisoners and disgraced them".

The following hymn of Guru Nanak in *Majh-di-Var* best described the time of Guru Nanak:

"The *Kalyug* is a dagger, the rulers are butchers;
Dharma has taken wings and flower away.
The dark night of falsehood reigns supreme, and
The moon of truth appears not to have risen anywhere".

iii) Guru Nanak's Philosophy

Guru Nanak preached strict monotheism and described the Creator as *Ikk* (one), without a second. Guru Nanak's philosophy of God is best described in *Japji*, the primal creed. His teachings were strictly monotheistic, without scope for the worship of any deity or human teacher. Contrary to medieval Indian practice of denouncing the world for spiritual elevation, Guru Nanak believed that the world was worth living in. "This world is the abode of God and the Tune One lives therein." Guru Nanak believed that it was possible to live pure among the impurities of life. "As the lotus like the detached in waters, as the duck floateth care-free on the stream, so both one cross the Sea of Existence, his mind attuned to the Word. One liveth detached, Enshrining the One Lord in the mind, shorn of hope, living in the midst of hope."

iv) Three Principles of Nanak's Teaching

Guru Nanak's teachings can be summed up on three simple Punjabi words, *Naam Japna, Kirti Karni* and *Wand Chakna*. Translated into English this means "always remembering God, earning one's livelihood through honest means and sharing the fruits one one's labour with others". To practise his teachings of equality Guru

Nanak started the twin institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat*, emphasizing that all sit in a congregation and while partaking food from the community kitchen should sit in one line without distinction of high and low or rich and poor.

Check Your Progress 1

i) The work *Sikh* was derived from the word *Shishya* originally derived from:

   a) Sanskrit

   b) Parsi

   c) Pali

   d) Punjabi

ii) Write a note on enlightenment of Nanak in about six lines.

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   ....

iii) What are the three principles of Guru Nanak's teachings?

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

23.3 DEVELOPMENT OF SIKHISM

In this sub-section we shall deal with the model of the Sikh society by Guru Nanak and development of Sikhism over a period of time.

23.3.1 Creation of a New Society

Sociologically you would be interested to know how a new society is developed based on religious faith and how it controls the behaviour of its followers. Guru Nanak helped develop a new society. Let us see how he defined the code of conduct and behaviour patterns of the member of that society. Towards the last phase of his life Guru Nanak settled at a small village on the banks of river Ravi (now in Pakistan) and called it Kartarpur, i.e., God's abode. There he worked on the field and shared his earning with others. A community of disciples grew up at Kartarpur but it could not be described as monastic order. On the other hand, it was a fellowship of ordinary men and women engaged in normal occupations of life, earning their livelihood through honest means and sharing the fruit of their labour with others. But what was remarkable about Kartarpur was that this provided a model of loving which was to become the basis for the development of Sikh society and Sikh value systems in the days to come. Herein the Guru and his followers got up before dawn and after ablutions performed their prayers. The spiritual routine being over, the Guru and his followers partook the sacred food from the community kitchen and then attended to the day's work. In the evening they again assembled

at a common place and performed their evening prayer and shared food. Before going to bed they all recited *Kirtan Sohila*, songs of acclaim.

Box 1

The Sikh Gurus laid great emphasis on early rising and remembering God. This new philosophy of life with its emphasis on early rising, working hard and always remembering God created a new society in which there could neither be any exploiters nor exploitation and exploited. The emphasis on honest living and sharing one's earnings with others laid the foundations of an egalitarian order. The sikh Gurus brought about a happy union between the spiritual and temporal domains.

23.3.2 Development of Sikhism

As you saw in he case of other religions that over a period of time various developments took place in the religious philosophies enriching the content of the same. Similarly various developments have taken place in Sikhism over a period of time.

In the processes of these developments various institutions had evolved in Sikhism. Guru Nanak was followed by nine successive Gurus who not only continued his precepts and ideals but made significant contributions in evolving different institutions for the Sikh community.

The second Guru, Guru Angad Dev, evolved a distinct script called *Gurmukhi* (coming from the mouth of the Guru) which became the sole medium for sacred writings of the Sikhs. It is in this script that the *Guru Granth*, the holy book of the Sikhs, is written.

The Third Guru, Guru Amar Dass, strengthened the Sikh movement by starting the institutions of *Manjis* and *Piris*. There are positions which important male and female Sikh missionaries occupied in their respective areas. For obliterating the caste distinctions, which then plagued the Indian society, the Guru made it obligatory for all the visitors to eat in the community kitchen before they could see him. There is a strong Sikh saying that the contemporary Mughal Emperor Akbar who went to see the Guru at Goindwal had to eat in Langar while sitting in one line on the floor among with his nobles and servants. The Emperor was so much impressed by the Guru's strict practice of equality that he donated a village on which the modern city of Amritsar came up later during the time of the fourth and fifth Sikh Gurus. The Guru also got many *baolis* (small tanks) constructed to help his followers take morning bath which is considered important for purification of body and mind. The Guru evolved simple and meaningful rituals for the Sikh community.

The Fourth Guru, Guru Ram Dass, laid the foundation of the holy city of Amritsar, which later developed as the spiritual capital of the Sikh faith. By inviting artisans and traders and by encouraging them to settle there the Guru also laid the foundation of a big trade and industrial centre which developed around the newly founded city.

The fifth Guru, Guru Arjun Dev, son and successor of Guru Ram Das, built the Harmandar, which is popularly known as the Golden Temple and compiled and installed the Holy Book the *Guru Granth*, therein.

The Sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind built Akal Takhat, the Throne of the Immortal, and declared it as the centre of Sikh temporal authority.

The Seventh Guru, Guru Har Rai continued the mission of his predecessors and

appointed the Bhai families of Bagrian and Kaithal to look after the missionary work.

The Eighth Guru, Guru Har Kishan cured the victims of small-pox in Delhi and is remembered in the daily Sikh prayer as the one whose very sight dispels all miseries.

The Ninth Guru, Guru Teg Bahadur set a unique example of religious freedom by sacrificing his life for the protection of Tilak, Janju the sacred marks of the Hindu religion. This is described by the *tenth Guru* "as a unique event in this age of Kaliyug". Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom proved to be a turning point in Sikh history.

In order to defend dharma, Guru Govind Singh, *the tenth and last* of the Sikh Gurus, created the order of the Khalsa. On the Baisakhi day of the year 1699, the Guru called an assembly of the Sikhs at Anandpur, in the Shivalik hills. While

Guru Nanak with the other nine Gurus of Sikhism dipicted around him.

addressing a packed audience the Guru demanded the heads of five Sikhs. The five who offered themselves and were subsequently initiated into the Sikh faith are popularly remembered in the Sikh prayer as the *Panj Piare* or the five beloved ones. These five beloved ones came from different directions and belonged to different traditional Indian castes, three of them belonged to the so called low castes. After being renamed and each getting the surname of Singh, meaning Lion, they were enjoined to support the five symbols of the new order — unshorn hair, a comb, short breeches, a steel bracelet and a sword.

A significant development in the history of the Sikh faith was Guru Gobind Singh declaring the Guru Granth Sahib, the Holy Book, as the Guru eternal for the Sikhs. Compiled by Guru Arjun Dev, the Sikh Holy Book is a unique example of ecumenical spirit of the Sikh faith. The Guru Granth contains 5,894 hymns, the largest number of them (2, 216) having been contributed by the fifth Guru himself. Apart from the hymns of the Sikh Gurus, the Guru Granth also contains the composition of the Muslim and Hindu saints some of them belonging to the so called lower caste of the Hindu society. Equal respect to all religions is best demonstrated when the devout bow before the Holy Book which contains the hymns of saints from different religious dominations.

Check Your Progress 2

i)   Who among the following Gurus laid the foundation of the Holy City of Amritsar?

   a) Guru Har Rai

   b) Guru Ram Dass

   c) Guru Teg Bahadur

   d) Guru Govind Singh

ii) Who compiled Guru Granth Sahib, the Holy book of the Sikh?

   a) Guru Ram Dass

   b) Guru Teg Bahadur

   c) Guru Govind Singh

   d) Guru Arjun Dev

iii) Guru Granth contains the hymns composed by

   a) Sikh Gurus exclusively

   b) Sikh Gurus and the Hindu Saints only

   c) Sikh Gurus and the Muslim Saints only

   d) Sikh Gurus and the Hindu and the Muslim Saints.

23.4 SIKH WORSHIP AND RITUALS

The Sikhs, follow a distinct pattern of worship. The Sikh Community is centered around various rituals. In this section we shall discuss the distinct pattern of worship followed by the Sikhs and few of their life cycle rituals.

23.4.1 The Worship Pattern

Against the prevalent Hindu practice of worshipping the idols, The Sikh Guru advocated worship of *Akal* (Timeless God). The Sikh temple, called *Gurudwara,*

is not a mere place of worship but also serves as a shelter for the shelterless, iron-fort for the destitute and refuge for the helpless where all the visitors irrespective of their religious affiliations are served free food and given shelter and protection. In the centre of the Gurudwara, Guru Granth, the Holy Book, is installed on a high pedestal; the idea being that the holy book occupies a place higher than the followers who sit on the floor. Since complete equality is preached and practised, there is no special place marked for important persons in the Gurudwara.

There are Gurudwaras in different parts of India, which are historic because of their association with the Gurus. There are other Gurudwaras throughout the world wherever there are Sikhs. These are not historic but are built by the followers to serve as centres for their religious worship attended by large gatherings. The Nishan Sahib, huge yellow triangular flag, with Sikh symbol of *Khanda*, marks the Sikh religious place.

Visitors from all sections of society can enter the Gurudwara after removing their shoes and cleaning their feet and covering their head. Doors of the Gurudwara are open to all communities. It is significant to point out that the famous Golden Temple at Amritsar has four doors indicating that it is open to all people from all the four directions and its foundation-stone was laid by a Muslim divine named *Mia Mir.*

23.4.2 Life Cycle Rituals

There are several rituals in the Sikh social life. Let us discuss some of these rituals briefly.

i) Child Birth

Soon after a child is born a set of five verses from the *Adi Granth* is recited. Unlike Hindu society where women during post-natal period are considered impure to enter the kitchen for nearly six weeks, in Sikh society a woman can resume her normal work as soon as she feels physically fit. Significantly, Sikhism rejects the orthodox Hindu Concept of pollution in this regard. It is considered undesirable to treat the mother as polluted. Pre and post-natal Hindu practices are simply discarded in Sikh way of life.

ii) Ceremony of Child Naming

Following the birth of a child in the family there is a naming ceremony generally performed on the first of *Baisakh* (traditional Indian New Year and the day of birth of the Khalsa). This is arranged in the presence of the Holy Book and congregation either at home or in the *Gurudwara*. The priest opens the Holy Book at random and the very first letter of the page is picked up for naming the child. All males have Singh (lion) and all females *Kaur* (princess) after their names. It rejects the caste name that signifies hierarchy as found in Hinduism.

iii) Marriage Rituals

In the Sikh society marriages are generally arranged by the parents. In some cases boys or girls find their own partners. But in all cases Sikh marriages are solemnised strictly according to prescribed norms wherein the bridegroom and his party called *Barat* go to the house of the bride. To begin with there is *Milni*, a ceremony where parents and relatives from both sides meet and embrace each other and token gifts are offered. Later all other friends and relatives are feasted and then all enter specially arranged Pandal or gurudwara where *Anand Karaj* (the marriage ceremony) is performed by the priest with Sikh musicians singing relevant hymns from the Guru Granth and the couple circumambulating the Holy Book four times in a clock wise direction. The *Lavan*, hymns of marriage, convey highest moral and spiritual

ideals to the couple. The ceremony being over, all join in lunch and then the bridegroom and the party return home along with the bride. Back home the bride is received with some ceremonies. There is a great emphasis on simplicity and dowry is not a precondition in Sikh marriages. Extra-marital love and sex are not allowed in Sikhism. "Do not cast your eyes on the beauty of another's wife. Treat other women as thy mothers, sisters and daughters" says Guru Nanak.

23.4.3 Baptism Among the Sikhs

From Guru Nanak to the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur there was a system of initiating the followers by giving them *Charan-amrit* (water touched by the Guru's toe) to drink. Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth and the last Guru, changed this to *Khande-da-Pahul* (water stirred with double edged sword) which he used when he baptised the five beloved ones (Panj Piare) on the Baisakhi of 1699 at Anandpur Sahib. When boys and girls attain puberty and are old enough to understand the obligations of their religion they are baptised. The ritual connected with this ceremony is the same as performed by Guru Gobind Singh while creating the Khalsa. While baptismal ritual can be performed any time of the year, Baisakhi, the day of the birth of the Khalsa, is considered most appropriate. It is performed before an assembled congregation. Five baptised Sikhs are chosen to initiate the new converts. *Amrit* (nectar) is prepared by mixing sugar in water and by stirring it with a Khanda (double-edged sword) to the recitation of selected passages of the scriptures including Guru Gobind singh's composition. The initiates then take the vows of the Khalsa faith. Each vow is read out loudly before the Guru Granth Sahib. Palms full with amrit are splashed in the face of the newly initiated Khalsas with the Sikh salutation of *Bole so Nihal* and *Siri Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa Siri Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh*. Baptised Sikhs, both male and female, have to strictly adhere to the following symbols:

a) Keshas (Unshaven hair): Sikhs are not supposed to trim, shave or cut any hair on any part of their body.

b) Kara (wrist-band or iron bangle): All baptised Sikhs are strictly to wear Kara. Worn on the right wrist this is taken as a constant reminder that as a Sikh one has to follow the Sikh code of conduct and perform pious deeds.

c) Kirpan (sword): This literally means "please protect me with thy sword". This was used as a ready weapon for self defence and for the protection of the meek and helpless.

d) Kangha (comb): To keep the long hair neat and tidy. Sikhs are enjoined to keep Kangha always in their hair-knot.

e) Kachha (drawer-underwear) was intended to keep the Khalsa always ready in the fighting dress and also, means a sign of chastity and strict morals.

Activity 1

You may be interacting with a number of your Sikh friends or neighbours. Based on your observation or experience write a one page note on the rituals the Sikhs as practised in your area. If possible, exchange your note with other students at the Study Centre.

23.5 SIKH CODE OF CONDUCT AND REFORM MOVEMENTS

There are significant codes of conduct for the Sikhs. Sikh society has also borne

witness to several reform movements. In this section we shall deal with these aspects briefly.

23.5.1 Code of Conduct

The behaviour patterns of the members of a society are broadly guided by the code of conduct regulating the behaviour of its followers. The Sikhs are supposed to follow the code of conduct called Rehat *Maryada* which has evolved over years. Among the few *don'ts* are eating *Halal* meat prepared in the Muslim way, removing hair from the body, smoking, use of alcohol and adultery.

As mentioned earlier Sikh Gurus condemned the traditional caste system and laid the foundations of an egalitarian society. Through the institution of *Sangat* and *Pangat* they tried to obliterate the distinctions between the so-called high and low castes as well as the rich and poor. By placing the hymns of the so-called low-caste weaver Kabir at par with the so-called high-caste Brahman Ramanand the Sikh Gurus set a unique example of equality and true spirit of ecumenism. However, because of the deep-rooted caste prejudices caste system has not fully disappeared from the Sikh society. While it is true that while sitting in the congregation or while partaking food from the community kitchen, (*Guru Ka Langar*), caste factors are not taken into consideration, caste still plays a domineering role in deciding matrimonial alliances and other social relationships. Apart from the broad caste divisions such as Jats, Khatris, Aroras and Ramgarhias, the converts from the so-called low-castes have not yet been fully assimilated in Sikh faith which does not recognise any caste system. The 'low-castes' remain 'low-castes' and have been given the separate label of Mahzabi Sikhs. When the Golden Temple and other Sikh shrines came under the control of the Udasi Mahants they fixed separate visiting hours for the Mahzabi Sikhs to offer their prayers in the sanctum sanctorum. They had to hire high-caste attendants to carry their Prasad to be offered in the temple. It was only during the Akali movements for Gurudwara reform that such restrictions were removed and control of the Gurudwaras passed on to democratically elected bodies. In spite of modernisation of the Sikh society inter-caste marriages are rare and rarer still are the examples of so-called high-caste Khatri marrying into the so-called Mahzabi Sikh family. Similarly there are divisions at religious and ideological levels. Some movements of religious reform among the Sikhs such as Nirankari, Namdhari and Akali, were started to purge Sikhism of unSikh-life practices.

23.5.2 Movements of Socio-Religious Reform

There have been several religious reform movements among the Sikhs to eradicate the above mentioned evils. These movements led to the development of various sects in Sikhism. In this section we shall be discussing only two to three socio-religious movements.

i) The Nirankari Movement

The first traces of differentiation of the Sikh faith were noticed during the days of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule in the Punjab. Baba Dayal, Founder of the Nirankari Movement, was the first among the Sikh religious reformers to have preached against the evils that had slowly crept into the Sikh social and religious life. He preached against idolatry, worship of graves, tombs and trees and belief in other complicated Brahmanical rites and ceremonies and exhorted his followers to worship one *Nirankar* (God). Though Baba Dayal was able to attract a number of followers known as, *"Nirankaris"* because of their belief in one Nirankar and who followed Sikh ceremonies in birth, death, marriage and other social usage, yet his movement could not make a very wide impact on the Sikh masses who still lacked educational awakening.

Sikhism developed in the Nirankari movement with one of the followers Baba Avtar Singh starting a parallel movement of his own known as Sant Nirankaris.

ii) The Namdhari Movement

The Namdhari Movement, is popularly known as *Kuka* movement. Started by Bhagat Jawaharmal and Baba Balak Singh, the movement became a powerful force of religio-political revival among the Sikhs under one of the latter's disciples, Baba Ram Singh. Baba Ram Singh particularly enjoined upon his followers the worship of one God through prayer and meditation. The Rehatnamas (moral codes) prepared and enforced by him exhorted all his followers to be engaged at all time in the worship of God. He also preached against social evils such as the caste system, infanticide, early marriage and barter of daughters in marriage and popularised simple and inexpensive Anand Marriage. The teachings of Baba Ram Singh seem to have had a wide appeal to the Sikh masses. Contemporary European officials viewed the growing popularity of Baba Ram Singh's mission with serious concern.

Box 2

Baba Ram Singh's mission was specially marked by teachings of righteousness, tolerance and mercy yet some of his followers got out of control and in a fit of religious frenzy committed certain excesses which resulted in a clash with the Government. Some of his more orthodox followers who were excited over the killing of the cows, murdered the butchers at Amritsar, Raikot and Malerkotla and were, as a punishment, blown off from the cannon's mouth. Though there is a difference of opinion among scholars as to whether the movement was religious or political, there is no denying the fact that the official action against the *Kukas* created great hatred for the British rulers in the minds of the people in the Punjab which helped prepare the ground for the subsequent religio-political struggle for the Akalis in the early twentieth century.

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iii) Akali Movement

Historically Akalis are the members of the suicide squads of the Sikh armies which first appeared about 1690 AD when the execution of two predecessors and continued persecution by the Mughals forced the 10th Guru of the Sikh (Guru Gobind Singh) to resort to armed struggle against the rulers. The Akalis are also known as *Nihangs* who traditionally wear blue dresses. In 1920s the Akali movement was again revived as a semi para military volunteers raised to oppose the British government. The Akalis represented the Sikh community to regain their control over the Gurudwaras, in the agitation for an independent Punjabi speaking, Sikh majority state. Thus the state of Punjab was formed in 1966. The Shiromani Akali Dal is a major political party in Punjab (The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1985 : 185).

23.5.3 Impact on Indian Society

With its emphasis on unity of God and brotherhood of mankind Sikh thought greatly influenced the Indian Society. Through their condemnation of the caste system the Sikh Gurus were able to make a major dent in the traditional hold of caste. By emphasising equality of all religions and by including hymns from the Hindu Bhaktas and the Muslin saints the Sikh Gurus set an example of true *ecumenism*. By reconciling two conflicting traditions — Hinduism and Islam the Sikh Gurus gave a positive direction by emphasising transcendental humanism and spiritual values. The Sikh Gurus perceived that there was a real lack of love among people and therefore they laid great emphasis upon spiritual practices and preached philosophy

of the God, the supreme reality. At a time when debate about superiority of one religion against another has again started the following hymns of the third Guru help to resolve the religious conflict:

"Of all the religions the best religion is to repeat God's name and to do pious deeds."

Check Your Progress 3

i) Mention few don'ts as observed by the Sikhs as their religious code of conduct.

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ii) Baba Dayal, the founder of the Nirankari movement preached against:

    a) idolatry

    b) worship of graves, tree, tombs etc.

    c) belief in Brahmanical rites

    d) all of the above

iii) The Namdhari Movement preached:

    a) to popularise simple marriage

    b) dowry marriage

    c) caste system

    d) early marriage

23.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed various aspects of Sikh religious belief and the development of Sikh society over the years. We started with the socio-cultural and the philosophical foundation of Sikhism. There we discussed the socio-cultural contexts in which Sikhism was born with the life and message of Guru Nanak. We also discussed the model of the Sikh society as established by Guru Nanak in his life time. Development of Sikhism and the appearance of the ten Gurus are discussed briefly in this unit. The worship pattern of the Sikh society, their life cycle rituals etc. were also discussed. Lastly we discussed the Sikh code of conduct and religious reform movements in Sikhism. Here we presented the Nirankari, Namdhari and the Akali movements as examples of the religious reform movements in Sikhism.

23.7 KEY WORDS

Amrit   : Baptismal nectar.

Kachha   : Drawer or big size underwear.

Kanga   : Comb.

Kara	:	Iron bangle
Keshas	:	Unshorn hair
Khalsa	:	The word Khalsa, literally meaning God's own is used for baptised Sikhs.
Kirpan	:	Sword
Kirt Karni	:	Honest Labour.
Langar	:	Free meal served in the Gurudwara.
Nam Japna	:	Meditation
Nishan Sahib	:	Yellow colour Sikh flag.
Sangat	:	Congregation
Wand Chhakna	:	Sharing one's earnings with others.

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23.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i)   a)

ii) Guru Nanak was engrossed in spiritual pursuits since his childhood. One morning when Nanak went for a dip in the river Bein he was absorbed in thoughts of God and in this stage he was into the divine presence. First words that he uttered after his enlightenment were "there is no Hindu, there is no Musalman".

iii) The three principles are — always remembering God, earning one's livelihood through honest means, and sharing ones fruits of labour with others.

Check Your Progress 2

i)   b.

ii) d.

iii) d.

Check Your Progress 3

i)   Among the few don'ts are eating Halal meat prepared in the Muslim way, removing hair from body, use of alcohol and adultery.

ii) d.

iii) a.

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