
UNIT 20 RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

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20.0 OBJECTIVES

On going through this unit you should be able to:

- describe the meaning of religion;
- analyse religion as part of the social organisation and its relation to the concept of faith;
- explain the simple, complex, and mixed forms of religion; and
- examine the changing aspects of religion in society.

20.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you are going to learn about the meaning of religion and various ways in which religion affects society and how it leads to the maintenance of the social order. Here we have also mentioned the negative aspects of religion such as superstition,

fanaticism, etc. In this unit you will also learn about the culturally diverse forms of religion like the simple, complex and mixed forms. Finally, in this unit you will learn about the changing aspects of religion.

20.2 RELIGION : AN ASPECT OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION

Religion is concerned with the shared beliefs and practices of human beings. It is the human response to those elements in the life and environment of mankind which are beyond their ordinary comprehension. Most religions deal with the attempt of human beings to understand something or some power which is supernatural and suprasensory. It is pre-eminently social and is found in nearly all societies. Majumdar and Madan (1956 : 151) explain that the word religion has its origin in the Latin word **rel** (1) **igio**. This is derived from two root words. The first root is **leg**, meaning 'to gather, count, or observe'. The second root is **lig**, meaning 'to bind'. The first root refers to belief in and practice of 'signs of Divine Communication'. The second root refers to the carrying out of those activities which link human beings with the supernatural powers. Thus, we find that the word religion basically represents beliefs and practices which are generally the main characteristics of all religions.

20.2.1 Religion and Society

Religion has also been characterised as that aspect of human social and personal life which embodies the most sublime of human aspirations. It is the foundation on which the normative structure of society stands. It is the upholder of all values, morality and ethics of society. In this sense, it is the source of public order in society and provides the source of inner individual peace to men and women. It has both ennobling, as well as, civilising effect on mankind. Yet, it has also led to the creation of obstacles in the path of progress. Its negative effects amongst mankind have been of promoting fanaticism and intolerance, ignorance, superstition and obscurantism (O'Dea 1966 :20).

Religion has led to the unification of the members of a society. But, it has also led to religious wars and communal tensions. However, we must keep in mind that often non-religious issues and conflicts of interests are the root causes of communal tensions in a plural society such as India.

While most people consider religion as a universal and, therefore, a significant institution of societies, Marxist scholars do not see it as necessary component of society. In Karl Marx's words : "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people". He believed that religious beliefs act as an opiate which reduces the pain of poverty and oppression from the minds of the exploited masses. It is, therefore, required by human beings only so long as they are oppressed and exploited by a dominant class. It will cease to exist in the communist society which will be the ultimate stage of social development, according to him.

20.2.2 Religion and Faith

Central to all religions is the concept of faith. Religion in this sense is the organisation of faith which binds human beings to their temporal and transcendental foundation. By faith human being is distinguished from other beings. It is essentially a subjective and private matter. We share the belief of others. This elevates us to a wider human plane. Thus, faith is something which binds us together and is, therefore, more important than reason.

According to the classical Indian thought. “Man is made by faith : As the faith so the Man” (**The Bhagvad Gita**). The Buddhist scriptures recognise faith as one of the five faculties of Man (the other faculties are energy, mindfulness, concentration and full knowledge). Faith is the foundation and guarantee of human relations. It is also a condition for love. Through faith the believer ‘communicates’ and fraternises with the non-believer. It makes possible the unity of life in one’s daily existence.

20.2.3 Link Between Faith and Religious Life

Using the Biblical metaphor, we can say: faith is the bridge that links the temporal with the transcendental, the exterior with the interior. But how? Let us consider the mechanism.

All traditional societies constitute their faith in such order as may make interaction between individuals possible, and the movement from temporal to transcendental a reality. What follows is an inverted triangle ABC (Illustration 1), where:

- A represents the transcendental value
- B represents the temporal element
- C represents the human response of ethical value
- R stands for religion

What links B to C to A is faith.

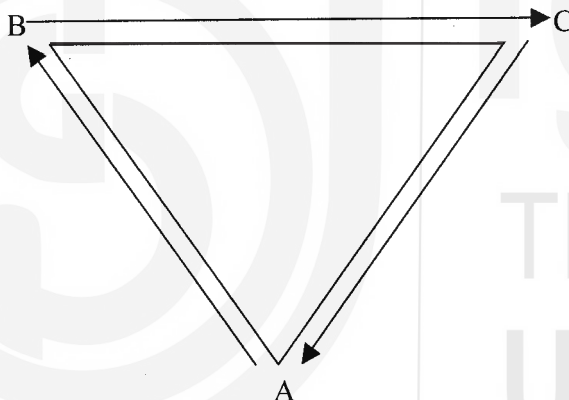
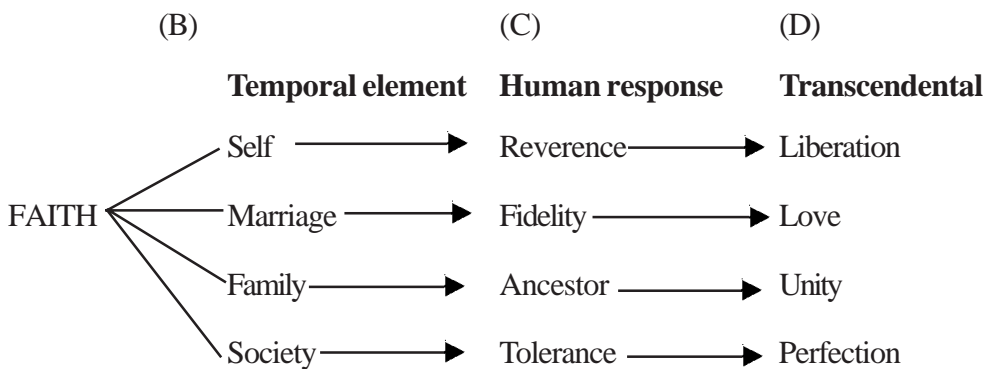


Illustration I

Let the significance of this triangle be elaborated further (Illustration 2).



Illustrations 2

Self, marriage, family and society refer to the basic constitutions of social life. These correspond to human response and transcendental value, through faith. The individual (self) in deep faith develops reverence for life, the condition which liberates him from suffering. A married person endowed with faith observes fidelity, which is the state of highest love. A faithful man is duty-bound not only for the living members but also

for the deceased kins. Hence, performs ancestor-worship, the act of divine unity. He also cultivates ideological tolerance, whereby the society rests in peace and he himself reaches the highest stage of perfection. Now, if you recollect the experiences and sayings of your own tradition, you will find that what we have just explained is nothing very new. Such interpretations of religious life are available in all traditions, may be in many different ways. But in essence they all agree that faith is the foundation of religion. In other words, the thread that binds all forms of religious organisation is invariably the faith.

Activity 1

Talk to at least three people of different religious faiths about their religion. Identify the common features in all these religions and write a note of one page on “Religion: Belief and Practices”. Compare your answer with other learners at your study centre.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Define religion using about three lines.

.....

2) What are the negative aspects of religion? Give an example. Use about three lines.

.....

3) In what way is faith central to all religions? Describe in about three lines.

.....

20.3 CULTURALLY DIVERSE FORMS OF RELIGION

Human cultures in time and space have envisioned various articles of faith. So there are different forms of religion. Broadly we can classify them into three classes: (i) simple form of religion; (ii) complex form of religion; and (iii) mixed form of religion. Sociologically speaking category (ii) has evolved from the category (i); however, this development need not be unidirectional. It can be in the opposite direction too, just as it can be a mixture of both as in the case of (iii). In this part of the unit, you are going to learn about the characteristic features of all the three forms of religions.

20.3.1 Simple Forms of Religion

The simple forms of religion can be distinguished from the complex forms of religion. There are some important characteristic features which are found in the simple forms. These characteristic features of the simple form of religion are as follows:

- i) The archaic form of religion is ahistorical, that is timeless. It is believed as a divinely given form of life, which has been in existence since the appearance, or creation, of human being, the beginning of the World.
- ii) As it is ahistorical, it is not founded or formalised by human being.
- iii) In this form of religion, the knowledge of belief and ritual is transmitted orally from one generation to the next.
- iv) In it, the religious experience is also an aesthetic experience, shared collectively in such performances as ritual dance and festivity.
- v) It is essentially descriptive, not explanatory. It is practised in 'good faith' a faith that needs no interpretation, no philosophical debate, no dialectical discussion.

In this description of simple forms of religion we can see that the tendency to philosophise does not exist here. The practical aspect of religion and magic are present. Therefore, there are no scriptures or Holy books present in such religions.

According to Emile Durkheim (1912) the simple form of religion forms the inner ring, as of a tree, of which the complex forms of religions form the outer, more evolved, ring. He says that in primitive societies there generally exist two

component elements in the supernatural field. One is the sacred element and the other is the profane. Durkheim calls the sacred element as religion and the profane element as magic or primitive science. As a contrast to Durkheim, Malinowski (1948) has classified religion and magic as the sacred part and science as the profane part.

Every society possesses its own set of religious myths. Myths actually are the carriers of beliefs from one generation to another in a simple sense. These beliefs are shared by the group in general whether this be a simple society or a modern society. However, the conception of the exact nature of the supernatural varies from one society to another. In the belief system of some societies "the supernatural may consist of ghosts and spirits, for others it may be a belief in the impersonal power which pervades everything in this world, while for some other people the supernatural may be manifested through a pantheon of anthropomorphic Gods and Goddesses, or through a simple God" (Majumdar and Madan 1956 : 152).

20.3.1.1 Varieties of Explanations Regarding Simple Religious Forms

It has been a major concern of evolutionary anthropologists to examine the content of various conceptions of the supernatural element found in different societies. Some of the major explanations are as follows:

- i) One of the first attempts to explain religious beliefs and its origin in the primitive society was made by Tylor (1871). He formulated the theory of animism which is the belief in the soul (anima). Therefore, he called this theory animism. He says that there can be multiple sources through which religion has originated but belief in the soul is crucial.

Tylor visualised the following phases in the evolution of simple form of religions:

- a) **Lower Animism:** It tends to be amoral, that is, the soul is continued after death in a condition which does not depend on its death during life.
- b) **Higher Animism:** It is based on the "retribution doctrine", that is, there are rewards and punishments for the soul, depending on the lifetime performance.

- ii) According to the critics of Tylor, animism is a later development in the history of religion. Scholars like Preuss and Max Mueller propogated a pre- animistic theory or religion called Animatism. Animatism is the belief that everything in Nature has life and is animate. Manaism is a special form of animatism. According to Majumdar and Madan (1956: 156) this theory is based on the notion that the primitive religion is based on belief in an all- pervadIng supernatural power. Though ‘beyond the reach of the senses’, it exists in all objects, including human beings and expresses as physical force or such other power. According to Marett, such -belief can be called Manaism after the Polynesian term ‘mana’ to represent this power.

To take an Indian example, amongst the Hos of Singhbhumi, Bihar, there exists a similar kind of religious belief which Majumdar (1956) has called ‘Bongaism’. These people believe in the concept of ‘bonga’ which resides in trees, natural objects and sometimes in manmade articles like bi-cycles, etc. It is the manifestation of a vague supernatural power which is, according to believers, the cause of all energy.

- iii) According to Frazer, religion and magic are the two ways of dealing with the major crises of life. In primitive societies men adopted two ways of facing the realities of life. One was through magic which is the belief in the superior supernatural power, which coerces it into service. For example, through chanting magical words supernatural spirits are made to obey the demands of the magician. The other way is to become subservient to the supernatural powers and worship it. This subservience to the supernatural forces is called religion. However, in Frazer’s opinion, magic and religion existed together in primitive societies in simpler forms of religions. There is the last stage in the progress of knowledge called science which, like magic is based on the principles of cause and effect, but unlike magic is based on true correlations which can be proved. Thus, magic, religion and science- are the three phases of the same reality in society.

20.3.2 Complex Forms of Religion

This form of religion has the following main features, which are radically different from the simple form of religion.

- i) It is historical, that is, its origin can be traced.
- ii) It is also a founded religion. The founder is attributed with divine powers, recognised as the Incarnation of God, the Son of God, or the Messenger of ‘God. The adherents look upon the founder as saviour.
- iii) The knowledge of belief and ritual is codified and textualised. The scriptures are considered holy and believed to contain the sacred words of God, or of his representative, and worshipped as a deity.
- iv) In this form of religion there is a large measure of personalism. The emphasis is on personal experience of religious phenomena. Faith is organised around the personality of the founder.
- v) This is a highly intellectualised form of religion. It possesses a body of doctrine which the adherents are required to believe and follow. The new doctrines are added in course of scholastic development. New interpreters belong to the same spiritual lineage. This leads to the formation of cults and sects. To

continue the doctrinal system and to propagate a particular ideology there comes up a class of specialists, preachers, monks and ascetics. who devote their lives exclusively for this purpose.



Religious Beliefs

20.3.2.1 Buddhism: An Example

Buddhism as a complex form of religion has the following features which put it in this category.

- i) **Historical Origin:** 6th - 5th centuries B.C. First preached at Sarnath (near Varanasi).
- ii) **The Founder:** Siddhartha Gautama or Sakyamuni Buddha, the son of King - Sudhodana and Queen Maya Devi of Kapilavastu (Nepal).
- iii) **Main Tenets:** The Middle Path or the Eightfold Path: the practices of right view; right aim, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation. These are the means of Nirvana, the release from the Wheel of Life. Those desirous of setting foot on the Eightfold Path have to take refuge in the Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha (community of monks).
- iv) **Distinguishing Features:** (i) **Materialism**, the doctrine of nonsoul : man is an aggregate of material factors and processes which at death, disintegrate without residue, (ii) **Atheism**, a religion without the concept of God (in practice its followers worship the gods who are lesser than the Buddha), (iii) Nihilism, the doctrine of impermanence, (iv) **Renunciation**, a religion of other worldly asceticism.
- v) **Sects:** Main divide: (i): **Theravada** or Hinayana with Arhat ideal, emphasising salvation of the spiritually advanced individuals. Main concentration in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand. (ii) **Mahayana** with Bodhisatva ideal, preaching attainability of enlightenment by all, the householder as well as the recluse. Mahayana or Tantric Lamaism, further subdivided into Kadampa, Kargyupa, Sakyapa and Ningmapa. The sects of Kargyupa (with two offshoots: Norpa

and Jonanpa) are regarded as semi-reformed. Main concentration in Tibet and the Himalayan region of India, especially Ladakh, Lahaul-Spiti and Arunachal Pradesh.

- vi) **Scriptures:** The most important ones: **Dhammapada**, **Tipitaka** of the early school, and a large collection of Mahayanist scriptures called **Tanjur**.

20.3.3 Mixed Forms of Religion

This type of religion is characterised by the elements of both the simple and the complex forms. In particular, it is a religion with scholastic explanation but without history. One of the best examples of this type of religion is Hinduism, traditionally called. Sanatana Dharma or the Eternal Religion.

Hinduism as a mixed form of religion does not have a historical origin as found in Islam, Buddhism or Christianity. It has no founder and its source is not in space and time. Unlike the complex forms of religions, it does not possess an organised, bureaucratic religious order of the type present in Christianity or Islam. Even its sects are without ties. Though they are founded like Christianity, Islam, or any other historical religion, they do not form a self-governing system. Each sect defines its boundary, but all are together in Sanatana Hinduism. The basis upon which the Sanatana Hinduism and its sects are related is the principle of one-and-many.

20.3.3.1 Hindu Religion and Caste System

Hindu religion can not be understood apart from the caste system. It does not have an organised clergy or religious order as in the case of Christianity.

Therefore, the system of caste acts as a means of maintaining order in society.

This system derives its legitimacy from the Hindu religion, especially the Manu Smriti. The caste system consists of about 3,000 castes which are separated from each other in marriage practices, food habits, linguistic differences, etc.

The Indian caste system was originally derived from the four Varnas, but territorial, linguistic and occupational factors gave rise to numerous hereditary groups which came to be known as castes. Each caste has a set of beliefs and rituals. These differences are marked in the observance of domestic rites (marriage, funeral etc.).

For the Hindu, there are two important guides for practice: The **Dharmasutra** and **Grihyasutra**. These are the parts of the Vedas dealing with the rules or procedures for religious activity. The Grihyasutra (domestic rites) incorporate a number of specific features of the castes. Hence, the rules relating to domesticity are very elaborate. Many of the rituals are preserved in memory rather than recorded: The women are the repositories of informal rituals. So, apart from the priest who recites mantra there are family elders-mainly women who perform rites for the new born child, the newly-wed couple, for the dead members of the family, etc. Hence, Hindu religious practices contain both formal and informal rites. In the formation of informal rites the castes are a major source.

20.3.3.2 Notions About Dharma, Karma and Moksha

For the Hindus, and also Buddhists and Jains, the notions **dharma, karma and moksha** are important.

- i) Dharma stands for the balance between social and cosmic orders; in ordinary terms it stands for justice or fairplay. Both for individuals and groups, it is the guiding socio-religious principle. It is the first of the four Hindu principles, the

others being **artha**, **kama** and **moksha**. The two middle terms mean pursuit of material and social goals. Together, they are called the **purusharthas**.

These four principles are for individual's guidance. On the social plane, any imbalance in this system results in **adharma** or disturbance of social order.

The demons in Purana are the forces which create **adharma**, hence the gods and goddesses incarnate on this earth, often in human form, to destroy adharma and restore **dharma**.

- ii) **Karma** is the consequence of the individual's or group's action. It can be bad or good depending on the actions. Human beings pass through a long cycle of births and deaths during which they accumulate **karma** or the consequences of actions in one's life. The present status of an individual, good or bad, high or low, is the result of actions performed in the past life. If an individual accumulates **punya** (merit) through good actions then he enjoys happiness in this life, but if he accumulates **papa** (sin) through evil doing he suffers as a result. Karma is not fatalism. The individual can improve his destiny through his or her actions. An important outcome of Karma theory is that the individuals do not blame gods or blind fate or the society for their sufferings; they alone are responsible for their present status.
- iii) **Moksha** or liberation means cessation of births and deaths. Hindus, Buddhists and Jains firmly believe in **karma**. Usually Buddhist and Jain monks take more rigorous steps than lay people, to overcome **karmic** bondage and escape from the cycle of births and deaths to attain **moksha** or **nirvana**.

Therefore, dharma, karma and moksha are dynamic principles motivating people to action. Hence, in Bhagvad Gita, Krishna advises Arjuna to act firmly and dutifully. In caste system, all castes, high or low, had a sphere of duties. The performance of the duties in the prescribed manner conferred on individuals a better rebirth in the next round. Therefore, low caste members performing their duties correctly were regarded as worthy human beings. In the Mahabharata, there is a reference to the low caste hunter who was proud of his life style rather than regret it. For the upper-caste members also, ethical and religious norms were binding. Whether born high or low, all individuals were required to follow the caste rules and practices. Otherwise they were punished by suffering in this life or next.

Thus, in Hinduism, an example of a mixed form of religion, we see a combination of the features of simple forms of religion, as well as, complex forms of religion. It is complex in terms of its foundation in higher philosophical thinking. Its scriptures like the Veda, Upanishad, Bhagvad Gita, etc. are highly sophisticated.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space given for your answer .

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Tick the correct answer:

- | | | | |
|------|---|-----|----|
| i) | Simple forms of religion are historical and creative. | Yes | No |
| ii) | Animism is a form of simple religion. | Yes | No |
| iii) | Simple forms of religions have an elaborate philosophical foundation. | Yes | No |
| iv) | Complex forms of religion are ahistorical. | Yes | No |

- v) The knowledge of belief and ritual is codified and textualised in complex, form of religion. Yes No
- vi) Hinduism is an example of complex form of religion. Yes No

2) Give an example each of a simple form, a complex form and a mixed form of religion in India.

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20.4 RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Change is the very essence of a living thing. A living religion must grow, must advance and must change. No form of religion is static. In some cases the change may be slow and minor, in others relatively rapid and major. Every religion claims its first principle supreme, original and eternal. Hence, there is also an element of censure for change. Change in religion may be compared with a growing tree. The dead branches wither away and new offshoots of fresh sap come up from the same tree. Change of religion is, on the other hand, an entirely different process. It implies rejection of the old form and acceptance of the new. It is technically known as conversion.

Broadly, there are three types of change in religion: (i) from simple to complex, (ii) from complex to simple and (iii) mixing of forms.

20.4.1 Simple to Complex Form

Contact with complex form of religion adds many new elements in the simple form of tribal religion. For example, with the gradual spread of Vaisnavism in Chotanagpur, the Oraons, a tribe which lives in that region, began to re-organise their traditional faith.

The consequences were as follows:

- i) The Oraons lost faith in the powers of their old spirits. , ..
- ii) A few of the spirits such as the ancestor spirits and the clan-spirits, came to be shorn of much of their maleficence and came to be regarded as ordinarily beneficent.
- iii) The original conception of the Spirit of Good developed into a small pantheon, which in turn evolved elaborate rites and ceremonies, actions and observations to please different grades of supernatural powers.
- iv) The Oraons aspiring for a higher spiritual life imposed upon themselves the restrictions against the use of alcoholic liquors as drink or libation, and of fowls, pigs and oxen as food or sacrifice.
- v) The institutions of temple and guru or spiritual guide, and loving adoration of a personal deity (bhakti) became acceptable.
- vi) Religious life began to find expressions through different denominations. Some turned into Bhuiput Bhagat, some into Nemha Bhagat, some into Visnu Bhagat, some into Kabirpanthi Bhagat, and some into Tana Bhagat.

To take another example, the impact of Vaisnavism on the Meitei religion of Manipur has been much deeper. There were three distinct stages which marked the introduction of Vaisnavism into Manipur. The first emissaries of the new faith, which arrived in 1704, belonged to the school of Nimbarka. The second quarter of the 18th century marked the arrival of the Ramanadi, and finally the school of Chaitanya replaced the earlier schools. There has been a remarkable coexistence of the old and the new forms of religion. This needs illustrations.

- i) Some of the tribal gods, called **lai**, which were not very significant, disappeared from the scene. Household **lai** continue to be worshipped; but the public lai, those which were the common property of all the Meitei, became fewer.
- ii) New Brahmanical gods became identified with the traditional deities. Panthoibi, the Meitei goddess, has become identified with Durga; Nongpok Ningthou with Shiva.
- iii) Traditional **lai** came to be worshipped according to Brahmanic ritual prescription (for example in the substitution of bloodless offerings of animal sacrifice).
- iv) The worship of the Vaisnava deities has developed and deepened. Krishna, in his cowherd aspect of Sri Govind, has become the dominant deity. This has caused strong emphasis on cow protection.
- v) Growth in the Radha cult. Introduction of the **Ras Lila**, enacting the relationship of Krishna and the Gopis. This has caused the development of the most beautiful form of religious dancing; generally known as Manipuri dance.
- (vi) Reading of the **Bhagavat Purana** and the **Mahabharata**, and singing **Kirtana**.
- vii) Emphasis on Brahmanic purification rites, and puritanical sexual ethics.

20.4.2 Complex to Simple Form

There are also examples of simplification of the complex form of religion, specially of rituals and ceremonies. Buddhism, for instance, came as a revolt against the Vedic ritual which was both complex and expensive, and also beyond the reach of ordinary people. It also required the services of the specialists, and knowledge of Sanskrit. The Buddha showed a path far simpler than this. He spoke to the people in everyday language and prescribed the Eightfold Noble Path. It is a different matter that in course of time his disciples, especially the Mahayanist, gave themselves up to the mystical Tantric form of complex religion. Later, the 19th century Brahmo Samaj again tried to simplify the complex nature of Brahmanic Hinduism. Its impact has been limited to Bengal. The Arya Samaj had also made a similar venture. It denied the Pauranic rituals and tried to establish the Vedic fire-sacrifice in a simple form. The impact of Arya Samaj can still be seen mainly in the western parts of north India.

20.4.3 Mixing of Multiple Form

Mixing of more than one form has caused development of new religious organisations. The most excellent example is of Sufism. It has evolved from Persian Zoroastrianism and Arab Islamism. The sublimity of this faith lies in its conception of the unity of Eternal Spirit and the intimate association of the Divine with the manifest. The Arab Muslims believe in a personal God. They also hold that mankind and the world are mere objects upon which the will of God is exercised. The Sufis approached nearer to the Christian sentiment embodied in the phrase "Christ in us". The Persian conquerors of India carried 'with them the mysticism and spirituality of Sufism.

Sikhism, Kabirpanth and many other Santa-Sampradayas of their kind are Sanatan Hinduism, modified by Buddhism and Sufism. In these forms of religion, the prime object of attainment is not Paradise but the total cessation of individual existence, or what is called Nirvana in Buddhism. Also there is no personal God. The Sufi idea of the unity of God is well-founded in most of the medieval religions. Guru Govind Singh, the last Guru of the Sikh Panth, was a staunch devotee of the goddess Durga. He established **khalsa** by which he bound his disciples into an army and conferred upon each of them the name Singh, or Lion. He asked his followers that after his death the **Granth Sahib** or “the Lord of the Book” was to be their guide in every respect. This holy scripture contains the devotional songs sung by practically all the Hindu saints of medieval India. It also contains 142 stanzas composed by Shaikh Baba Farid, the most celebrated Sufi . saint who accompanied Nanak, the illustrious founder of Sikhism, for more than twelve years.

The Bisnois of Rajasthan claim that their religious organisation is composed of twenty Hindu and nine Muslim tenets, and hence “Bisnoi” (**Bis** = twenty + **nau** = nine).

Activity 2

Find out whether in your region there exists worship of a Sufi Saint or Baba who is worshiped by people of more than one religion. Write a report on the religious practice and nature of religion of this Saint/Baba.

Compare your answer with those of your peers at your study centre and discuss with your Academic Counsellor.

20.4.4 Sects and Cults

Sects are like the various branches of a tree, which is a religion. They are a reaction to what is not acceptable in a religion. In fact, the sects rise as a protest movement against established religions. Protestant Christianity is a sect of Catholic Christianity; just as Jainism and Buddhism are some of the sects of Hinduism.

Sects often reject many of the norms and values of the main religion and replace them with beliefs and practices which appear to be unusual to the people who are not members of that sect. They are insular to, and closed to others who have not gone through the initiation procedures for membership. In most sects a strict pattern of behaviour for members to follow is present. Membership demands extreme loyalty to the sect and it becomes the most dominant factor in the member’s life.

Cult is another aspect of religion, which is an offshoot but unlike a sect it does not arise as a protest movement but remains part of the main religion. It is an acting out of feelings, attitudes, and relationships which are an end in themselves. For example, the cult of Devi, or the cult of Krishna etc. have a following of a large number of people who believe in it and sing the devotional songs, etc. for its own sake.

Sects and cults are the processual aspects of religion i.e., religion in the process of being practiced. Sect is much more formalised and definite, while cults are only minor expressions of variety within a religion.

20.4.5 Conversion

Conversion is the chief end of all teaching and preaching in some religions. It is a process of growing up in spiritual life. In protestant theology it is called “the rebirth

of the soul”. As a constant challenge of faith, conversion is an ongoing discovery of the real nature of religion. In practice, however, such personal freedom of experience is hardly attainable. For, one is either born in a religious tradition to follow the prescribed way, or alternatively may give up ‘the inherited tradition to adopt another prescribed way. In either case he is not involved in the discovery of faith. Religious missions are motivated by a desire to convert others to their faith. The supreme task of the Christian Church is the conversion of the World, making disciples from all nations. That is the objective of Islam also. The ethics of conversion grants moral rights to seek for more followers to one’s way of religious beliefs. The missionaries believe that theirs is the best form of religion received from God and that it is their religious duty to impart to others who are not yet within it. When this pious motive gets distorted the method of coercion is employed only with a view to increasing the number of fellow religionists. It is no longer then a real conversion.

Many Hindus embraced Islam under different situations. The Mopla fisherfolk of Kerala were the first Indians to have accepted Islam. The Sufi saints and other religious faqirs or **darwesh** converted a large number of Hindus to Islamic faith. The Muhammadan rulers were also instrumental in conversion but more often than not they exercised force. Conversion to Christianity has generally been through missionaries, and largely among the tribes of India. Kerala again is the home of the first Indian converts to Christianity. Traditions die hard. Most converts to Islam and Christianity continue to follow some of their old beliefs and practices which are even against the tenets of the new faith. This they do either secretly, or openly. A proselytising religion wanting to hold on to the neophytes or new converts cannot do anything in this regard. Like Islam and Christianity, Buddhism also practises conversion. The Buddha had asked his mendicants to convert their adversaries to the Path not by reasoning but by reduction to the sublime. Sanatan Hinduism does not believe in proselytising, because in its view there are different paths to the Ultimate, each equally valid and worthy to follow: As there is no conversion, so also no reversion. The Arya Samaj theory of conversion was never accepted by the orthodox followers of Hinduism.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space given for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Fill in the blanks in the following sentences:

- i) with..... form of religion has added many new elements in the simple form of tribal religion.
- ii) The impact of on the Meitei religion on Manipur has been very deep.
- iii) Buddhism came as a revolt against the ritual which was complex and beyond the common peoples reach.
- iv) Sects and cults depict the aspects of religion.
- v) In Protestant theology conversion is called “the rebirth of the”.

20.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have explained the social nature of religion and how religion forms a part of the social organisation of all societies? Here we have discussed the concept of faith and its relationship with religion and society. We have discussed the intimate relationship between the transcendental values, temporal elements and human response which forms the basis of religion and which are linked with each other by the element of faith.

We have also described the crucial features of simple, complex and mixed forms of religions with some examples of each. Finally, we have discussed the concept of change within religion. We have analysed the process of change from simple to complex, from complex to simple, and the mixed forms found in the religions in India. The nature of sects and cults, and religious conversions have also been explained in this unit.

20.6 KEY WORDS

Ahistorical : anything which does not “have any history”.

Dialectical : a logical discussion by question and answer as means of investigating truths in philosophy.

Embody : to include.

Fraternise : to associate with people to make friends.

Normative : that aspect of social order which deals, with the norms of the society, such as the do’s and don’ts.

Opiate : anything which acts like a drug or alcohol which either deludes ‘you or puts you to sleep.

20.7 FURTHER READINGS

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20.8 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Religion is an organisation of faith. It deals with the shared beliefs and practices of human beings.
- 2) Some of the negative aspects of religion are that sometimes they create obstructions in the path of progress of a society. They promote fanaticism, ignorance and superstitions also.

- 3) Faith is central to all religions as it binds human beings to their temporal and transcendental foundation. It is faith which distinguishes human beings from all other living beings.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) i) No (See section 20.3.1)
ii) Yes (See section 20.3.1.1)
iii) No (See section 20.3.1)
iv) No (See section 20.3.2)
v) Yes (See section 20.3.2)
vi) No (See section 20.3.3)
- 2) Religion of some of the tribes in India, eg. “Bongaism” of Ho’s of Kolhan, Bihar is an example of simple religion. Buddhism is a complex religion and Hinduisim is a mixed form of religion.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) i) Contact, complex
ii) Vaisnavism
iii) Vedic
iv) Processual
v) Soul

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6

CULTURE AND RELIGION

UNIT 20

Religious Beliefs and Practices

5

UNIT 21

Culture I : Main Characteristics

20

UNIT 22

Culture II : Diversity and Change

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UNIT 21 CULTURE I : MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

Structure

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- 21.1 Introduction
- 21.2 Characteristics of Culture
 - 21.2.1 Role of Culture
 - 21.2.2 Features of Culture
- 21.3 Culture and Human Nature
 - 21.3.1 Human Beings and Other Animals
 - 21.3.2 Uniqueness of Human Beings
- 21.4 Culture and Biology
 - 21.4.1 Culture and the Satisfaction of Hunger
 - 21.4.2 Food Taboos and Rituals
 - 21.4.3 Patterns of Sexual Gratification
 - 21.4.4 Culture in Relation to Health and Sickness
 - 21.4.5 Culture and Sex Roles
 - 21.4.6 Culture and Race
- 21.5 Let Us Sum Up
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- 21.8 Model Answers to Check Your Progress

21.0 OBJECTIVES

On going through this unit you should be able to understand:

- the concept of culture, as used in anthropology and sociology;
- that culture as a distinctively human phenomenon, rooted in human being's unique nature; and
- that culture is closely inter-related to biological process.

21.1 INTRODUCTION

If you have been to a zoo or a circus, and have observed the behaviour of monkeys and chimpanzees, you must have been struck by the similarities between their gestures and ours. Some of you might have wondered whether we are just like these animals, albeit a little more developed.

In recent years, a number of sciences have devoted attention to animal behaviour. As a result of extensive researches and investigations, we now know a good deal about what we share with other animals, as well as the ways in which we differ from

them. The concept of culture has greatly expanded our understanding of the nature and behaviour of human beings in all its richness and diversity, as well as in relation to the behaviour of animals. It has greatly helped us in understanding the diverse ways in which the basic biological needs of human beings are satisfied. It has brought to our awareness the differences among the various communities and groups of mankind, and the manner in which these differences are continued and passed on from one generation to another .

The concept of culture is immensely helpful in that it offers us a truly broad perspective on mankind, and thereby expands our intellectual horizons. It liberates us from the chains of prejudice and groups-centredness, and thus humanizes our consciousness.

21.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

We sometimes describe an individual as “a highly cultured person”, meaning thereby that the person in question has certain features such as his or her speech, manners, taste for literature, music or painting, which distinguish him/her from others. Culture, in this sense, refers to certain personal characteristics of an individual. However, this is not the sense in which the word culture is used and understood in social sciences.

Sometimes, culture is used in popular discourse to refer to a celebration or an evening of entertainment, as when one speaks of a “cultural show”. In this sense, culture is identified with aesthetics or the fine arts, such as dance, music or drama. This also is different from the technical meaning of the word culture.

Culture is used in a special sense in anthropology and sociology. It refers to the sum total of human beings’ behaviour, feelings, beliefs, thoughts; it connotes everything that is acquired by them as social beings. One of the most comprehensive definition of the term culture was provided by the 19th century British anthropologist, Edward Tylor. He defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society.”

21.2.1 Role of Culture

Culture has two distinctive, but inter-related aspects. On the one hand, it is an expression of human beings ingenuity; it cannot be adequately understood without reference to certain characteristics which are unique to human beings. These unique characteristics include rationality and imagination, capacity for self-awareness and self-reflection, and capacity for symbolic communication or language.

On the other hand, culture has played a crucial role in the fulfilment of capacities and potentialities. Their survival in the evolutionary process was made possible due to culture. Such factors as co-operations, the domestication of plants and animals, the discovery and use of fire, the making of tools and implements, and the invention and use of language greatly facilitated their adaptation to the natural environment. Modern biologists point out that, unlike animals, human beings played an active role in their own evolutionary career.

Co-operation among human beings provided security from wild animals and external threats. It facilitated the hunting of wild animals by making it a group activity. The domestication of plants and animals helped in the adaptation of human groups and communities to the environment. Obtaining food through gathering, fishing and hunting was made easier by the use of tools and implements. The discovery and use of fire provided security from wild animals. Language made possible the sharing,

accumulation and transmission of experience and skill. If not for culture, human beings would have probably perished in the long and arduous process of evolution.

21.2.2 Features of Culture

Culture is used in two senses, a general and a specific sense. Used in a general sense, it implied the sum total of those characteristics which are unique to mankind and which have no parallel in the animal kingdom. When used in a specific sense, it refers to the totality of the life ways and behaviour patterns of a community or a group. One may speak, for example, of Chinese culture, Eskimo culture, Hindu culture, etc.

Culture is characterised by the following features:

- i) It is shared in common by the members of a given society or community. Culture therefore, refers not to beliefs and activities of individuals, but to those of groups of people who are organised in communities. It is fundamentally a social, rather than personal or individual, phenomenon.
- ii) Culture is learnt and acquired by human beings in interaction with others. An individual acquires the characteristics of his parents and his group in two ways. On the one hand, she or he acquires the physical characteristics and features of her or his parents, such as skin colour, stature, texture of hair and colour of the eyes, through **genetic transmission**, over which he or she has no control. On the other hand, he or she learns and acquires the thoughts, attitudes, language and habits of his or her parents, and through them, of his or her group, by way of **cultural transmission**.

It follows from the above observation that differences among various groups and communities in regard to language, beliefs, customs and rituals are to be understood and explained not in terms of physical or racial differences, which are biologically inherited, but in terms of learnt and acquired cultural differences.

- iii) Culture is not only learnt and acquired by individuals in a social context, but it is also accumulated and transmitted from generation to generation, through the mechanism of symbolic communication or language. In other words, a society or a community accumulates, over long periods of time, experiences, knowledge and skill, which are shared in common by its members, and it passes from one generation to another.

Activity 1

Interview one member of your Grandparent's generation, one of your own generation and one of a child's generation in your family on what they think about the role of men, women and children in your family/community and society. Write a report on "Social and Cultural Changes in my Society" of about 2 pages. Compare your note with others students and discuss the topic with your counsellor at your study centre.

21.3 CULTURE AND HUMAN NATURE

You have learnt in the foregoing sections that culture is essentially an expression of certain characteristics which are unique to human beings. A comparison between animal nature. In recent years, several disciplines such as physiological psychology, neuro-physiology, ethology (which is concerned with the study of animal behaviour in the wild) and sociology (which studies animal and human behaviour in a comparative framework) have provided us with valuable information on animal behaviour.

Consequently, we are now in a better position to know what human beings share with other animals, and what is unique to them.

21.3.1 Human Beings and Other Animals

A few decades ago, it was commonly believed that animals can neither learn to make and use tools, nor can they plan ahead or count. Modern researches in animal behaviour have established that all these assumptions about animals are not correct.

The fact that animals are capable of learning has been known to animal trainers and zoo keepers for a long time. You too must have observed this fact if you have pets such as parrots or dogs or cats at home. Researches in ethology and ornithology (the systematic study of the behaviour of birds) indicate that a number of animal species are capable of learning patterns of behaviour. For example, the young one of a bird learns the song pattern of its species during the first spring of its life. A young chimpanzee learns from its mother how to identify poisonous fruits and berries in the forest.

Many species of birds have a remarkable sense of direction and planning. This is evident in their seasonal migration. When the freezing cold of the Arctic becomes too harsh, the Siberian cranes cross a distance of several thousand miles and fly over to places like Bombay, Mysore, where the weather is more pleasant for them. They go back to their native habitat soon after the cold subsides.

The higher primates, such as monkeys and apes, make and use crude tools. The chimpanzees in the wild feed on white ants, which breed in the hollow recesses of tree trunks, when the chimpanzee's hand cannot reach right inside, he plucks the branch of a tree, inserts it inside the trunk and waits. When the white ants cling to the branch, he takes it out and gobbles up the ants.

The emu is an Australian animal which lays big eggs. The Australian buzzard, who is very fond of the eggs, drives the emu from its eggs, and then flies aloft with a stone in its claws. It drops the stone on the eggs and when they break, it swoops down and swallows the contents.

There are striking similarities between human beings and the chimpanzees in the number and form of chromosomes, the proteins of the blood, and the structure of the genetic material DNA. Jane Goodall, an ethnologist, studies the behaviour of chimpanzees in their natural setting in Tanzania. She found interesting similarities between certain aspects of chimpanzee behaviour and human behaviour. She found that, much like human beings, the chimpanzees have a lengthy childhood; they form close family attachment; they make and use primitive tools, and hunt in a collective manner. She also found similarities in respect of communication, such as facial expressions and gestures.

21.3.2 Uniqueness of Human Beings

In certain respects, human beings are part of the animal kingdom, in that certain biological and physiological processes are commonly shared between them and animals. Yet, they differ from the other species of animals in several crucial aspects, which set them apart from the rest of the animal world.

- 1) In animals, the satisfaction of basic biological urges, such as hunger, thirst and sex, is determined by instincts. In human beings, instincts have almost disappeared. Consequently, the satisfaction of biological needs in them takes place through culture. Animal responses to the environment are fixed and

stereotyped, whereas human beings responds to his or her environment in a flexible manner and in a variety of ways.

- 2) Though some species of animals make and use tools of a primitive nature, human beings' tool making ability is of a qualitatively superior kind. In animals, tools are made and used only for the present; as soon as their purpose is served, they are thrown away. Human beings on the other hand, make tools not only for the present, but also in anticipation of their future use.

Furthermore, culture makes it possible for men and women to accumulate their experience and skill in regard to tool making and pass it on from generation to generation. Thus, over several thousand years there has been a continuous improvement in their tools making ability.

- 3) Human being is the only species in which the female is sexually receptive throughout the year. This has important consequences for marital and social behaviour.
- 4) The human child is dependent, physically and emotionally on the mother for a much longer period, as compared to other species of animals. This has a significant bearing on woman's roles, on the mother-child relationship, as well as on the network of kinship in human society.
- 5) There are certain characteristics of human beings, which are described as 'species-specific'. The human brain has developed certain devices such as control of hand and speech, foresight and planning. The main organisation of the brain is located in the frontal and the pre-frontal lobes, which enable people to think of actions in the future.
- 6) Human being is essentially a symbolic animal. She/He is the only animal capable of self consciousness, of self-reflection. The rational and imaginative faculties enable them to create concepts, meanings and values which have universal significance. Their symbolic nature enables them to transcend the immediate environment of which they are a part.
- 7) Human beings capacity for symbolic communication or language is unique to them. The development of the vocal cords in human beings and the close location of the speech and hearing centres in the brain made possible the emergence of language.

Check Your Progress 1

Note : a) Use the space below for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Discuss the main characteristics of culture. Use about five lines.

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2) Give some examples of the uniqueness of human beings. Use about four lines

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21.4 CULTURE AND BIOLOGY

Human being shares with animals certain basic biological urges, such as hunger, thirst and sex, which press for satisfaction. However, there is a significant difference in the manner in which the satisfaction of basic biological needs takes place in them and in animals. Among the animals, the basic needs are satisfied through the mechanism of instincts, whereas in human beings they are fulfilled and regulated through culture.

21.4.1 Culture and the Satisfaction of Hunger

There are tremendous variations in the manner in which the biological urge of hunger is satisfied among human groups and communities in different parts of the world. The Bushmen, who live in the hot, sandy Kalahari desert in Southern Africa, survive on wild plants, insects, locusts, scorpions, bustards and ostriches. The Eskimos,, who live in the freezing cold of the Arctic, survive on the meat and fat of the walrus. The Lapps of Scandinavia survive on the milk and meat of the reindeer. The Andaman Islanders in the Bay of Bengal live by means of fruits and roots gathering, fishing, and hunting. The Semang hunters of Malaysia, who survive on yams, berries, roots and nuts, supplement their diet with squirrels, monkeys and lizards. The Australian aborigines hunt the kangaroo and relish its meat.

21.4.2 Food Taboos and Rituals

Culture defines what types of food are worthy of consumption by a given people or a community, and what food items are to be avoided. Consequently, a given food item, which is relished by one people may be abhorred by another. The aphorism a short sentence packed with meaning, “one man’s food is another man’s poison” is very true in a cultural sense. Pork, which is forbidden to Jews and Muslims is eaten with relish by the Christians. Milk and milk products are regarded as luxury food by the Baganda of East Africa, and the people of West Africa and the Chinese consider them as inedible and nauseating. The Navahos and the Apaches of New Guinea and Arizona consider fish nauseating and unfit for human consumption. Dog meat, which will be nauseating to most modern people, is eaten with relish by the Mexican Indians and some Naga tribals in India. The American Indians, until recently, considered tomatoes poisonous and refused to eat them. Certain types of fish are considered a delicacy and eaten raw in Japan. Eating raw meat is widely prevalent in several parts of Africa.

Various shades of vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism exist side by side in the Indian society. Thus, you find some strict vegetarians in South India (Vira Saiva) and Gujarat (Jain), who consider meat, eggs and fish as taboo. There are strict Jains who do not eat tubers. Many traditional families forbid elderly ladies and widows of all ages from eating onions and garlic.

Many cultures prescribe that certain types of food are not to be combined with others. Orthodox Jews, for example, do not combine meat and milk products in the same meal. Orthodox Muslims avoid eating dairy products immediately after eating fish. The Eskimo keep the sea foods separate from foods obtained from land animals.

Rituals are invariably associated with the consumption of food. In India for example, one is supposed to have a ritual bath before taking one's meal, which is followed by wearing ritually clean clothes. Thereafter, the person is to sit in a ritually clean place, and then eat the food. The Brahmins of Nepal can take their food only while wearing unsewn garments.

Activity 2

List at least two items of food which are considered to be auspicious in your culture/religion/society and why? Write a note of one page on "Food and its Social Nature". Discuss your note with your peers and Academic Counsellor at your study centre.



Food Culture

The rules of ritual purity and pollution in India are particularly observed in regard to food. Some foods such as milk are regarded as having inherent purity; other foods are made pure with frying. Food that has been fried in oil or ghee is less likely to be polluted. Such fried food called **pukka** food, in contrast with **kaccha** food cooked in water, can be exchanged between different communities in North India. In North India, cooking or eating in an earthen vessel is considered ritually clean. However, in South India, a Brahmin will never eat from an earthen vessel, as it is considered polluting.

Many cultures prescribe fasting and abstinence from food. Devout Jews fast every Thursday and Monday in addition they fast for 24 hours on Yom Kippur. The early Christians observed Lent which lasted for forty days. The Muslims fast for a whole month during Ramzan (the 9th month of the Muhammadan Year) Hinduism considers fasting a meritorious act, to be observed on auspicious occasions. It is important to note that the act of fasting represents a symbolic transcendence of the biological urge of hunger and thirst.

21.4.3 Patterns of Sexual Gratification

There are infinite variations among groups of mankind in regard to the fulfilment of the sexual impulse. In almost all cultures, sexual mating is institutionalised in marriage. Furthermore, every culture has rules of incest, which prohibit marital relations among close relatives. The incest taboo is a universal cultural invention which is aimed at regulating sexual behaviour. There are great diversities in respect of incest regulations from one culture to another, and even within a single society. In North India, for example, cross-cousin marriages are not allowed, whereas they are preferred in south India. In some south Indian castes, an elder sister is expected to ask her younger brother to marry her own daughter. This would be considered incestuous in North India.

Furthermore, there are rules of endogamy in many cultures, which prescribe that one should marry within one's own kin group lineage. Rules of exogamy, on the other hand require an individual to marry outside the group of gotra. In many parts of North India, the system of village exogamy exists, which requires that an individual may marry a girl only from another village.

Great diversities exist among groups of mankind in respect of partners in marriage. Polygyny (the union of one man and more than one woman) is a favoured form of marriage in Africa, the Near East, China, Melanesia, Polynesia and among the tribal communities in North and South America. King Mtesa of Uganda is said to have had 7000 wives. Among the Trobriand Islanders, who are generally monogamous, a chief may have as many as 60 wives. Polyandry (the union of one woman and several men) is prevalent among the Marquesans of Polynesia, the Todas in India, the Kandyans of Sri Lanka, the Da-la of Indo-China and the Paviotso Indians of North America. Among the Khasas of Jaunsar-Bawar in Himachal Pradesh, there exists a system of fraternal polyandry, in which a woman is married to two or more brothers at the same time.

Certain religious traditions, such as ancient and medieval asceticism and Roman Catholicism encourage celibacy. Thus, cultural factors regulate the satisfaction, or wilful negation of the sexual impulse among human beings to a remarkable extent.

21.4.4 Culture in Relation to Health and Sickness

Cultural factors significantly influence health and sickness in society. Certain types of ailments are significantly correlated with such factors as class, occupation, ethnicity and food habits. Hypertension, diabetes and ulcers may be regarded as urban diseases, generally connected with sedentary occupations. Environmental pollution, brought about by technological advancement, is now identified as one of the major causes for the growing incidence of cancer.

Food habits, particularly the consumption of fatty foods and high salt intake, are significantly correlated with cardiovascular diseases. Several tribal communities in the South Pacific islands, the Kirghiz of Turkey, certain African tribes, the Australian aborigines, and the Eskimos use no salt in their diet. Consequently, diseases such as high blood pressure are unknown among them. On the other hand, one-fourth of the diet of Eastern Finlanders consists of animal fat; consequently, they are most prone to heart attacks.

A culture generally defines what diseases are to be considered as illness, and therefore requiring treatment. Intestinal worms are regarded as necessary for digestion among the Thonga of Africa and the Yap Islanders. In most primitive societies, diagnosis and treatment of diseases are invariably associated with magical beliefs and rites and

shamanistic practices. In some cultures, diseases are associated with the violation of taboos. Among the Ojibwa Indians, a person who is guilty of violating food taboos, invites sickness on himself and his family members.

21.4.5 Culture and Sex Roles

Men and women differ not only in anatomical and physical features, but also in respect of behaviour, role and attitudes. It is generally held that men and women behave differently because nature has prescribed different roles and behaviour patterns for them. This is a mistaken view.

The differences between the roles and behaviour patterns of men and women, though related to certain anatomical and physical processes, are not entirely determined by them. Sex roles and traits, in other words, are not biologically given, they are conditioned by culture.

In India and in many other cultures, men are supposed to be dominant, aggressive and rational, while women are supposed to be submissive, impulsive emotional and delicate. Margaret Mead, a distinguished American anthropologist, made a comparative study of the respective roles of men and women in three primitive societies in New Guinea. She found that in each of these cultures, the sex roles were radically different from those of Western culture. For example, in the Tehambuli tribe, women are masculine and men feminine, in terms of Western cultural standards. Women are dominant, responsible and are engaged in gardening and fishing activities. Men, on the other hand, are concerned with aesthetic matters, and with being charming. Among the Arapesh, both men and women show feminine traits; they do not indulge in aggressive behaviour. Among the Mundugumor, both men and women exhibit masculine traits. Their behaviour reflects violence and aggressiveness. Mead, therefore, concluded that sex roles are culturally conditioned.

21.4.6 Culture and Race

Differences in physical characteristics and features among people belonging to different countries or groups are often confused with differences in culture and behaviour. One hears, for example, of Jewish race, Negro race, Aryan race, etc. When the term race is used in this manner, it combines a set of unrelated features, such as physical characteristics, language, religion, cultural traditions and behaviour patterns, which differentiate a given people from others. Furthermore, there is invariably an implicit value-judgement in this sense of the term race. Some races are regarded as being naturally and inherently superior to the others.

This is a wholly fallacious view. There is no necessary connection between race, language, culture and nationality. Racial features are largely determined by genetic and biological factors, whereas culture and language are learnt, acquired and transmitted through training and education.

Race prejudice is based on false and irrational premises. In fact, racism has proved to be one of the most dangerous myths of modern times. Hitler's belief in the superiority of the Nordic race led to the most inhuman massacre of six million Jews in Nazi Germany. Race prejudice has been responsible for the persecution and harassment of thousands of Negroes in the United States. The obnoxious phenomenon of apartheid in South Africa, whereby a small white minority had ruthlessly ruled over a vast black population, is an expression of the ideology of racism.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Bring out the relationship between culture and biology. Use about eight lines.

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2) Distinguish between race and culture. Use about six lines.

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21.5 LET US SUM UP

- i) Culture, which differentiates human beings from other animals, refers to the sum total of their activities, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and all that is characteristic of them as social beings.
- ii) Culture is shared by the members of a group or community. It is learnt and acquired by individuals through language. It is transmitted from one generation to another through training and education.
- iii) Culture is an expression of human beings' unique capabilities and potentialities. On the other hand, it plays an active role in the fulfilment of these potentialities. Culture has been instrumental in the evolutionary survival of human race.
- iv) Culture is significantly related to biological processes. It regulates the manner in which basic biological urges, such as hunger, thirst and sex, are satisfied. Consequently, there are tremendous variations in respect of satisfactions of these urges.
- v) Cultural processes have a significant bearing on health and sickness in society. Factors such as class, occupation, urbanisation and food habits are significantly correlated with certain types of diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes and ulcer.

- vi) The respective roles of men and women are not determined by biological processes, but are defined and influenced by cultural conditions. In other words, a culture defines what roles and activities are appropriate for men and women.

21.6 KEY WORDS

- Cultural Transmission** : The process whereby elements of culture, such as language, attitudes and beliefs, are passed on from one generation to another through training and education.
- Endogamy** : The system of marrying within one's own group or caste.
- Exogamy** : The system of marriage which requires that a person may marry only in another group or village.
- Fraternal Polyandry** : A system of marriage in which a woman is married to two or more brothers in the same household.
- Genetic Transmission** : The mechanism whereby the parents pass on their hereditary physical characteristics to their offspring.
- Gotra** : A Hindu clan which traces descent from a common ancestor.
- Lineage** : A group of people who are related by blood ties, and who trace their descent from a common ancestor.
- Polyandry** : A system of marriage in which a woman is married to two or more men at the same time.
- Polygyny** : A system of marriage in which a man is allowed to have more than one wife.
- Race** : A human population whose members share some hereditary biological characteristics which separate them from other groups.
- Rules of Incest** : Universally prevalent rules in human society which prohibit marital or sex relations among close relatives, such as between father and daughter, mother and son, brother and sister.
- Shamanism** : The widely prevalent belief among primitive people in the power of medicine men and sorcerers, who act on behalf of spiritual forces and heal the sick.
- Species Specific** : Those characteristics and features, mainly of a biological and physiological nature, which are unique to human beings or any other organisation.
- Symdolic Communication** : Communication through language which is unique to human beings.

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21.8 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Culture has three major features. It is commonly shared among the members of a group or community. It is the attribute of a group, rather than an individual and therefore a social phenomena. It is learnt and acquired by individual human beings in the course of growing up in a social milieu largely through language. It is transmitted, through education, from one generation to another.
- 2) Human being is a unique animal in the animal kingdom because unlike other animals they do not behave by instinct but according to the cultural pattern of their society. They use tools of increasing complexity and functionality than any animal, Culture is unique to the human species.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Culture and biological processes are closely related. Culture regulates the satisfaction of basic biological urges, such as hunger, thirst and sex. Consequently, these urges are satisfied in scores of ways by various groups of mankind.

There is a significant correlation between certain types of diseases (such as hypertension, diabetes and ulcer) and certain cultural factors, such as food habits, urbanisation, occupation and class. Roles of men and women are not determined by biological factors. These are conditioned by cultural processes.

- 2) Race constitutes the differences in physical features and characteristics which are transmitted generically from one people to another. The racial features have nothing to do with cultural or linguistic features, although culture is often confused with them. Culture, as a contrast, is the sum total of human beings life ways, their behaviour, feelings and thoughts. It constitutes everything that is acquired by them as social beings.

UNIT 22 CULTURE II : DIVERSITY AND CHANGE

Structure

- 22.0 Objectives
- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Culture and Environment
- 22.3 Culture and Society
- 22.4 Culture and Language
- 22.5 Structure of Culture
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- 22.6 Cultural Diversity
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 - 22.8.4 Diffusion and Language
- 22.9 Let Us Sum Up
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- 22.12 Model Answer to Check Your Progress

22.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you should be able to describe that:

- Culture and environment are closely related;
- Language is one of the most important agencies through which elements of culture are shared among the members of society, and through which cultural traditions are transmitted from generation to generation;

- Though culture constitutes a unity of whole, it can be analytically separated into its constituent elements, such as traits, patterns, symbols and ethos;
- Cultural diversity and cultural conditioning are the two major dimensions of the concept of culture; and
- Culture is subject to changes over time.

22.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 21, you have learnt about the main characteristics of culture, You have learnt how culture has played a crucial role in the survival of human race, and how it represents the fulfilment of human beings' unique capacities.

You have also learnt about the relations between culture and biology; the diverse ways in which human beings basic needs are satisfied; the manner in which the processes of health and sickness are influenced by cultural factors; and the extent to which the roles of men and women are defined by culture,

In this unit, we shall carry the discussion further and bring out the relation between culture and environment, as well as, between culture and language. In this unit you will learn about the manner in which human behaviour is organised and regulated in terms of traits, symbols and ethos.

This unit will provide you with a better understanding of the variations and differences which exist in groups of mankind in all aspects of life, as well as the ways in which these differences persist and are passed on from generation to generation.

You will also learn how cultural artefacts, traits, inventions and innovations spread from one region to another. The processes of cultural change are explained with concrete illustrations.

It is hoped that the two units 21 and 22 will considerably enrich and expand your understanding of human behaviour. By sharpening your perception and sensitivity, these units will hopefully provide you with a broader and truly human perspective on mankind.

22.2 CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

You have learnt in the foregoing unit that culture played a crucial role in the successful adaptation, and thereby evolutionary survival of mankind. Such innovations and inventions as the discovery and use of fire, the domestication of plants and animals, the making of tools and implements, and the use of language greatly helped human beings in meeting the challenges of the environment.

Both human beings and animals have to adapt themselves to the natural environment. The adaptation of animals is governed by instinctual mechanisms. Human being, on the other hand, adapts herself or himself to the environment in a variety of ingenious ways. The great apes, who are zoologically the nearest to human beings, can survive in tropical conditions and on specialised diets only in very limited numbers. Human being is capable of living and multiplying on various sorts of diets in all kinds of environmental conditions. Thus the Eskimos have lived in the freezing cold of the Arctic; the Lapps who move with the reindeer and live on its milk and meat, have survived and multiplied in the Iceland of Scandinavia; similarly, the Bushmen, who live on wild roots, berries and plants, have managed to survive in the hot, sandy deserts of South Africa.

The environment may be seen as a dependent or an independent variable in different situations. A harsh habitat, such as the Arctic or desert regions offers a strong challenge to human communities, particularly when their economic and technological resources are limited and simple. Consider, for example, the Bushmen of the Kalahari desert in South Africa, who hunt ostriches in an ingenious manner. The Bushmen hunter with his small bow and arrow, disguises himself under the skin of an ostrich, which is mounted on a frame. Then he cautiously joins the herd of ostriches, and imitates their movements so cleverly that the ostriches do not suspect his presence at all. When he comes closer to an ostrich, he quietly throws his arrow at it, killing the animal.

Water is of paramount importance to the Bushmen since the Kalahari desert is one of the most inhospitable desert regions in the world. They store water in ostrich egg shells. In addition, they suck roots, bulbs and fruits which contain moisture or liquids.

The interplay between culture and environment is best illustrated through what anthropologists refer to as transhumance. The pastoral nomads move about with their livestock from one region to another in search of fresh pastures. The pastoral Fulani of West Africa, for example, move with their animals almost constantly in search of fresh grazing lands. The Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir and the pastoral nomads of Nepal move in late spring and summer to pastures at hills where they live in camps.

The failure of monsoon in certain regions for two or more successive years sometimes forces the farmers to abandon their villages. They come to be heavily dependent on their flocks of sheep, goats and other animals, and quite often move with their herds in search of water and grazing land. In the course of time, many of them shift from agriculture to pastoral nomadism.

Different groups, who live under the same environmental conditions, sometimes adapt themselves to the environment in different ways. Consider for example, the Eskimos of North America. They build their snow houses, called igloos, with blocks of snow. The igloo provides shelter and comfort in the freezing cold of the Arctic. The Eskimos hunt the walrus and survive on its flesh and fat. The walrus ivory is used for sledge runners and for the water-proof boats, known as *kavaks*, in which the Eskimos go out on hunting expeditions.

When we compare the Chukchi and the Yukaghir of the Siberian Arctic, who live under the same harsh climate, as the Eskimos, we find a different pattern of adaptation. The igloo is unknown to them. Skins are attached to a wooden frame, which serves as a shelter. Unlike the Eskimos, who are hunters, the Siberian tribes are herders, depending on the reindeer. The reindeers feed on the tundra, and when there is hardly any **tundra** left for the reindeers to graze on, the Chukchi and the Yukaghir drive off their herd to a new grazing ground. The women, who are left behind along with the children, dismantle the skin tents, pack them on the reindeer, and follow the group.

22.3 CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Society is perceived as a chain of social relations among groups of individuals who are held together by commonly shared institutions and processes. All processes of human life-cycle are carried out and regulated in society. Thus, there is an integral reality of the individual, culture and society. All these are mutually inter-dependent, so that any one of them cannot be adequately understood without reference to the

other. Culture depends for its existence and continuity on groups of individuals whose social relations form society.

Human being is generally defined as a social animal. However, their social nature is not particularly unique to them. A society can exist at the sub-human level. Ants and bees, for example, have genuine societies. The chimpanzees and Gorillas in the wild live in their society much like human beings: they form stable relationships; they move about and hunt in groups.

Culture exists only in human societies. There can be an animal society without culture, but no human society is found without having to own culture. Consequently, what differentiates men and women qualitatively from other species of animals is not their social nature, but their culture. Human being is essentially a cultural or symbolic animal.

In actual life, society and culture cannot be separated. Even though culture is a broader category, it cannot exist and function without society. Society, in other words, is a necessary pre-condition for culture. Similarly, neither society nor culture can exist independent of human beings.

In the same way culture and civilisation are closely related. Civilisation refers to a historical phase of culture. A civilisation is characterised by certain distinctive features, such as cities and urbanisation, occupational specialisation, monumental structures such as temples, places and tombs, classes and hierarchies, and above all, the art of writing. Civilisation emerged for the first time in human history in ancient Mesopotamia during the 4th millennium B.C.

22.4 CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

You have learnt in Unit 21 that human beings capacity for symbolic communication or language sharply differentiates them from other animals. Language plays a crucial role in the process of enculturation, whereby the individual acquires and imbibes the values, beliefs, customs and habits of his society. Language facilitates the sharing and accumulation of experiences and skills; it is also instrumental in the transmission of cultural traditions from one generation to another. Language has played a pivotal role in the evolutionary survival of *homo sapiens* and the continuity of human society.

Language is learnt and acquired by the human child in a social and inter-personal context. A human being's mind is especially programmed for learning language, and a child of average ability can master any complex language of the world, be it Chinese, Sanskrit or Arabic. The primates, such as monkeys and apes, have quite an elaborate repertoire of gestures and sounds, which serve as the basis of primate communication. A rhesus monkey has a vocabulary of somewhere between forty and hundred sounds and gestures, which are understood by the members of the tribe. They all share the same vocabulary and use it in exactly the same way, without any variations or re-combinations. Human languages, on the other hand, are characterised by infinite variations in respect of vocabulary, usage and expression. The Oxford English Dictionary, for example contains 2,50,000 words, many of which are derived from scores of other languages.

Language reflects the cultural patterns and traditions of people. The Eskimo language, for example, has twelve different words for different kinds of snow, which cannot be adequately rendered into English or any other language. This is because snow occupies a central place in the life of the Eskimo. Similarly, the Arabic language has scores of words for the camel, for which there could be no exact equivalents in

English. The life of the Bedouin nomad in the Arabian desert is centred around the camel. The Navaho Indians, who are pastoral nomads, move continually from one pasture to another with their flock of sheep. Their cultural life is reflected in their language, folklore, myths and legends: their gods and heroes move restlessly from one place to another. The caste system occupies a central place in the Indian society. Aspects of caste, such as ritual ranking and notions of purity and pollution, are reflected not only in behaviour patterns but also in the vocabulary and usage of Indo-European and Dravidian languages. Thus, aspects of culture, which are of central importance to a people, find an extensive elaboration in their language.

Language not only reflects the cultural traditions of a people, but it also influences their perception and thinking. Linguistic patterns in other words, condition, perception and thought. The Zuni language has a common term for orange and yellow; correspondingly the Zunis make no distinction between these two shades. The Hopi language has two grammatical categories, which do not exist in English and many other languages. The first category has names only for temporary events, such as thunder, lightning. The second category has names only for long term events, such as stars, man. The distinction in the Hopi language between these two categories is indicative of the manner in which the Hopi people organise their experience. Many Dravidian languages and also a few contiguous Indo-Aryan languages like Marathi have two First Person Plural Pronouns called Inclusive (of the listener) and Exclusive (of the listener). The distinction is culturally important for them. Thus, the relationship between culture and language is one of mutual interaction and influence.

Activity 1

List at least two differences in linguistic usage which have cultural connotation, such as, dating in the West, in our own Indian language (Hindi, your Mother tongue/Father tongue). Compare your list with those of other students at your Study Centre.

22.5 STRUCTURE OF CULTURE

Culture is constituted by inter-related parts of elements. The internal organisation of culture comprises its structure. The term culture is essentially an abstraction which is derived from an observation of human behaviour. Human behaviour is organised and ordered in terms of traits and patterns. Similarly every culture possesses a unifying principle, a philosophy of life, which permeates every aspect of it. In what follows, we shall examine the structure of culture in terms of patterns, traits, symbols and ethos.

22.5.1 Cultural Patterns

A cultural pattern refers to an ordered sequence of behaviour. It represents a form of behaviour which is shared among the members of a given community or group. In western society, for example, a man is expected to raise his hat while greeting a lady on the street. This is a cultural pattern. In Indian society, one touches the feet of his/her parents, elders and teachers as a mark of respect towards them. This is also an example of a cultural pattern.

Cultural patterns are of two types; ideal cultural patterns and actual behaviour patterns. Ideal cultural patterns define how the people of a society should behave in particular situations. But people do not always behave according to the ideal patterns as

defined by their society, they sometimes deviate from them. Actual behaviour patterns refer to the manner in which people actually behave in particular situations.

A cultural pattern generally combines two or more elements in a given culture. The pattern of plough agriculture, which first originated in Western Asia, comprises the following elements: the plough, animals to draw the plough, domestication of these animals, grains of rice or wheat to be sown, and fertilisation with dung.

The tradition of untouchability which has been abolished way back in India at the time of framing of our Constitution in India comprised the following elements: the notion of inequality among human beings, the ranking of individuals and groups in terms of high and low, the association of ritual purity and pollution, birth and occupation, food and touch.

22.5.2 Cultural Traits and Cultural Complex

A cultural trait is the smallest identifiable unit of a culture, such as bow and arrow. The system of primogeniture, which is prevalent in most parts of India and other countries and according to which the eldest son succeeds his father after his death, is an example of a cultural trait.

A cultural complex, on the other hand, is an aggregate of traits. The jajmani system, which was prevalent in many parts of rural India, provides an illustration of a cultural complex. The jajmani system refers to a complex network of economic, social and cultural relationship 'say' between a food producing family and an artisan family. ; A farming family, for example, get its agricultural tools and implements made and repaired by the former a part of the crop at harvest-time. Thus, the jajmani system, which represented a reciprocity of relationship, functioned as a cultural complex. However, in recent times this cultured complex has more or less disappeared even from our rural societies.

22.5.3 Cultural Symbols

Every culture bestows a special meaning and significance on certain objects and things. Material objects, colours, figures, and gestures thus assume special importance for the members of a given culture. They represent cultural symbols.

A flag, for example, is the symbol of a nation. The **bindiya** or **bottu** on the forehead of some Indian women is a traditional symbol of her married status. The use of **sindoor** or vermilion in the parting of her hair is also a symbolic index of the same. The sacred thread worn by Hindu men in India is a symbolic index of the same. It is a symbolic pointer to their *dwija* or twice-born status. The vertical or horizontal marks made with ash or coloured powder on the forehead of an Indian is a symbolic mark of his/her caste and sect. The Nagas of Assam believe that the forehead is the special seat of the soul, which needs to be guarded from the evil effect of strangers. This is done by pasting on the forehead a small fragment of the leaf of wormwood. This cultural symbol is believed to be efficacious in warding off evil influences.

22.5.4 Cultural Ethos

A culture has two distinctive, but inter-related, aspects. One can be described as **eidos** or the external form of a culture, and the other as **ethos** or the world-view of a people, their conception of the world and of man's relationship with the world. The **eidos** includes the formal structure of a culture, such as its institutions, customs, habits, rituals and behaviour patterns. The **ethos** of a culture refers to its total quality, the system of ideas and values which permeates and dominates the whole culture.

The ethos of Indian culture is expressed in terms of the concept of **dharma** which refers to moral duty or right conduct. It is often described as “the Foundation of the Universe” in the Indian philosophical thought. The concept of **dharma** finds expression in the four life-stages (varnashrama dharma): student, householder, forest dweller and ascetic. Each of these stages is associated with a distinct set of duties and obligations.

22.5.5 Cultural Areas

The area in which similar cultural traits are found is called a cultural area. The great regions of the Pacific, such as Australia, Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia and Indonesia are described as cultural areas, because each one of them is marked by a concentration of distinctive cultural traits and features.

The present boundaries of states in India, which have been drawn on the basis of languages, generally represent cultural areas. For example, Rajasthan, Kashmir, Assam and Tamil Nadu are distinguished from each other not only in respect of the languages but also in regard to certain distinctive cultural traits and characteristics. The north-eastern region, in a general sense, may be regarded as a cultural area. Similarly, the Dravidian south could be broadly regarded as a cultural area, which differs from North India in respect of temple architecture, kinship system and language. However, it should be kept in view that a large cultural area also possesses internal variations.

22.5.6 Major Components of Culture

A culture constitutes a structural unity, in that its various elements or constituent parts are mutually inter-related and inter-dependent. However, it is possible, for the purposes of analysis and understanding to delineate the major components or divisions of culture.

The major components of culture, which are universal in nature, can be analytically separated into the following units:

- i) **Technology** : it refers to the system of tools, implements and artifacts, made and used by a people to meet their basic needs.
- ii) **Economic organisation** : it includes the techniques which are employed by a people in organising the production and distribution of goods and services.
- iii) **Social organisation** : it refers to the framework of social and inter-personal relations.
- iv) **Political organisation** : it refers to the ways and methods of controlling conflict, and deals with the maintenance of the social order.
- v) **Ideology** : it includes a guiding set of beliefs, values and ideals.
- vi) **Arts** : that is the forms which ensure the fulfilment of human beings’ aesthetic urges.
- vii) **Language** : it is the medium through which all the above operate.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Bring out the relationship between culture and environment in a paragraph of about ten lines.

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- 2) Tick the correct answer

- i) Language has played a pivotal role in the evolutionary survival of homosapiens. Yes No
- ii) A cultural trait is one of the largest identifiable unit of a culture. Yes No
- iii) Technology refers to the system of values and beliefs in society. Yes No

22.6 CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Mankind is characterised by tremendous diversities not only in regard to observable features but also in respect of languages, religious beliefs and practices, customs and traditions, and rituals and ceremonies.

You have learnt in Unit 21 that human beings basic needs are satisfied and regulated through culture. Infinite variations exist in the ways in which these needs are satisfied, in the manner in which human groups and communities adapt themselves to the environment, as well as in the expression of universal cultural patterns such as religion, language technology and art. We shall explain cultural diversity with some illustrations.

There are great variations among different human groups in regard to the disposal of the dead. The Jews, Muslims, Christians and several other communities bury their dead. The Hindus cremate the dead. The Parsis in India expose the dead bodies to vultures. The ancient Egyptians mummified the dead bodies of kings, queens and other important individuals. In India, dead bodies are sometimes set afloat in the river Ganga. In addition to these there are other methods of the disposal of the dead, which are practised by human communities in various parts of the world. These include, seafold burial, simple abandonment, dismemberment and setting away in vaults or canoes.

Likewise, religious beliefs, practices and rituals exhibit great variations. Most primitive people believe that natural objects and phenomena such as trees, rivers and the stars, have souls. This is known as *animism*. Others believe in totemism, in which certain species of animals are ritually associated with a clan or a tribe and worshipped

as its ancestor. The Australian aborigines, for example, trace their descent from an ancestor, who is symbolically identified with a honey, ant or kangaroo. Many primitive people also worship the souls of their dead ancestors. On the other hand, there are religions such as Hinduism which believe in a multiplicity of gods and goddesses, and which hold that the divine essence permeates the whole universe. Monotheistic religions such as Judaism and Islam believe in supreme God who is the master and creator of the universe. Buddhism has no notion of a supreme being.

22.6.1 Cultural Diversity In India

Cultural variations exist in all groups of people world wide. Consider, for example, Indian society, which has scores of languages and dialects, beliefs and rites, customs and traditions, habits and behaviour patterns. We shall provide a couple of examples to illustrate the extent of cultural diversity in India.

The Brahmin constitute a single *varna*. However the Brahmin in different parts of the country are not a culturally homogeneous group. They are divided into hundreds of castes and sub-castes called jatis who marry only among themselves. There are great variations among the various Brahmin sub-castes in respect of language, food habits, customs and rituals. The Brahmin sub-castes are divided into two major sects, the Vaishnava and the Shaivite. These sects are divided into numerous smaller sects. For example, in South India, the Vaishnava are divided into Madhava and Shri Vaishnava. The Shri Vaishnava in turn are sub-divided into northern and southern sects. In North India, the Vaishnava are divided into worshippers of Rama and worshippers of Krishna. the worshippers of Rama are sub-divided into Madhava and Ramanandi. The worshippers of Krishna are sub-divided into Chaitanya and Radha-Vallabha.

There are significant variations among the various Brahmin sub-castes in respect of food habits. The Kashmiri pandits eat meat, but not fish. The Maithili Brahmin of Bihar eat meat and fish, but not chicken. Similarly, the Bengali Brahmin and the Saraswat Brahmin eat fish. The Punjabi, Gujarati and South Indian Brahmin on the other hand are strictly vegetarians.

There are differences in the various regions of India in respect of dress pattern. In eastern India the ritual wearing of unsewn garments is widely prevalent. Similarly, one can enter the inner sanctum of a Jain temple only while wearing an unstitched piece of cloth. The Brahmin of eastern Nepal eat their food only while wearing unsewn garments. However, as one moves from Bengal to Western and Northern India, unsewn garments are replaced by stitched garments.

22.6.2 Cultural Diversity and the Unity of Mankind

Cultural variations among the various peoples of the world may appear to be confusing and mind-boggling. However behind the facade of diversity lies the fundamental unity of mankind. All human beings, regardless of social and cultural differences, belong to a single biological species **homo sapiens**. All human groups and populations can inter-breed and produce their own kind. Moreover all human communities share the cultural universals: the capacity for learning and acquiring culture, the capacity for language, incest rules, funerary rites, institutions such as marriage, family and religion, among others.

22.7 CULTURAL CONDITIONING

Human beings, as individuals and as members of groups think, feel, and behave in certain ways because they have been brought up under certain conditions in a given

society or community. The culture of a people influences their perception and attitudes, their values and beliefs their habits and customs. In other words, it is largely our culture which forms our character and builds our personality. This fact is known as cultural conditioning.

A culture influences and conditions people to attach a special meaning to certain objects, things and colours. Certain colours, for example, are regarded as auspicious and are used during festive occasions, ceremonies and rituals. Red is considered auspicious in most parts of India. Brides are dressed in red in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and several other regions. Green has a special cultural significance in Maharashtra. When a girl reaches puberty, the first sari presented to her by her parents is green. The bridal dress is green. A woman wears a green sari during pregnancy. When her son is married, she receives a green sari as a gift from the bride's mother. In South India, particularly Andhra, yellow is considered auspicious at marriages, house warming ceremonies, and religious functions.

You have learnt in unit 21 that food habits are influenced by cultural factors. This conditioning manifests itself in strange but interesting ways. Mushrooms, which are considered a delicacy in the west, are avoided by many vegetarians in India because they are supposed to resemble meat in texture and taste. Similarly, the Jain vegetarians have an initial aversion to tomatoes and beetroot because their colour resembles that of blood.

22.7.1 Purity and Pollution in India

An interesting illustration of the manner in which culture influences and conditions behaviour is provided by an aspect of the caste system which is known as ritual purity and pollution.

Pollution is supposed to be brought about by birth, unclean occupation and contact with death and bodily emissions such as blood, excreta, urine, saliva, nail pairings and hair. Any contact with these things renders a person impure. Pollution is believed to be transferable by physical contact. A more interesting aspect of ritual defilement is known as distance pollution, which is particularly prevalent in South India. It is believed that pollution or impurity can be transmitted by the mere shadow of an untouchable, or by his or her proximity within a certain distance.

In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, certain castes in earlier time had to keep a certain distance between themselves on the one hand and the Brahmins and other higher castes, on the other so as not to defile the latter. Thus, the Shanar, of the toddy-tapper caste of Tamil Nadu, contaminates a Brahmin if he approached him within 24 paces. In Kerala, a Nayar may approach a Brahmin but must not touch him. A Tiyan was allowed to keep himself at a distance of 36 steps from the Brahmin and a Pulayan was not permitted to approach him within 96 paces.

22.7.2 Cultural Relativism

Ethnocentrism is the view that one's way of life, religion and ideals are to be preferred to others. This is a narrow, but widely held, view, and antidote to it is provided by the idea of cultural relativism. Cultural relativism refers to the view that the values, ideals and behaviour patterns of a people are not to be evaluated and judged in terms of our own values and ideas but must be understood and appreciated in their cultural context.

The idea of cultural relativism emphasises the point that we should try to transcend our own cultural conditioning and make an attempt to understand another culture the way it is understood by the individuals who participate in it. This requires a measure

of imagination, understanding and breadth of vision. It is only when we set aside our prejudices and stereotypes about a given people that we can understand them in a realistic and humane manner.

22.8 CULTURAL CHANGE

Human society is characterised, on the one hand, by the persistence and continuity of cultural forms and, on the other, by change and innovation. No society can be totally static or isolated for long periods of time. Changes in a given culture may come about from its internal dynamics, such as revolutions or upheavals, or from contact with other cultures. The coming into contact of two or more cultures generally leads to changes, in different measures, in the interacting cultures. Quite often, cultural traits and patterns spread from the important centres of civilisation to the smaller regions. Since the dawn of civilisation in ancient Mesopotamia during the 4th millennium B.C. to the present, the process of cultural borrowing has been going on in all parts of the world.

22.8.1 Acculturation and Diffusion

When groups of individuals, having different cultural traditions, come into contact, changes take place in their original cultural patterns. This is referred to as acculturation or culture contact. Diffusion on the other hand, refers to the spread of cultural traits and patterns from major centres of civilisation to smaller cultures and occasionally the other way round. Acculturation and diffusion involve one another.

Diffusion generally refers to the spread of specific cultural traits or elements, whereas acculturation refers to the changes brought about in whole cultures.

The processes of acculturation and diffusion have been going on in human society since very ancient times. Thus as far back as the third millennium B.C. we find trade and cultural relations between the Mesopotamian civilisation and the Indus civilisation.

An interesting illustration of the diffusion of cultural traits is provided by the mathematical symbol of zero. The zero can increase the value of symbol one to ten, hundred, thousand and million. The zero was invented, along with the system of numerals, for the first time in India. This system of numerals was adopted by the Arabs during the 5th century. Earlier, in Arabic writing only letters were used in place of numbers. The Arabs, in turn, transmitted the Indian system of numerals to Europe. Interestingly enough, in English the system of writing numerals is still referred to as Arabic numerals whereas in Arabic it is described as Indian numerals.

22.8.2 Diffusion of Paper Making

Paper was invented in china during the beginning of the first century A.D. In A.D. 751, the Chinese attacked Samarkand which was under the control of Muslims. The Arabs repulsed the attack and a number of Chinese were held by them as prisoners of war. The Arabs were aware of the fact that the Chinese knew the technique of paper making. They told the Chinese prisoners that they could secure their release if they taught the Arabs how to make paper. The Chinese prisoners agreed to the condition and taught the technique of paper making to the Arabs.

Within two centuries paper mills were set up in Baghdad and Cairo. Paper making spread through the Muslim world from Samarkand and reached Europe in 1189. In

the course of time, it spread from Muslim Spain to Italy, France, Germany, England and the U.S.A. The following figure brings out the diffusion of paper making from China through the Muslim world to the West.



The Spread of Paper Making

22.8.3 Story of the Alphabet

Writing originated in ancient Mesopotamia during the third millennium B.C. Systems of writing are divided into two main categories, non-alphabetical and alphabetical. The Mesopotamian system of writing, known as cuneiform or wedge-shaped, was non-alphabetical. The first alphabetical system of writing emerged during the 18th century B.C. in Syria and Palestine. It is known as the North Semitic script. It was written from right to left, and it had 22 characters.

During the 9th century B.C., the Greeks borrowed the North Semitic alphabet from the Phoenicians. They improved the system. The Greek alphabet is the mother of all modern European alphabets, including English. The word alphabet comprises the first two letters of the Greek alphabet, namely, alpha and beta, which in turn were derived from the first two letters of the Semitic alphabet, namely Aleph and Beth.

The following chart brings out the evolution of the English alphabet from the 18th century B.C. to the present.

North Semitic				Greek			Etruscan		Latin		Modern caps				
EARLY	EARL CANA RITE	CANA RITE	PHOEN ICIAN	EARLY	EAST	WEST	CLASS ICAL	EARLY	CLASS ICAL	EARLY	MONUME NTAL	CLASS ICAL	BLACK LETTER	ITALIC	ROMAN
K	F	K	F	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	A	A	A	Λ	A	A	A	A
9	9	9	9	B	B	B	B	B			B	B	B	B	B
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	>		<	C	C	C	C
∇	∇	∇	∇	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	∇			∇	D	D	D	D

Evolution of English Alphabet

22.8.4 Diffusion and Language

A comparative study of languages provides an interesting illustration of the dimensions of cultural diffusion. The English language has borrowed and adopted hundreds of words from Chinese, Indian, Semitic, African and other languages of the world in the course of its development. Consider, for example, the following words which are widely used in English but which are of Indian origin: bungalow, chit, loot, jungle, bamboo, bandicoot, verandah. The following words are of Arabic origin: sofa,

cotton, tamarind, algebra, admiral, cipher, tariff, alcohol, atlas, arrack. English has contributed a large body of vocabulary related to technology, industry and mechanics.

Another interesting illustration of cross-cultural diffusion is provided by the manner in which certain words are borrowed and modified in different languages. The following chart provides the origin of some English words.

English	Arabic	Sanskrit
Sandal (wood)	Sandal	Chandan
Ginger	Zanjabil	Shrangaver
Camphor	Kafur	Karpur (which in turn was driven from the Chinese)

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Show how the concepts of cultural diversity and cultural conditioning broaden our understanding of human behaviour. Use about ten lines.

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2) Fill in the blank in the given space.

- i) Cultural variations exist not only world-wide but within the same also.
- iii) In the South of India, the Vaishnavas are divided into and

22.9 LET US SUM UP

- 1) Culture and environment are closely inter-related. The environment may be seen as an independent or a dependent variable in different situations.
- 2) There is a close relationship between society and culture. A society may exist at the sub-human level, but only human society possesses culture. Thus, what differentiates human beings from other animals is culture.
- 3) Language reflects the culture of a people; it also influences and conditions their perception and thinking.

- 4) Though culture constitutes a unity, it can be analytically separated into its constituent elements, such as patterns, traits, symbols, and ethos.
- 5) Communities and groups of mankind in all parts of the world are characterised by tremendous variations not only in respect of physical and racial features, but also in regard to religious beliefs and practices, customs and traditions, rituals and ceremonies.
- 6) The cultural differences among groups of mankind persist and are passed on from one generation to another through training and education.
- 7) No culture can remain static or totally isolated for long periods of time. Cultural traits, inventions and innovations often spread from the major centres of civilisations and find their way, often in modified forms, into other cultures.

21.10 KEY WORDS

Acculturation	: The coming into contact of two cultures, as result of which one is influenced by the other.
Cultural Area	: The area in which similar cultural traits are found.
Cultural Complex	: An aggregate or collection of cultural traits.
Cultural Conditioning	: The process whereby the thought and behaviour of individuals in a given society are influenced by its culture.
Cultural Ethos	: The world-view of a people.
Cultural Relativism	: The view that the values and ideals of a culture are to be judged in their own terms.
Cultural Symbols	: Objects and things which are endowed with a special meaning or significance by people.
Cultural Trait	: The smallest identifiable unit of a culture.
Cultural Universals	: Institutions and cultural patterns which are universally found in all human regions.
Ritual Pollution	: The belief that contact with unclean occupations, untouchable persons, death and bodily emissions renders a person impure.
Transhumance	: The regular movement of pastoral nomads with their livestock in search of fresh pasturage.
Tundra	: A treeless plain, comprising black mucky soil and a dense growth of dwarf herbs.

22.11 FURTHER READINGS

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22.12 MODEL ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Culture and environment are closely related. Human communities and groups adapt themselves to their environment in a variety of ingenious ways. Environmental conditions facilitate, as well as block, the fulfilment of human potentialities in different situations. A harsh environment, such as the Arctic or desert regions, creates greater problems of adjustment, especially when the economic and technological resources of a people are limited.

A community or group may relate differently to the same milieu at different times. In the same way, different groups in the same environment may adapt themselves to their habitat in different ways.

- 2) i) Yes. (See Section 22.4)
ii) No. (See Section 22.5.2)
iii) No. (See Section 22.5.6)

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The concept of cultural diversity makes us aware of the tremendous differences which exist among groups of mankind in respect of languages, religious beliefs and practices, customs and traditions. It also makes us aware of the diverse ways in which human beings adapt themselves to the environment, and the different ways in which their basic needs are satisfied.

The concept of cultural conditioning, on the other hand, brings to our awareness the fact that the differences among groups of mankind in respect of values, ideas and behaviour are neither biologically given, nor are they genetically transmitted from parents to children.

Human beings think, feel and behave in certain ways because they have been brought up in a given social and cultural milieu. These distinct ways of thinking and behaviour are acquired by individuals through the cultural process.

- 2) i) Country
ii) Madhavas, Shri Vaishnavas.

UNIT 23 VALUES

Structure

23.0 Objectives

23.1 Introduction

23.2 Values in Social Sciences

23.2.1 Definition of Values

23.2.2 Nature of Values

23.3 Distinction Between Values and Norms

23.4 Values in Personality and Socio cultural Systems

23.4.1 Human being as a Value-creating and Value-fulfilling Animal

23.4.2 Hierarchy of Values

23.4.3 Values as Core of Culture-Personality

23.4.4 Values and Environment

23.5 Change in Systems of Values In Indian society

23.5.1 Values in the Vedic Period

23.5.2 Values in the Post-Vedic Period

23.5.3 Values in the Buddhist Period

23.5.4 Manusmriti : Veda of the Brahmanical Revival

23.5.5 Values in the Islamic Period

23.5.6 The Modern Value System

23.6 Let Us Sum Up

23.7 Key Words

23.8 Further Readings

23.9 Model Answers to Check Your Progress

23.0 OBJECTIVES

On studying this unit you should be able to:

- describe what values are;
- distinguish between values and norms;
- explain how values integrate personalities and cultures; and
- discuss how they change from time to time in the same society.

23.1 INTRODUCTION

By now you are familiar with the fact that cultures differ from one another and a person belonging to the same culture behaves more or less in the same way. Underlying such differentiation and similarities are values and norms. In this unit you will learn about the meaning of values and how values can be distinguished from

norms. You will also learn about the role of values in the personality formation and the socio-cultural system. In this unit we have discussed the process in which values change within a society from one period to another. As an example we have discussed the change of values in Indian society from the Vedic period to the modern times.

23.2 VALUES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

It is not easy to define social values. Like most terms employed in the social sciences, the term value too has been taken from common parlance. And in common parlance the same word is used by various people in a number of different senses. However, when we use a word in scientific discussion, we should do our best to make its meaning as precise and well-defined as possible. Otherwise statements would become loose, and discussions are likely to be confusing. Unless crucial terms are properly defined, it would be difficult to make headway in understanding and analysis and in furtherance of knowledge through research work.

23.2.1 Definition of Values

Broadly speaking, values are conceptions of the desirable, which influence selective behaviour. Values may be defined as the criteria and moral judgement or certain subjective standards through which individuals or groups distinguish between good or bad, true or false and between ought to be or not to be etc. It shapes individual personality, social morality and guides individuals to be a part of or function within distinctive socio-cultural system.

23.2.2 Nature of Values

Values are the generally accepted basic assumptions about what is right and important. They define the purposes of life and the means of achieving them. According to International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences (ISSS: 1968) all “purposive actions fall within the boundaries of evaluative action. Within purposive actions we can identify three main kinds of value: conative (desire, liking), achievement (success versus frustration), and affective (pleasure versus pain or unpleasantness)”.

Some writers take such view of this concept that for them anything good or bad is a value, or a value is anything of interest to a human subject. However, it seems inappropriate to extend the meaning to the terms so widely as to make it meaningless.

Activity 1

In what ways do you think values are changing in society today? Observe different relationships, such as, between father and son, daughter and mother, teacher and the taught in you family/community. Write an essay of two pages on “The changing Values in My Society.”

Discuss your essay with other students and your Academic Counsellor at your Study Centre.

23.3 DISTINCTION BETWEEN VALUES AND NORMS

Values and norms are deeply related to each other; both are concerned with accepted assumptions about what is considered to be right or wrong, or desirable or undesirable. Values constitute the basis of norms. Norms depend upon values and are justified through standards of “true”, “good” and “beautiful”.

Relatively speaking, values are more general and abstract than norms. Norms are relatively more specific: they refer to sets of expected behaviour associated with a particular situation or with a given position in the social order. Widely shared values such as truthfulness, loyalty or respect for elders find expression through (relatively) concrete norms which vary with different situations; strata and professions.



Values : Touching the Feet of Elders

Norms themselves are sometimes evaluated. Behaviour conforming to two different norms (both of which may be acceptable) may be regarded as better or worse in terms of values which are more fundamental.

Norms provide specific rules about what should be done or should not be done by various kinds of actors in particular situations. On the other hand values are abstract standards of desirability, so that they are relatively independent of specific situation.

Since values are more general, the same value may be embedded in a wide variety of norms. For instance, the values of respect and obedience to superiors underline various sets of norms related to widely different institutions such as the family, military, schools, and administrative, political or religious organisation.

On the other hand, it is not unusual for a particular norm to embody simultaneously a number of separable values. For example, the norms which forbid cheating in an examination are based on several values such as those of honesty, achievement, equality of opportunity and pursuit of knowledge.

Apart from the differences in the levels of generality and specificity, another useful basis of distinction exists between values and norms.

This is the field of value inquiry which refers to attitudinal directives like choice preference, likes and dislikes while the field of normative inquiry refers to those attitudinal directives which consist of obligations and prescriptions. We can also define values as the preferred mode of orientation to specified categories of human experience. The characteristics of norms can be best explained in comparison with categories of values. Therefore, since values involve preferences whereas norms

involve prescriptions, there are higher degrees of freedom and more room for deviance in the realm of value orientation.

Values provide standards for judging a wide variety of aspects of socio-cultural life: actions, goals, means, ideas, attitudes, qualities, objects, persons and groups.

Dominant values have been found to involve (i) extensiveness, (ii) persistence (duration), (iii) intensity (iv) prestige of value carriers.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Define values and describe its nature. Use about five lines.

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2) How are values different from norms? Give an example. Use about five lines.

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23.4 VALUES IN PERSONALITY AND SOCIO-CULTURAL SYSTEMS

Values play an important part in the integration of the personality and the socio-cultural systems. They serve as the means of forestalling, resolving or minimising conflict both at the level of personality and that of the system of social interaction.

23.4.1 Human Being As a Value-creating and Value-fulfilling Animal

As Radhakamal Mukerjee (1960: 10), whose contribution to the study of values is widely recognised, points out that human beings create values and also fulfil them. This particular ability affects both the formation of personality and the formation of groups and institutions in society. In this sense human beings are not only the source of values but also those who judge the behaviour involved in day to day functioning of society.

A difference is sometimes drawn between personal and social values. However, even those values which are regarded as personal, are largely acquired by the individual from the society, or a segment of it, to which he/she belongs. A human infant is hardly a social being or person at the time of its birth, though it does possess

the potentiality to become one. It is through the process of socialisation that it becomes a social being or a person. Internalisation of the values of the group is an integral and important part of this process of socialisation.

23.4.2 Hierarchy of Values

A person does not attach equal importance to all his or her values. There is a hierarchy of values. In a situation of competing claims, the lower values must yield to the higher one. Thus, when the examinations are close, a student would rather study than go to see a movie. Undoubtedly, in many situations the individual is faced with a conflict of values. But these conflicts are resolved or kept to a minimum through the hierarchical ordering of values. In the absence of such hierarchy of values, the integration of an individual’s personality is likely to be seriously threatened, and his actions may become chaotic.

A socio-cultural system too is integrated through a degree of coherence among its diverse values and the general consensus about their hierarchical ordering. According to Radhakamal Mukerjee (1960: 13) the values pertaining to various aspects of life, such as economic, political, moral or religious, form a network. The values of all social groups and institutions like political, economic, religious, etc., also affect each other in the process of interaction and they overlap with each other.

23.4.3 Values as Core of Culture - Personality

Sets of values form the core and ethos of every culture. People belonging to a culture, however, are often not conscious of many of the values, for, values are internalised and become a part of their personality. Radhakamal Mukerjee (1960 : 13) says that a normal person is one who successfully obtains a balance between the various conflicting values and goals faced in life. When a person is unable to resolve the value conflicts it leads to severe mental strain and imbalance in his or her personality. Therefore, he considers that in all normal human beings the person should be a “whole” person just as a normal society is that which is an integrated whole.

23.4.4 Values and Environment

Values also reflect a society’s adjustment to environment. Those activities and objects which promote adjustment are assigned a higher value. For example, the tribals who are dependent on hunting and gathering assign high degree of value to their bows and arrows and to the preservation of the forest as well. Indeed different aspects of life and spheres of activity have different kinds of value.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

- 1) How is a human being a value-creating and a value-fulfilling animal? Describe in about four lines.

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2) In what way people resolve conflicts of values in their daily life? Use about five lines.

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3) Tick the correct answer.

- i) Social values and personal values are both acquired by the individual from its society. Yes No
- ii) Hierarchy of values leads to conflict of values in an individual’s personality. Yes No
- iii) Values have much to do with the environment and culture of a society. Yes No

23.5 CHANGE IN SYSTEMS OF VALUES IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Though systems of values are quite stable and tenacious, they do undergo basic changes in course of time. Values are strongly bound to other aspects of the social system to which they belong; and change in the value system goes hand in hand with changes in the social system as a whole. Whether it is the change in the value system that causes social change, that is, the change of the social system; or it is some other factors which bring about basic social change, including a change in the value systems - is a question on which opinion is sharply divided. Let us have a glimpse of the change in the system of values of the civilisation to which we ourselves belong.

It is customary to talk of “Indian Values” in a way as if all sections of Indian people share the very same values in all historical eras. This is obviously not so. Besides variations in the value systems of the people of different strata and other segments of Indian society, the values of the dominant elites themselves have undergone tremendous changes over various socio-cultural eras, about which we have ample evidence from textual and other sources.

Since socio-cultural systems are wholes, attempts to study particular values in isolation from the dynamics of the system as a whole tend to remain superficial. Sometimes they are even misleading. This is all the more true in the case of traditional socio-cultural systems, such as that of India, which have grown over long periods of time; when their structural and cultural elements have developed a high degree of consistency. We shall therefore view the changes in the Indian value system in the perspective of the dynamics of the traditional socio-cultural system as a whole from the Rigvedic times onwards. This would illustrate how the systematic values of a civilisation which has maintained remarkable continuity have undergone numerous changes in the course of time.

23.5.1 Values in the Vedic Period

Rigveda, the earliest literary source, provides us a good deal of information about the people who migrated and settled in India around 1500 B.C.

It tells us that the militant Aryans destroyed ninety nine cities and overpowered their inhabitants, who are referred as “dasa”. After the victory, the following pattern appears to emerge.

i) **Conflict of Values Between the Conquerors and the Vanquished**

The vanquished people are referred to as **dasa** (slave) and **pani**. The **pani** are portrayed as wealthy traders. The cattle wealth of the **pani** was a great attraction for the Aryan. Being traders the **pani** did not want to part with their cows and other wealth without compensation. The tendency of **pani** to expect something in exchange for everything that they gave, appeared absurd to the semi-nomadic Aryan.

Such a clash of race and culture between the Aryan and the non-Aryan contributed, in a myriad subtle ways, to the shaping of the Indian traditions of culture and patterns of values. The varna stratification, the distinctiveness of the elite and the folk streams of culture, and the double standards that prevail in the sacred and the secular law - all these owe a good deal to this clash, and the consequent patterns of adjustment that came into being .

ii) **Duality of Norms and Values**

The hatred towards the racially distinct subjugated people found expression in social values and norms. In Rigveda, we find two sets of norms, one for the Aryan and the other for the non-Aryan. The poet, Samvanana, exhorts Aryans to live together in a spirit of harmony and unity. He says, “May you go together, speak together, may your minds know together just as the gods of earlier times take their portions together”. But none of the poets of Rigveda ever expressed the desirability of the Aryan living peacefully with the dasa.

It would appear thus that the foundations of the valuational patterns that have persisted till the present day were laid long ago, perhaps in the Vedic era itself. The facts briefly mentioned above indicate how the Aryan priests and warriors had begun to look upon the non-Aryan traders (Pani) as a perennial source of wealth for extortion and the dasa as the people whose only duty was to serve the Aryan master. The elaborate legal system found in the Smriti, which prescribes different codes of conduct, privilege and penalties for persons of different Varna. This also has its roots in the double standards of morality and law for the Aryan and the non-Aryan laid down in the Veda.

However, after the Aryan settled down in the Indo-Gangetic plains and established a working relationship with the pre-Aryan people, their militant spirit declined. They took over many non-Aryan values and beliefs. Conflicts within the Aryan elites also began to take shape. Through the Brahmana Grantha, the priestly Brahmana asserted their superiority over the Kshatriya who were kings and warriors. Many elaborate and expensive *yajna* were prescribed for which the Kshatriya had to pay. The Kshatriya revolted against this dispensation. Their protest found expression in the Upanishad.

23.5.2 Values in the Post-Vedic Period

In the Upanishad, the knowledge of the Self is considered the ultimate aim of life. Persons from all walks of life participated and made contribution to it. The language of Upanishad was easy to understand and therefore attracted people. People belonging even to the younger generation of the priestly elite had lost their interest in the intricate sacrifice and rituals. This wave gave a strong blow to the supreme position of the priestly elites as well as to the Varna hierarchy.

It appears that by the time of the Upanishadic era, the notion of racial purity was compromised to such an extent that it became a part of the ritual purity. Thus for getting formal entry into the community, it was made obligatory for each child to undergo certain sacraments or Sanskara. From conception to death, these sacraments are to be performed to mark the turning points in a person's life.

It seems that in all traditional societies, whenever the elites want to get rid of the immediate past, they try to revive the ancient past. Due to the long interval of time, a complete revival of the bygone age is never possible. Usually what is revived is only some outer form of the ancient past. During the Upanishadic era the values of Varna-hierarchy lost their hold. The lower castes, women and the younger generation of elites revolted against the traditional social order. During this era many popular non-Aryan values got entry into the elite stream. The stronghold of the priestly elites loosened to such an extent that even the priests had to get acquainted with the newly emerging metaphysical ideas.

23.5.3 Values in the Buddhist Period

The social values sought to be re-established in the Post-Vedic period were challenged again by Buddhism. The impact of Buddhism was very great. Unlike Brahmanical elites, Buddha preached in the common man's language. He preached equality of all human beings. The Brahmanical lore was in Sanskrit. It was the preserve of the elite only. Buddha's teachings were open to all castes. Buddha attacked the great Vedic sacrifices and declared them wasteful and futile. Buddhism became popular among rulers, well-to-do merchants, artisans and peasants.

The value of equality among castes and the stress on hard work and frugality propagated by Buddhism, promoted industrial and business activity. People made remarkable progress in trade and industry during this era. Many industries and crafts are mentioned in Buddhist literature. The Jataka mentions eighteen types of guilds of artisans and workers. They are mentioned as **sheni** or **puga** (**seni** and **puga** in Sanskrit). The royal court recognised these guilds. There used to be a head craftsman in each guild. He is called **Jethaka** or **pamukha** (**jyeshtha** or **pramukha** in Sanskrit). He was an important member of the royal court. Gradually there developed a prosperous commercial class.

Buddhism disturbed the caste hierarchy and the division of society entirely on the basis of birth. The racial factor which was the basis of colour doctrine got another jolt from foreign hordes who continually came to India. They fulfilled very well the criteria of white complexion and blond hair propounded by Patanjali as the physical qualities of a Brahmana.

23.5.4 Manusmriti: Veda of the Brahmanical Revival

Therefore in order to maintain the uniqueness of the Brahman the criteria of racial purity had to be replaced by ritual purity. The Brahman too had lost their racial purity to some extent, despite theoretically emphasising the colour/doctrine. Still another threat was from the pre-Aryan darker people who were at the lower rungs of the social hierarchy. They constituted the majority in the society. Their norms and culture were basically different from the Aryan.

In order to survive, the priestly elites had to meet all these challenges, and at the same time revive the flickering Brahmanical tradition. In this period of crisis Manusmriti, the Veda of the Brahmanical revival, appeared on the horizon. Unlike the Sutra of the Post-Vedic period which were recognised to be creations of human being, Smriti were presented as the dictates of mythical seers. It is indeed appropriate

to attribute the Manusmriti, the grand treatise of revivalist era, to Manu, the primeval father, since work really laid the foundations of the social and moral order supposed to be based on Vedic tradition.

23.5.5 Values in the Islamic Period

Impact of Islam in India can be traced back to the Arab conquest of the Sind in the beginning of the eighth century. The Muslim population in India was sixty million in 1973. In 1991 (Census 1991) the population of Muslim in India was about 101 million which is about 12.1% of total population of India. Historically and sociologically speaking Islamic values play a very important role in the cultural tradition of India.

When we talk about the values in the Vedic period, in the Upanishadic period, and so on, we are basically talking about the Hindu Great tradition. In contrast, the Islamic Great tradition is founded on a world-view which more or less “is non-hierarchical, is purely monotheistic, and messianic-historical in ethos” (Singh 1973 : 68). It is non-hierarchical in the sense that according to Islam all men are equal in the eyes of God, unlike the Hindu tradition. In the Hindu tradition, as Manu has accorded, the Brahmin are at the top; the Kshatriya are next to them, followed by the Vaishya and at the lowest rung are the Sudra.

Islam is monotheistic in the sense that its people believe in the existence of one supreme God, unlike Hinduism where multitude of Gods and Goddesses are worshipped. It is messianic-historical in ethos because its origin is traced to the time of Abraham, or Ibrahim. From the sons of Abraham the three religions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism are traced. It believes in the notion of messiah who will redeem the world and that there will be the day of judgement when the world ends.

Islamic values, like Hindu values, or for that matter any other values, have not remained constant. There has been a lot of intermixture between Hinduism and Islam. Sufism, a sect of Muslim religious mystics, has the elements of ‘bhakti’ of Hinduism. Similarly, Sikh religion has values of both the great traditions, Hindu, as well as Islam. Because of a long period of socio-cultural interaction the Muslim population of India had elements which are not present amongst the Muslims of other countries. They have caste-like structures in their society. Certain customs are also borrowed from the Hindu population. Similarly, the Hindu communities have borrowed the custom of ‘purdah’ or veil in North India from the Muslims.

23.5.6 The Modern Value System

The traditional value system of India, which formed the basis of its social structure and institutions for more than fifteen hundred years, began to show signs of rapid change and decline as a result of the impact of modern social forces. These forces were brought about, for the most part, by the British rule. The change did not come merely because the rulers were foreigners. It came about primarily because the British represented a radically different type of society - the modern, industrial-capitalist society in all its economic-technical, political-legal, and cultural-ideological dimensions. Moreover, the industrial-capitalist civilisation is an expanding one. It cannot leave the traditional societies to continue as they have been. Because of its own dynamics, it tends to bring about structural and valuational changes in the traditional societies.

i) The British Rule and Indian Value System

The impact of the British rule on the Indian society gave birth to an urban middle class which had values that were not only different but even opposed to the traditional values. It became imbued with the values of modern capitalist society such as

individualism, rationality, competitiveness, acquisitiveness, and activeness. This was a far cry from the unified life of the traditional society where the values of co-operation and contentment prevail. In India the concept of individualism never existed, except in the case of the ‘sanyasi’ otherwise family group was the basic unit of society to which every person belonged.

Impact of the British rule also opened the channels of communication between the Indian elites and the Western society. The English language became the window through which, the Indians could view the changes in Western society. They imbibed the values of freedom. The notions of equality, liberty and fraternity came to be understood and internalised by them. Notion of democracy and self-rule or swaraj became a popular ambition for our leaders during the national movement for freedom in India. In fact, we can see the impact of western values on our national leaders such as, from Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekanand, Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore.

ii) **Impact of Modern Values on Indian Villages**

Modern values did not remain confined to the cities. Modern forces brought about a basic transformation in the relationship between urban centres and the villages; and thus the life and values in the countryside also began to change. It was not that because of the new means of transport and communication, peasant villages were connected with transport and communication, for the first time. In peasant civilisations villages are always related with towns. Unless a stable relationship existed between the villages and the towns the latter could not have survived as they did not produce such essential things as food and cotton. The fact is that a certain kind of relationship always existed between the villages and the towns belonging to the peasant civilisation; but the modern economic, technological, political and cultural factors have brought about a qualitative change in the nature of this relationship, thereby beginning a process of transformation of the village life itself.

In the traditional peasant civilisations, towns thrive on the revenue collected from the villages. Apart from getting such surpluses from the villages, the towns people are not interested in transforming the countryside or in manipulating its life in any way. This picture changes dramatically when towns become centres of commerce and industry. Now the towns people make an all out effort to sell the mass-produced goods in the country side, and to acquire cheap labour and raw material from there.

This has important consequences for the traditional way of life in the villages. The village industries decline, and together with mass-produced commodities which are pumped into the villages, modern attitudes and values also invade the rural areas. The production in the villages also is motivated more and more by the desire for earning the maximum profit, rather than primarily fulfilling one’s requirements. Together, with this, the values of individualism, competition, and unlimited acquisitiveness also has gathered strength.

Activity 2

Are the values of idealism, patriotism, humanism still important to us in India or the values of “Money mindedness” or achievement oriented behaviour along with consumption orientation become important to us? Comment on this in about one page and share your views with other students and Academic Counsellor at your Study Centre.

Modern forces dealt a blow to folk values, as well as to the folkway of life. In traditional, peasant civilisations, the basic values underlying the elite and the folk

traditions of culture were the same. The difference between the two traditions was primarily that of the degree of refinement, systematisation, and self-consciousness. It was because of the sharing of the basic values and worldview that the traditional elite culture did not damage or weaken the folk cultures, even though they were in constant interaction with each other. The modern elite culture on the other hand is imbued with values which are not only different from folk values but are opposed to them. It is not surprising, therefore, that the influence of modern elite culture poses a threat to the very existence of folk culture and folk values. We find thus that although the values of a social system tends to form a coherent and relatively stable pattern, they do not remain static.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) In what way were the values of the Aryans different from the Pani? Explain in about six lines.

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2) Tick the correct answer.

- i) Social values and norms in the Vedic period reflected the hatred felt by the subjugated people. Yes No
- ii) Poets of Rigveda expressed the desirability of the Aryan to live peacefully with the Dasa. Yes No
- iii) In the Upanishad, the knowledge of the self is considered to be the ultimate aim of life. Yes No
- iv) Buddha attacked the great Vedic sacrifices and declared them wasteful and futile. Yes No
- v) The concept of hierarchy is central to Islamic values. Yes No

23.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt about the meaning of values in social sciences and how values are different from norms in several ways. You have also come to know about the role of values in the personality structure and socio-cultural systems of society. The unit has also explained the process in which the values change with time in the same society and how the historical circumstances shape and reshape the values of a society.

23.7 KEY WORDS

- Achievement** : a result brought about by resolve, persistence or endeavour.
- Acquisitiveness** : the behaviour which implies a strong desire to acquire or possess.
- Affective** : belonging to the sphere of emotions.
- Attitudinal** : according to the personal attitudes or feelings or judgements.
- Cognitive** : that which can be known, including both the processes of awareness and judgements, such as good and bad, ugly and beautiful etc.
- Conative** : an inclination (such as an instinct, a drive, a wish or a craving) to act purposefully.
- Concreteness** : something which is definite, factual and real.
- Generality** : something which is present in all cases, that is which is common to all.
- Psychic** : which belongs to the sphere of the mind or that which is mental.
- Specificity** : the condition of being peculiar to a particular individual or group of organisms.

23.8 FURTHER READINGS

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23.9 MODEL ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Values are conceptions of the desirable which influence selective behaviour. They are deeply associated with the human personality and the socio-cultural system of the society. They are the generally accepted basic assumptions of what is right and important in society and what is not. Values define the purposes of life and the means of achieving them.
- 2) Values are intimately related to norms since they constitute the basis of norms. Norms depend upon values and are justified through standards of values like “true”, “good” and “beautiful”. However, norms are more specific in comparison with values which are more general and abstract. Norms are

more prescriptive or prohibitive and therefore, involves lesser freedom than values.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Human being is a value-creating and a value-fulfilling animal in the sense that she or he is not only the fountain of values but also makes value judgements which are embodied in all inter-personal goals, relations and behaviour in the normal functioning of groups and institutions.
- 2) People resolve the conflicts of values which they face in their daily life by placing these values in a hierarchy. According to the priority of their goals in life and actions required to fulfil those goals, they follow these values. Therefore, value conflicts are resolved through the process of selection of each value.
- 3)
 - i) Yes (See section 24.4.1)
 - ii) No (See section 23.4.2)
 - iii) Yes (See section 23.4.4)

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) the Aryan were the conquerors, robust and lively in spirit. They were militant and being semi-nomadic they did not believe in accumulation. They readily shared their food with their guests. While the Pani were the vanquished people who were the wealthy traders of that time. Being traders they did not like parting with their wealth, including cattle, without getting something in compensation.
- 2)
 - i) Yes (See section 23.5.1.2)
 - ii) No (See section 23.5.1.2)
 - iii) Yes (See section 23.5.2)
 - iv) Yes (See section 23.5.3)
 - v) No (See section 23.5.5)

THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 24 NORMS

Structure

24.0 Objectives

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24.2 The Nature of Social Norms

24.2.1 Changing Nature of Social Norms

24.2.2 Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft Norms

24.2.3 Discord in Norms

24.3 Aspects of Norms

24.3.1 Folkways and Mores : Kindred Concepts

24.3.2 Types of Norms

24.3.3 Integration and Conflict of Norms

24.3.4 Diversity of Norms in Different Cultures

24.4 The Function of Norms in Socialisation and Social Control

24.4.1 Deviance

24.4.2 Anomie

24.5 Let Us Sum Up

24.6 Key Words

24.7 Further Readings

24.8 Model Answers to Check Your Progress

24.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you should be able to:

- describe the characteristics of norms;
- discuss the different types of norms;
- analyse the role played by norms in the integration of society;
- describe the diversity of norms in different cultures; and
- list the function of norms in socialisation and social control.

24.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you are going to learn about the nature of social norms. The ways in which social norms are changing and the differences between the various types of norms. Here the diversity of norms in different cultures has been discussed. You will also learn about the function of norms in the process of socialisation and social control. The unit discusses the problem of deviance and anomie in society.

24.2 THE NATURE OF SOCIAL NORMS

the use of “norms” as a technical term in the social sciences is rather new. This is shown by the fact that the 1930 edition of the **Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences**

did not even include this term. The word “norm” is derived from the Latin “**norms**”, which is a carpenter’s square or rule.

Social norms are standards of behaviour shared by the members of a social group, to which they are expected to conform. Norms refer to accepted and required behaviour for a person or a group in a particular setting. They are rules for social living.

No social structure can survive without social norms; for social structure is made up of patterned social behaviour, and unless the behaviour of people is regulated by a vast variety of prescriptive and prohibitive norms, human society is bound to be thrown into unthinkable chaos.

24.2.1 Changing Nature of Social Norms

Unlike physical reality, human society is sustained by laws that are normative. While the laws of the physical world operate by themselves and are not disobeyed, the norms of various kinds which regulate social relationships, and ultimately the social structure, can be violated and also changed.

Social norms are standards of a group for controlling the conduct of its members in relation to each other and to the community as a whole. Norms are both prescriptive and prohibitive. In other words, norms require people to do certain things, and forbid them from doing certain other things.

Norms surely regulate the conduct of people, but it does not mean that this is necessarily achieved through physical coercion. As we shall see, there are numerous kinds of norms and the mechanisms of punishment and reward through which they control behaviour vary considerably. It may be mentioned, however, that physical coercion is not really required in most of the cases, because the members of a group usually take for granted the norms upheld by the group and do not consider it proper to deviate from them.

Activity 1

List two norms and two values which are part of your society and culture. Write a note of one page on “Values and Norms : Nature and Distinction”. Share your answer with other students at your Study Centre and also discuss it with your Academic Counsellor in your counselling session, if possible.

24.2.2 Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft Norms

Not all the norms of a society are written down. In fact many of them are not even specifically spelt out. For example, the rich variety of customs and manners which govern the behaviour of various members of a joint-family towards each other are not coded or written down. We learn them by watching the behaviour of our elders from ever since our childhood. The same is more or less true of other familistic or primary groups. On the other hand, the norms of the contractual and secondary groups or associations are more formally laid down. Often the norms or rules which regulate the associations are written down. On the basis of this difference, Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft norms have been distinguished. According to Earl Bell (1961), the action norms which belong to the Gesellschaft category are both rational and efficient where the achievement of goals in society is concerned. Only the efficiency of achieving one’s aims counts in this sphere. Whereas, in Gemeinschaft category the society or community will follow the traditional ways and habits of doing things even though they may not achieve results. In spite of the evidences which show the

inefficiency of their methods and procedures, the people keep on following their old ways.

However, Bell believes that in Gemeinschaft organisation or systems, it is very difficult to measure the efficiency of the action norms because they are multipurpose. They are more geared towards the satisfaction of the needs of the members rather than towards attaining specific goals or ends.

24.2.3 Discord in Norms

Norms are based on values. They prescribe through relatively specific rules what is considered to be good or desirable by the society as a whole, or by a particular group. There is a diversity of norms belonging to various groups, and these sometimes come in variance with each other. For instance, the norms of the family and the broader kin-group require that one should help his or her kinsmen in every way.

If someone holds a position of power in a government or some other organisation, he/she is expected to help and provide employment to his or her kinsmen but the norms of the organisation require a person to select the most efficient candidate. This is only one example of discord in norms. They arise not only in the norms of different groups, but also between various norms of the same group. These disagreements are sought to be reconciled with reference to values which are considered higher and are more generally accepted. Norms themselves are ordered as higher or lower in terms of the more general and fundamental values.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) What are social norms? Explain in about five lines.

.....

2) Tick the correct answer.

- | | | | |
|-------|--|-----|----|
| vi) | Social norms are crucial to the survival of any social structure. | Yes | No |
| vii) | Physical coercion is often required to make people follow the social norms of their society. | Yes | No |
| viii) | All the norms of a society are written and coded. | Yes | No |
| ix) | The norms which are contractual and formally laid out are called Gemeinschaft norms. | Yes | No |

24.3 ASPECTS OF NORMS

There are many concepts which are close to the concept of norm, or can be looked upon as its types. For a clear understanding of social norms it is necessary to be

familiar with various terms and concepts that are related to the concept of norm, and are frequently employed in sociological literature. Among these, “folkways” and “mores” are used more or less as equivalents of social norms. There are other widely employed terms such as manners, fashions, customs, institutions, and laws that represent norms of different types that are supported by various kinds of sanctions of reward and punishment which go with each of them. In order to be conversant with the whole array of social norms we must be clear about these also.

24.3.1 Folkways and Mores: Kindred Concepts

It was W.G. Sumner who made popular these concepts through his book *Folkways* which was first published in 1906. The term folkways is so broad that it encompasses all kinds of social usages and social codes. According to Sumner (1906) folkways often “are like products of natural forces which men unconsciously set in operation”, and “are developed out of experience”. He again points out that folkways are “handed down by tradition and admit of no exception or variation, yet change to meet new conditions. From this results that all the life of human beings, in all ages and stages of culture, is primarily controlled by a vast mass of folkways. Now, we look at the relations and distinctions between folkways and mores.

i) Relations between folkways and mores

Mores are those folkways which are viewed as *regulators* of the society. Thus “folkways” is a wider concept, and those folkways which are considered to be important for the sustenance of the society are “mores”. In this sense mores are a kind of folkways, which are more binding than the latter.

ii) Distinctions between folkways and mores

However, some writers treat folkways and mores as separate categories. For example, Kimball Young and Raymond Mack (1972) observe that in Sumner’s own work the concept of folkways is employed in a general sense while mores are defined as a particular kind of folkways but it would help clarity of thought if the two are distinguished. Young & Mack (1972) have drawn a distinction between folkways and mores. They say that folkways are more general in comparison to mores; while mores are folkways which have been given greater importance by the society. To have a clear conceptual idea about them, it is essential to treat the less important or significant norms as folkways and more crucial norms as mores. The violation of folkways is lightly judged while the violation of the morally judged norms or mores is punished severely.

In comparison to Young & Mack, Broom and Selznick (1963 : 69) believe that the intensity of feelings and the procedure for enforcing them distinguishes the folkways from the mores. They say that in the scale of norms, the mores find their place at the top and the folkways at the bottom. The folkways concerned with such things as dress, fashion, table manners, etc., do not evoke much emotion. If somebody wears the wrong clothes at a formal occasion, at the most that person will be asked to leave or will be ridiculed. However, the dress or uniform of such positions as the clergy, the military etc., are different since they are not merely clothes. They are badges of membership and rank which cannot be substituted by other clothes, as in the case of civilians. These authors maintain that though folkways are considered to be right proper and rational, objectively they may not be rational.

Koller and Couse (1965 : 665) also treat folkways and mores as distinct concepts. To them folkways are “customary ways of doing things, but they are not vital to a

society's well being. Consequently, an individual who fails to conform to a folkway usually suffers only a mild disapproval". Mores on the other hand, are viewed as "essential to a society's well being. Consequently, they are strictly enforced".

However, there is much to be said in favour of regarding "folkways" as the broad category of which mores are the more effective manifestation. The difference between them is only that of degree; for, all folkways regulate socio-cultural life in some way, to a greater or a lesser extent.

24.3.2 Types of Norms

Customs, fashions, institutions (in the sense of established procedures) and laws embody different types of social norms. Different types of norms are upheld by their particular kinds of sanctions - that is ways of punishment and reward. In fact, the nature of social sanctions that go with various kinds of norms are good indicators of the types of norms.

i) Customs as Norms

The primary sanction against the violation of the norms of custom is social disapproval. Deviation from the norms of prevailing fashions is prevented or minimised through the fear of ridicule or contempt. And institutions (such as marriage) are procedures which are established so strongly that they become necessary conditions of behaviour. Law or legal norms have the power of the state behind them. The violation of law or legal norms, is punished through fine, imprisonment and even with death penalty.

Customs regulate most of our day-to-day behaviour. They underlie the more formal order of legal and institutional norms. Customs are socially accredited ways of action. They are so deeply rooted in the way of life of a society, that people conform to them almost by force of habit, without being conscious about it. Customs are seldom coded or written down by the people who are governed by them. They are group procedures that emerge gradually. They are not enacted by any established authority. They are spontaneous and yet they are perhaps the most pervasive and effective of all social norms.

ii) Fashion as Norms

While customs hold sway in traditional societies, modern societies are marked by the rise of fashions. Fashion is a term which applies to a wide variety of aspects of life as opinions, beliefs, recreation, dress, jewellery, furnishing, architecture, etc. It is according to Maclver and Page (1949 : 181) "the socially approved sequence of variation on a customary theme". They see fashions changing in a cyclical way with time. Fashions are cultural factors which are not very much concerned with the basic values of society, although they do not go beyond the customs. They rather supplement the customs of the society.

A fashion which is the latest, tends to be the most preferred, even when it may be ugly or uncomfortable. On the other hand, the older a custom is believed to be, stronger is its grip on the people, even though it may be unjust or repressive. It appears thus that a major difference between traditional and modern societies is that while the traditional societies tend to value whatever is old, modern societies tend to place a value on whatever is new.

Activity 2

Interview a person from your Grandparents generation, one from your parents and one from your own generation on the style of dress worn during their times. Ask them to draw the shape and designs which were fashionable then, today and during your parents' generation and the latest style worn by today's teenagers. Do you think fashion is linear, cyclical or haphazard. Discuss your findings with other students at your study centre.



Changing Fashions and Dress Styles

iii) Institutions as Social Norms

The term institutions has been employed in various ways. Some sociologists use it in such a broad sense that it includes almost anything that is socially established. Maclver (1949 : 15), however, has defined institution in a narrower sense. According to him, institutions are “established forms or conditions of procedure characteristic of group activity”. In this sense institutions too constitute social norms. These social norms are so compelling that they become the necessary conditions of behaviour. Institutions embody more social recognition and compulsion than customs.

iv) Legal Norms

As mentioned already legal norms have the power of the state behind them. In modern society the state alone wields the ultimate sanction of physical enforcement through imposition or threat of imposition of fine, imprisonment, or death. Laws are often derived from customs, but norms become a part of law only when they are upheld by the state.

24.3.3 Integration and Conflict of Norms

In stable societies, even though there are diverse kinds of social norms, these are ordered and integrated through values which are unanimously accepted by almost everyone. In no society there is complete conformity to norms by all the people. But in stable traditional societies, there tends to be a high degree of unanimity about

basic values and the propriety of social norms that they underline. Yet, even in such societies, conflict between various norms is not totally absent.

However, in modern complex societies which are marked by unprecedented social differentiation and a fast rate of social change, conflict of norms reaches new heights. Such societies tend to have subgroups whose particular norms violate the norms of the larger social system. For example, there are criminal subcultures. There is also deviance which does not necessarily come within the perview of criminality. These lead to deviant subcultures.

A high pace of social change also tends to enhance the conflict of norms, and deviance. When values are changing fast, it is difficult to judge what is right and what is wrong. The simultaneous existence of diverse systems of values and norms weakens the spirit of conformity because of rapid social change as well as vastly increasing contact between different cultures and ethnic groups. When people know only one set of values and norms, they tend to adhere to them steadfastly. But when they are aware of numerous alternative values and norms, they no more consider any of these as sacred and inviolable. Prime example of role conflict experienced is by women in contemporary urban life. Women as mothers, as wives, as working women, as daughters and daughters-in-law experience role conflict in their everyday lives since the values attached to each role they perform tend to conflict with each other. Even men in today's society face role conflict since traditional male superiority expected from them may conflict with their modern value of treating their women as their equals.

24.3.4 Diversity of Norms in Different Cultures

Innumerable variations are found in the norms of different cultures. Sociological and anthropological literature is replete with illustrative material regarding the variety of norms in different societies, and different strata of the same society. The variety in norms is so large that it would be difficult even to classify them.

As Maclver and Page (1949 : 20-21) point out, that there are very few universally prohibited behaviours in society, exception being the taboo on mother-son incest. There are wide variations in cultural practices. In some societies we find people covering their heads to show respect, in others uncovering. Some people prohibit marriage within their community while others prohibit outside the community. In some societies a strict sex code exists for the married but not the unmarried, while in others the strictness applies to the unmarried but not the married. Thus, we see that a great variation in the crucial norms exists from one society to another, from one social group to another. Maclver and Page, therefore, warn the student of sociology that to be scientific in our investigations we must develop an unbiased approach to the study of other cultural systems.

Even in the face of such wide diversity of social norms, ethnocentrism is far from non-existent. Wide variation in the norms of different societies underscores the need of viewing social phenomenon in relation to their cultural setting. However, there is often a tendency to evaluate the ways of other people in terms of our own norms. This is ethnocentrism. Much of the prevailing social science itself seems to suffer from deep western ethnocentrism.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note:** a) Use the space below for your answers.
 b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Describe the nature of folkways. Use about five lines.

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.....

2) Give an example of folkway and mores of society to make a distinction between the two. Use about six lines.

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.....
.....

3) Tick the correct answer.

- i) While customs and institutions are social norms the fashions are not. Yes No
- ii) People conform to the customs of their society because otherwise they will have problems with the police. Yes No
- iii) Customs are seldom coded or written down by the people who are governed by them. Yes No
- iv) Marriage is an institution found in most societies. Yes No

24.4 THE FUNCTION OF NORMS IN SOCIALISATION AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Socialisation refers to the processes through which human infants develop into social beings. Socialisation inevitably involves the internalisation of the social norms of the group to which the individual belongs. In other word, social norms become a part of the personality of the individual through the process of socialisation.

Thus an adequately socialised individual does not look upon social norms of his or her community as outside objects that hinder him or her. On the other hand one believes them to be right and proper, and tends even to think that one is acting according to the dictates of one’s own conscience when one conforms to the norms and values of one’s society.

By social control we mean the way in which the social order is organised and sustained. In the process of social control, norms play the most crucial part for it is norms that regulate social behaviour. And without such regulation no stable patterning of social relationship is possible. Thus social groups; which embody distinctive patterns of social relationships, cannot survive. The maintenance of social organisation is unthinkable without the operation of norms.

24.4.1 Deviance

Norms provide the standards for the control of behaviour of individuals towards each other, and in relation to various groups and the community as a whole. This does not mean, however, that there is absolute conformity to social norms by all the members of a society at any time. Deviance from norms does exist, and there are a variety of reasons for deviance which merit serious study in terms of general theory and also with reference to particular societies. Such study would inevitably imply better understanding of the nature and functioning of social norms.

24.4.2 Anomie

Anomie literally means the lack of norms or normlessness. But the situation of complete normlessness seldom exists. Sometimes there is lack of clarity about norms. But the term anomie is more frequently used to indicate ambivalent orientation towards norms. R.K. Merton has explained anomie in terms of the gap between culturally defined goals and the legitimate means to reach them.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) How does a person conform to the social norms of his/her society. Describe in about five lines.

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2) What is anomie? How does R.K. Merton describe anomie? Use about two lines.

.....

.....

3) Tick the correct answer.

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|----|
| i) | When social change occurs very fast, it leads to change of values at a fast pace giving rise to conflict of norms | Yes | No |
| ii) | Norms of all societies are the same. | Yes | No |

24.5 LET US SUM UP

You have learnt in this unit about the nature of social norms. You have also learnt about the kindred concepts and types of norms like the folkways and mores. Integration and conflicts of norms have also been explained. In this unit the function of norms in the process of socialisation and social control has been discussed. We have described the problem of deviance and anomie in society. Finally, diversity of norms in different cultures has also been discussed.

24.6 KEY WORDS

Ethnocentrism	: The attitude that one's own group is superior.
Fundamental	: Anything which forms the basis or the crux of a system or organisation.
Gemeinschaft	: Strong reciprocal bonds or sentiment and kinship within a common tradition.
Gesellschaft	: Impersonally contracted association between persons.
Kindred	: Any concept which is related to the given concept or similar to it.
Oppressive	: Any custom which is coercive in nature.
Penalties	: Disadvantages imposed on a person or persons for breaking any rule or norm.
Prohibitive Norms	: Any norm which stops a person from doing some thing. For example, touching one's husband's elder brother, in some parts of India is prohibited.
Regulate	: An action which leads to establishment of order.
Sanction	: Approval given to an action etc., by custom or tradition.

24.7 FURTHER READINGS

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Young, Kimball and Raymond, W. Mack, 1972. *Systematic Sociology : Text and Readings*. Affiliated East-West Press : New Delhi.

24.8 MODEL ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Social norms are standards of behaviour shared by the members of a social group, to which they are expected to conform. The word "norm" is derived from the Latin "**norma**" which is a carpenter's square or rule. Thus, social norms refer to accepted and required behaviour for a person or a group in a particular setting. They are rules for social living.
- 2)
 - i) Yes (See section 24.2)
 - ii) No (See section 24.2.1)

iii) No (See section 24.2.2)

iv) No (See section 24.2.2)

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Folkways are described as products of natural forces which people unconsciously set in operation. These products of natural forces reach a final form of maximum adaptation to an interest which is then handed down from one generation to another by tradition. These folkways do not vary much from one period to another. Yet, they do shape themselves to meet new conditions within a certain limit.
- 2) In India to touch the feet of one's elders is a folkway but if a person refuses to do that, he or she is not thrown out of the community. One of the mores of Hindu society is not to eat beef and even now if a Hindu in a village eats beef, he will be excommunicated from his community. Therefore, to refuse to conform to a folkway is easy but to refuse to conform to a mores of one's society is very difficult.
- 3)
 - i) No (See section 24.3.2)
 - ii) No
 - iii) Yes (See section 24.3.2)
 - iv) Yes (See section 24.3.2)

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) A person conforms to the social norms of his or her society through the process of internalisation of these norms. This internalisation takes place through the process of socialisation of a person from early childhood to adulthood status. They become part of a person and his or her habit. They are also associated with rewards and punishments according to the nature of the norms.
- 2) Anomie literally means the lack of norms. Merton has described anomie as the gap between culturally required goals and the legitimate means to reach them.
- 3)
 - i) Yes (See section 24.3.3)
 - ii) No (See section 24.3.4)

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