
UNIT 11 RELIGIOUS ETHNICITY : THE CASE OF THE PUNJAB

Structure

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11.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit teaches you the concepts of ethnicity and religion and they can become a basis of social stratification. After studying this unit you should be able to:

- Describe ethnicity and religion as a form of ethnic identity;
- Discuss religious ethnicity as a basis of stratification;
- Outline politics of religious and ethnic identities in Punjab; and
- Describe conditions under which religious ethnicity becomes a basis of stratification.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Human societies are made up of different types of social grouping. The most important of these, in modern times, are the nation states. However, nation states are not the only collective identities that individuals in contemporary societies identify themselves with. Most of the nation states today, industrialized developed countries of the West and the developing countries of the third world alike, are inhabited by a variety of social grouping, distinct cultures and ways of life. In other words, most countries of the world today are **plural societies**. Plural societies are those in which there are several large ethnic groupings, living in a common political and economic system, i.e. the nation state, but otherwise largely distinct from each other.

11.2 CONCEPTS OF ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

It is in the context of the modern nation states that the term ethnicity became popular in the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology. It began to be used around the middle of the twentieth century in American sociology to describe people of different national origin. Ethnic groups are supposed to differ from each other on the basis of some cultural criteria. An ethnic group, according to R.A. Schermerhorn, is a 'a collectivity within a

larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memory of shared historical past, the cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity, religious affinity, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypal features, or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group' (as in Sollor, 1996: xii). Members of an ethnic group not only share a common identity of belonging to that group but are also seen to be so by others in the society.

However, ethnicity is not merely a symbolic or cultural phenomenon. In certain contexts it could also become a source of political mobilization and conflict. As Sharma points out ethnicity has two dimensions, dormant and salient. In its dormant form, 'ethnicity represents an innocent mode of identification based on certain relatively distinct cultural attributes. In its salient form, ethnicity signifies an urge for political power based on a sense of cultural distinction' (Sharma, 1996: 105). The distinctive cultural consciousness of an ethnic group could get politically activated due to various sociological and historical reasons, such as a fear of assimilation into the mainstream culture, experience of discrimination or the emergence of political aspiration for autonomy and self-governance.

11.2.1 Religion as a Form of Ethnic Identity

Religion has often been associated with the idea of the "sacred" or "God". According to Anthony Giddens, all religions 'involve a set of symbols, invoking feelings of reverence or awe, and are linked to rituals or ceremonials practiced by a community of believers' (Giddens, 1989: 452). This definition suggests that the concept of religion involves two aspects. One, a system of rituals and beliefs including the ideas of a sacred symbol or a notion of the divine; and two, it involves a "community" of believers who share those ideas. Emile Durkheim had also emphasised the point that religions are never just a measure of belief. All religion involves regular ceremonial and ritual activities, in which a group of believers meet together. Regular participation in these ritual activities helps in binding the members of such groups together into **communities**. These religious "communities" in the contemporary context of the nation states, particularly those inhabited by believers of more than one faith, have tended to pursue their distinct **cultural identities** and have tended to identify themselves as distinct ethnic groups. Thus religion in these cases becomes the basis of ethnic identity.

11.3 RELIGIOUS ETHNICITY AS A BASIS OF STRATIFICATION: MINORITIES AND MAJORITIES IN THE MODERN NATION STATES

Ethnic distinctions are rarely neutral. As Giddens points out, they are commonly associated with marked inequalities of wealth and power. The ethnic composition of the most plural societies is such that their citizens is generally made of one large ethnic group and many other ethnic with small populations. This divides the nation states into one "**majority**" and several "**minorities**". The majority group invariably controls power in most of these societies while the minorities tend to be the victims of prejudice and discrimination. This obviously leads to a relation of inequality and social stratification among the ethnic groups, a powerful and dominant majority and several subordinate ethnic minorities.

Though the expressions minority and majority are often used in numerical terms, sociologically their distinctions involve much more than that. According to Giddens (1989: 245), a minority group has the following features.

- i) Its members are disadvantaged, as a result of discrimination against them by others. Discrimination exists when rights and opportunities open to one set of people are denied to another group. For instance an upper caste Hindu landlord may refuse to rent a room to someone because she or he is a Muslim or a tribal.
- ii) Members of a minority have some sense of group solidarity, of 'belonging together'. Experience of being the subject of prejudice and discrimination usually heightens feeling of common loyalty and interest. Members of a minority group often tend to see themselves as 'a people apart' from the majority.

- iii) Minority groups are usually (at least to some degree) physically and socially isolated from the larger community. They tend to be concentrated in certain neighbourhoods, cities or regions of a country. There is little intermarriage between those in the majority and members of the minority groups. Members of the minority groups attempt hard to maintain their ethnic and cultural distinctiveness.

Some have suggested that, the notions of minority and majority are sociological rather than numerical, a minority group might in certain circumstances consist of the majority of population. The example that is cited in this context is that of South Africa during the apartheid regime when a small number of White people ruled over a large Black majority. This, however, happened only in rare circumstances. In most cases, the minorities groups are constituted of those ethnic communities that are numerically smaller in number. However, it may be kept in mind that not all groups that are numerically small in number necessarily constitute an ethnic minority. An ethnic group can be described to be a minority only when it fulfils the above mentioned sociological criteria. There are many instances where small ethnic groups are well integrated into the power structure of a country and do not experience any discrimination vis-à-vis the other groups. Similarly, there are no permanent minorities. It largely depends upon the political process. Changes in political regimes and their ideologies can change the position of different ethnic groups in the power structure of a society. In a democratic society the chances of minority groups feeling marginalised and discriminated against are lesser than in an authoritarian regime. Also, over a period of time certain groups that were well integrated in the power structure could develop a distinct identity and begin to experience prejudice and discrimination. This process is called **minoritization**. It is in this framework of minoritization that we can understand the case of the Sikhs in Punjab, who over a period of time have come to develop to distinct self-image of a minority group.

11.3.1 Politics of Religious / Ethnic Identity in Punjab

The present day Punjab is a rather small state located in the northwest of India. Despite it being relatively small in size, the state of Punjab occupies an important place in the India politics. The state is located on India's border with Pakistan. The effects of the partition of the sub-continent in 1947 were felt the most in Punjab. A large number of people migrated from both sides of the "new" border. Most importantly for us, Punjab is one of the states of India where a majority of the population belongs to a minority religion. Nearly sixty percent of Punjab's population is that of the Sikhs. Not only that, the state has also witnessed various ethnic mobilizations during the late nineteenth century. But the most important separatist movement occurred during the decade of 1980s. As a consequence of these mobilizations, the Sikhs of Punjab acquired a separate ethnic and religious identity.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Describe religion as a form in ethnic identity. Use about five lines for your answer.

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- 2) Write a note on religious ethnicity as a basis of stratification. Use about five lines for your answer.

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11.4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Historical speaking, the state of Punjab was among those regions of the sub-continent that experienced strong mobilization against the British colonial rule. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the state witnessed variety of social reform and protest movements. It was around this time that the consciousness of a separate religious identity first emerged among the Sikhs.

Activity 1

Enquire about the background of the state of Punjab, from your Punjabi friends. Make a note in your notebook of the important reform and protest movement that happened in Punjab.

The process of social and economic development experienced in Punjab after the British established their rule in the state led to the emergence a new middle class among the Sikhs. This class initiated reform movements among the Sikhs in the region and began to assert that Sikhism was separate from Hinduism. The campaign was spearheaded by two of the reformist organizations, the Singh Sabha movement and the Chief Khalsa Dewan. Their main mission was to strengthen internal communication among the Sikhs and define clear boundaries between the Sikhs and the Hindus.

The process of redefining communal boundaries culminated in some important social movements among the Sikhs. Foremost of these being the movement for the "liberation" of Gurudwaras (the Sikh Temples) from the Hindu *mahants* during 1920s. The Sikhs demanded that all the historic Gurudwaras by brought under the governance of newly fomed Sikh organisation, the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC). The Sikh political party, the Shiromani Akali Dal was also formed during this movement.

While on the one side, the movement helped in developing a distinctive self-image among the Sikhs, on the other, it brought the Sikh masses into the freedom struggle. The British, during this movement of the Akalis, sided with the Hindu *mahants* and the Sikhs in Punjab turned against the colonial rulers, Being a non-violent mass movement, the Akalis received the support of the Indian National Congress and became part and parcel of the broader nationalist movement. After a long drawn struggle, they succeeded in getting the Gurudwaras 'Liberated' from the *mahants*.

Box 11.01

The process of social differentiation among the Hindus and Sikhs received a boost when the British conceded separated electorate to the community in 1921. Similarly, the introduction of census during the late nineteenth century by the colonial rulers played its own role in redefining communities in Punjab. For certain administrative and political purpose, the British rulers began to categorise populations into well defined religious communities. The people of Punjab were asked to chose between Hindu and Sikh identities even when the two communities were not clearly distinguishable in the region.

11.4.1 Punjab after the Independence

Due to the multiplicity of factors, the ethnic composition an self identities of different religious communities underwent significant changes during the British rule in the state, particularly during the last decade of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. From a religious sect, the Sikhs emerged as a separate ethnic group, objectively differentiated as well as subjectively self-defined community. This process continued to unfold itself during the post - Independence period also.

When the states were reorganised on linguistic lines after Independence, Punjab was left undivided, even though it included a large Hindi speaking area. The Sikhs were unhappy about it. They wanted a state where they were in a majority. The changes that came in the demography of the region with partition had made it possible for the Sikhs to achieve this goal. The partition of India was accompanied by a "population exchange" between India and Pakistan.

Almost the entire population of Sikhs and Hindus living in the western Punjab migrated to the Indian side of the border and the Muslims migrated to the Pakistani side. As a consequence of this, the Sikhs became a majority in certain district of the state. In

undivided Punjab, Sikh constituted only around 13 to 14 percent of the total population. The mass migration of the Sikhs from the western districts that went to Pakistan increased their proportion to nearly 55 percent in the northwestern districts of the post - partition Indian Punjab. The Akalis saw in it an opportunity to demand for a Sikh majority state. They began to mobilize the Sikhs for a re-organization of Punjab in a manner that the state boundary included only the Sikh majority districts. Since the Punjabi Hindus opted not to identify with the Sikh aspirations and went so far as to record Hindi as their mother tongue during the census enumeration after Independence, the Akalis could demand a Sikh majority state on linguistic lines as well. After a long struggle, the state of Punjab was divided on September 1, 1966. The Hindi speaking districts of southern Punjab were put together into a new state the came to the known as Haryana. Some of the hill districts on the northeast were transferred to the state of Himachal Pradesh.

Box 11.02

In the new Punjab, the Sikhs were in a clear majority but Hindus also continued to be a substantial number. While the Sikhs have clearly dominated the political institutions in the state, their position in the Punjab economy has been only partially dominant. The demographic and economic structure of Punjab is such that while the Sikhs almost exclusively control the agricultural land, the urban trade has been a near monopoly of the Hindu trading castes. This is reflected in the table presented below. While the Sikhs are clearly in majority in the state as a whole, they are a minority in the urban areas of Punjab. Nearly 69 percent of the Sikhs live in rural areas of Punjab, more the 66 percent of the Hindus live in towns. In the Sikh concentrated districts, like Amritsar and Bhatinda, this pattern is even more pronounced.

The tension between Hindus and Sikhs became more acute with the success of the Green Revolution Technology in Punjab's agriculture. With Green Revolution came an extensive use of modern inputs in farming. This increased the productivity of land many folds. Farmers shifted to cash crops and took their surplus farm produce to the market. They also needed to buy modern inputs, such as chemical fertilizers, high yielding variety seeds and pesticides from the urban markets. In the market place traders were much more powerful than the farmers, Farmers, particularly those with smaller landholdings, became dependent on the traders. They often had to borrow money from the traders. There was a new relation of dependency that the otherwise politically dominant farmers felt in relation to the traders. This economic conflict between the Sikh peasantry and the Hindu traders was also seen in communal terms by some. Some scholars have even explained the rise of militant movement among the Sikhs during the 1980s in terms of this very factor.

Table 1

DISTRICT	HINDU			SIKH		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Bhatinda	22.56	12.92	61.13	76.93	86.67	37.96
Amritsar	23.43	8.23	60.31	74.22	89.29	37.65
Sangrur	27.14	21.25	50.25	66.90	75.20	34.33
Ludhiana	33.22	16.88	63.82	65.71	82.47	34.34
Ferozepur	33.58	24.02	72.22	65.07	74.82	25.69
Kapurthala	38.02	28.45	69.69	61.26	70.80	29.68
Ropar	43.49	39.21	67.46	55.61	60.10	30.51
Patiala	44.37	37.49	63.92	54.24	61.03	34.93
Gurdaspur	48.02	40.94	75.90	44.82	51.03	20.38
Jullundher	53.91	44.91	76.49	440.90	54.73	24.04
Hoshiarpur	59.25	57.13	74.65	39.38	41.60	23.23
Punjab Total	37.54	28.56	66.33	61.21	69.37	30.79

Source: D' Souza in Samiuddin ed. 1985 p. 54.

11.4.2 The Rise of Militancy

The state of Punjab witnessed another powerful movement on religious/ ethnic lines among the Sikhs during the decade of 1980s. The Akali Dal started the movement focussing purely on secular issues. But gradually it was taken over by militant elements within the Sikh communal politics and its become a movement for secession from the India State. The Akalis had initially started mobilizing the Sikh peasantry for Punjab in the early 1980s on the question of the distribution of irrigation water of the rivers that passed through the state. Even the Communist Party of India (Marxist) was one of their allies in this struggle. Gradually the Akalis shifted the focus of their struggle towards the demand for greater autonomy to the states within the framework of a resolution passed in 1974 at a meeting of some Sikh organizations in a town called Anandpur Sahib. "The Anandpur Sahib Resolution", as it came to be known, demanded more autonomy to the states of the Indian union. It asked the Central Government to keep only the critical areas of governance with it, such as, issuing currency notes, management of armed forces, and formulation and management of the foreign policy. The rest should be transferred to the state governments. The Akalis initially projected the Anandpur Sahib Resolution in a secular framework asking for more autonomy to all the states of the Indian union and an over-all decentralization of powers. They even received support from other regional parties. However, the central government saw in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution suggestions of secessionism. The political intentions of the Akalis became suspect.



United Akali Dal Meeting in Golden Temple

Courtesy : IT

A new political trend had begun to gain momentum in the Sikh politics around the same time. Under the leadership of a religious preacher by the name of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a militant movement for a separate nation for the Sikhs began to take shape. The rise of Bhindranwale could be traced to a religious struggle between the followers of the Sant and those of the Nirankari Panth, a reformist religious sect of the Hindus and Sikhs. Some Congress politicians also patronized the Sant who, they thought, would emerge as a alternative to the Akalis in the Sikh religious politics. However, the Sant soon began to act on his own and started mobilizing the Sikhs for a separate state of Khalistan. He received active support from across the border. The political strategy adopted by the militants was that of creating panic by terrorizing the public through both selective and indiscriminate killings. Interestingly, the Khalistanis were given much more attention by the media than the Akalis had ever been given. Consequently, the Akalis began to get marginalised in the Punjab politics.

Activity 2

Discuss among your fellow students whether violence is acceptable as a solution to intra-nation political problems. Make a note on this in your notebook.

After having initially encouraged them, the Congress government at the Centre came to realise that things were getting out of hand. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of the country, decided to deal with the Sikh militants by the use of force. The Government of India issued an order for army action at arrest Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who, along with his heavily armed followers, was hiding inside a Sikh shrine, the Golden Temple at Amritsar. This armed operation was termed as "Operation Bluestar". The strategy adopted was that of direct confrontation with the militants. The Indian army, fully equipped with tanks and other arms, attacked the Sikh shrines on June 3 1984 and the first phase of the "Operation" was over by the night of June 6, 1984.

The army entered the Golden Temple on a day when pilgrims had come to visit the Gurudwara on the occasion of a Sikh festival. A large number of these pilgrims, including women and children, died in the crossfire. According to one estimate, the total casualties of officers and army men were about 700 and of civilians about 5,000 (Joshi, 1984:161). While the Akali leaders who were inside the temple were brought out safely by the army, Bhindranwale, as well as most of his close associates, were killed during the operation. However, although the militant leadership had been liquidated, the political crisis in the state was far from over. In fact the post-operation Bluestar phase of the militant politics in the state was even more violent. The army action had made most of the Sikhs very angry against the central government and as a consequence the militant outfits increased in numbers as well as swelled in strength. The violence against innocent Sikhs in different parts of the country that followed the killing of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in October 1984 only served to further broaden the militants' support base. Members of these "terrorist" organizations were able to acquire sophisticated weapons from across the border and some of them also trained in the neighboring country of Pakistan.

11.4.3 Militancy and Human Rights

However, the militant movement lost direction. It was not only the security forces that the militants targeted. Even common people, Hindus and Sikhs, living in Punjab and the neighboring states, became victims of their terrorist activities. Since the militants largely came from rural areas of Punjab and they often used these villages as their hiding places, the security forces too began to harass the average citizen. People of Punjab nearly forgot what it meant to live in peace. Their basic human rights were being violated both the terrorists and the security forces. Extortion kidnapping and indiscriminate killings became regular features of everyday life in the state. The militants also tried to impose a moral code of conduct on the common on the common Sikhs. The Sikh women were directed against wearing "western-style" dresses. They also issued directives on things like how the Sikh weddings should be arranged. The common Sikhs did not approve of these "reforms" initiated by the militants.

Box 11.03

The police and para-military forces too harassed common people on allegations of sympathizing and sheltering the militants, even when they had no proof of it. On the other hand the innocent villagers were forced to shelter a militant, if he so demanded, simply for the fear of the gun. In such cases, they could be at the receiving end both ways.

The democratic political process had come to a halt in the state and no elections were held for a long time. The militant's movement for an independent state of Khalistan could gain only limited support from the common Sikhs in Punjab. Though many Sikhs were angry at the Central Government particularly for the army action of Golden Temple and the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in November 1984, they were also unhappy with politics of militancy. In the absence a popular political base, the Khalistan movement began to disintegrate by the late 1980s. The militant groups got divided and started attacking each other. The state police used this opportunity to repress the militants with force. In some cases the police even recruited ex-militants to fight the terrorist groups in Punjab. By early 1990s, most of the groups had either disintegrated or had been physically eliminated, directly or indirectly, by the security forces. The militant Sikh movement was thus over

without having achieved anything at all in political terms the democratic process was revived in the state and the Akalis came back to power in the state in 1996.

11.4.4 Implications of Militancy

Though politically movement failed and could not achieve anything concrete for the Sikhs, its implications for the community as well as for the country were many. It created an unprecedented sense of political crisis all over. Those in academics and in policy-making began to review the process of nation building in India afresh. For the Sikh community, the crisis of 1980s was a testing time. Apart from tragedies like the "Operation Bluestar" and the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and in other parts of India, the "crisis" redefined their identity. Their sense of being a minority ethnic group became much more acute. Not only the Sikhs began to see themselves as being a distinct minority; others also began to see them in similar light. The "Operation Bluestar" and the anti-Sikh riots in different part of India provided them for the first time, with a proof of their being discriminated against as a community which also reinforced their sense of a collective identity. They began to see their status as being much closer to the above-mentioned notion of an ethnic minority. To put it in different words, the militant movement and the crisis of 1980s furthered the process of minoritization of the Sikhs in India.

The Sikhs constitute a little more than two percent of the total population of the country. Nearly 75 percent of the live in the state of Punjab and the rest 25 percent in different part of the country and the globe. Since they continue to be in majority in the state of Punjab, for a large majority of the Sikhs their sense of being a minority is not experienced in everyday life. However at the level of consciousness, they continue to see themselves as an ethnic minority.

11.5 CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH RELIGIOUS ETHNICITY BECOMES A BASIS OF STRATIFICATION

In much of the classical sociological literature, the structure of social stratification has generally been conceptualized through "secular" categories. Almost all theories of social stratification have emphasized on categories like class, occupation or power. It is only recently that sociologists have come to recognise the significance of factors like gender and ethnicity in determining the structure of social stratification. Ethnicity has been seen to work as a basis of social stratification in two different forms. First, in the form racial discrimination, as it has existed in the western societies for a long time. Second the discrimination on the basis of religion, against those belonging to the religious minority groups.

The classical example of the racial discrimination is that of the Blacks. In most of the Western countries, the dominant White population has for ages discriminated against the Blacks. Racial discrimination operates at various levels. It has been seen to work within organizations and also in the larger society. For example, the senior positions in organizations are likely to be occupied by the members of the "superior" race and the positions at the lower levels are largely occupied to those coming from the "inferior" races. There have been many political movements against the practice and ideology of racism. Over the years, the racial prejudice against Blacks has become much less.

Discrimination against religious minorities has been a feature many societies during the modern times. It has taken various forms, ranging form the extreme case of fascist extermination of Jews during the regime of Hitler, to more subtle forms of discrimination. Though most of the modern nation states claim to follow secular principles in governance, their origin in most cases could be traced to ethnic movements. Also, most of the present day nation states have citizens belonging to more than one ethnic origin, which makes them plural societies. However, the state power is generally not shared equally among different ethnic communities. It is this distinction that leads to inequalities and stratification on ethnic lines. Apart from language, religion has been the most important source of ethnic difference.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Outline the historical background to religious ethnicity in Punjab. Use about five lines for your answer.

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- 2) Discuss the rise of militancy in Punjab. Use about five to ten lines for your answer.

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Ethnic/ religious differences in themselves do not lead to ethnic inequalities. There are many countries where members belonging to different religious communities enjoy more or less equal status. Religious ethnicity becomes the bases for social stratification only under certain circumstances. First and foremost of these is **the nature of the political regime**. If a particular society has a secular democracy, it is unlikely that those belonging to the minority religion will face any systematic discrimination against them. However, if it is a theocratic and undemocratic country, religious ethnicity becomes an important basis of stratification. Those belonging to religious minorities are not likely to be given positions of power in the society. Even in a secular - democratic society, an ethnic minority could face discrimination if a strong prejudice exists against it among the other sections of the society. Similarly, an ethnic group could become a victim of discrimination if a given political formation finds it useful to mobilise communities against it for electoral gains.

The second important factor that can lead to religious ethnicity becoming basis of social stratification is **the demographic structure** of a country. If a country is inhabited by one large majority and several religious minorities, the chances of religious ethnicity becoming a basis of social stratification would be much higher than in a country inhabited by a large number of religious communities without any single community enjoying the majority status. Or where the entire population belonged to a single ethnic community.

Third important factor is the **relationship between religion and economy**. If the members of a particular religious community control the productive forces in the economy, they are likely to enjoy a much more powerful position than the other communities. Finally and most importantly **are the cultural and historical factors** that determine the relations between ethnic/ religious communities in any society. A society that has cultural values that encourage tolerance and mutual respect, is less likely to discriminate against the religious minorities than those societies that do not have such cultural values. Similarly, historical memories play their own role. If the past of a society is marked by ethnic rivalries, the present is also likely to be marked by prejudice.

11.6 KEY WORDS

- Ethnicity** : Pertaining to shared culture ancestral past, and a feeling of bondedness.
- Identity** : A recognition of the uniqueness of a group/individual based on factors such as ethnicity.

Religion	:	A corpus of data pertaining to an ideology directed towards the supranational i.e. the sacred and the profane.
Militancy	:	An aggressive violent stance used in conjunction with an aim such as demand for autonomy of a ethnic group.

11.7 FURTHER READINGS

Giddens, A. (1989), *Sociology*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Grewal, J.S. (1994), *The Sikhs of Punjab*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

11.8 SPECIMEN ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Religion has regular rites and rituals which the believers enact. Such activities bind the believers into a community. In cases of nations with believers of more than one faith several cultural identities form. These tend to identify themselves as distinct ethnic groups. In these cases religion becomes the basis for ethnic identity.
- 2) Religious ethnicity divides a state into majority and minority where the former controls power and minorities tend to be discriminated against. This leads to a relation of inequality and social stratification among ethnic groups. There is usually a powerful and dominant majority and several subordinate ethnic minority groups.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Punjab historically experienced strong mobilization against British colonial rule. It has also witnessed social reform and protest movements in the late 19th century and a separate religious identity emerged. It also led to redefining communal boundaries. All the major religio-political groups were gradually formed. The sikhs were also involved in masses in the freedom struggle.
- 2) In the 1980's the Akali Dal begun a secular movement, which was gradually taken over by militants. Whereas formally issues such as irrigation rights were debated, gradually the demand shifted to autonomy from the Indian state. The history thereafter was conflict with the state which led to use of force in 1984 under 'Operation Bluestar'. Following this militancy lost direction as it had targeted not just military but civilians also.