

Block

2

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

UNIT 1

Concept of Society and Culture **5**

UNIT 2

Social Group **20**

UNIT 3

Social Identity and Movements **34**

UNIT 4

Social Change in Indian Context **50**

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BLOCK 2 SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Introduction

This Block is mainly devoted to generate a general understanding of the society, in terms of broad structures and important social processes that constantly keep operating in every society. It begins with the exposition of meaning and delineation of various attributes and characteristics of the concepts of society and culture. Since these two terms are freely used not only in other disciplines with different meanings but also in general conversations, it is necessary to make it explicit the sense in which these are used in anthropology. Culture being central concept in anthropology, there is a greater need to differentiate it from the concept of society.

The first unit, will deal with what the society essentially refers to as complex patterns of social relationships, and culture as designed for living. In the second unit, the focus is on the important social groupings. The social groups are broadly divided into primary and secondary. However, based on the spatial segregation, interests of the members and the nature of the groups, there is further classification as community, association and organisation. Thus, the social organisation can be found at different levels. A social group manifests mainly due to its separate identity with reference to other social groups. Therefore, the identity of a group is important, and the third unit discusses the significance of social identity. For social identity individual self exists a priori, and it is constructed in social and cultural conditions and contexts. In this unit we attempt to examine the identity construction through reasons and choice, and also the transformation of identity as identity cannot be static. The identity is also subjected to hegemony, power and changing nature of society, and as a result, different forms of identities can be noted. The changing society, particularly the post-industrial one has such a far fetching influence that the social identity has become very dynamic. The global networks of various kinds generated social movements that spread across the geographical boundaries and began to challenge the traditional institutional structures and powers. In these social movements we find formation of new identities and shaping up of the identities. Finally, the attention is drawn to the dynamic aspects of the society, the conceptualisation of social change. In the last unit, we shall focus on the various processes of social change in Indian context. The tribes which remained outside the pale of Hindu society are gradually drawn close to Hindu society adopting Hindu customs and practices, which is termed as Hinduisation. The caste system has not been as rigid as it was thought of, and Indian society has been changing and this process is explained as sanskritisation in which low castes and tribes attempt to emulate the practices of higher castes. The impact of British rule, and the western ideas and values have been conceptualised as westernisation and modernisation. Globalisation is the recent trend.

This Block, thus, provides a comprehensive view on the concept of society, various social groups, social identity, social movements and social change.

UNIT 1 CONCEPT OF SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Contents

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The Concept of Society
 - 1.2.1 Meaning and Definition of Society
 - 1.2.2 Characteristics of Society
- 1.3 The Concept of Culture
 - 1.3.1 Meaning and Definition of Culture
 - 1.3.2 Elements of Culture
 - 1.3.3 Characteristics or Attributes of Culture
 - 1.3.4 Culture and Society
- 1.4 Summary

References

Suggested Reading

Sample Questions



Learning Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the concept of society and culture in anthropological perspective;
- describe some major characteristics of society and culture; and
- understand the relationship that exists between culture, society and individual behaviours.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Though the term society and culture is used today as a scientific concept by most of the social sciences, its most comprehensive definition has been provided in anthropology. Humans are social beings. That is why we live together in societies. Day-to-day we interact with each other and develop social relationships. Every society has a culture, no matter how simple that culture may be. Culture is shared. The members of every society share a common culture which they have to learn. Culture is not inherited it is transmitted from one generation to the other through the vehicle of language. Like societies, cultures differ all over the world. The two concepts society and culture are closely related and sometimes can be used interchangeably. This unit discusses the meaning and definition of society and culture in anthropological perspective. The unit also discusses some of the characteristics and elements of society and culture.

1.2 THE CONCEPT OF SOCIETY

In common parlance the word society is usually used to designate the members of specific in-group, persons rather than the social relationships of those persons. Sometimes the word society is used to designate institutions like Arya Samaj

(society) or Brahma Samaj. Society is a word used in routine life with a particular meaning. Everyone often defines society as an aggregation or collection of individuals. But in sociology and anthropology, the term is used in a different sense. The term “society” refers not just to a group of people but to a complex pattern of norms of interaction that exist among them. In terms of common sense, society is understood as a tangible object, whereas in sociology and anthropology it refers to an intangible entity. It is a mental construct, which we realise in every day life but cannot see it. The important aspect of society is the system of relationships, the pattern of the norms of interaction by which the members of the society maintain themselves. Some anthropologists say that society exists only when the members know each other and possess common interests or objects.

1.2.1 Meaning and Definition of Society

The roots of the term society can be traced to the Latin word *socius* which means companionship or friendship. George Simmel an eminent sociologists has stated that it is the element of sociability or companionship which defines the true essence of society. As Aristotle stated centuries ago man is a social animal, it brings into focus that man always lives in the company of other people. Society has become an essential condition for human life to continue. Herein, we will discuss some of the views of the social thinkers who had on society and how they have perceived the same.

August Comte viewed society as a social organism possessing a harmony of structure and function. Emile Durkheim regarded society as a reality in its own right. For Talcott Parson Society is a total complex of human relationships in so far as they grow out of the action in terms of means-end relationship intrinsic or symbolic. G.H Mead conceived society as an exchange of gestures which involves the use of symbols. Morris Ginsberg defines society as a collection of individuals united by certain relations or mode of behaviour which mark them off from others who do not enter into these relations or who differ from them in behaviour. Cole saw Society as the complex of organised associations and institutions with a community. MacIver and Page found it was a system of usages and procedures of authority and mutual aid of many groupings and divisions, of controls of human behaviour and liberties; a web of social relationship. A society is generally conceived of as a human group which is relatively large, relatively independent or self-perpetuating in demographic terms, and which is relatively autonomous in its organisation of social relations. But it is the relativity of each society’s autonomy, independence and self-perpetuating nature which is the crucial factor, and the distinction of one society from another is often arbitrary. It is important in anthropology not to allow these arbitrary divisions to distort our vision of systems of local, regional, national and international social relations.

We can sum up the definitions of society into two types – the functional definition and the structural definition. From the functional point of view, society is defined as a complex of groups in reciprocal relationships, interacting upon one another, enabling human organisms to carry on their life-activities and helping each person to fulfill his wishes and accomplish his interests in association with his fellows. From the structural point of view, society is the total social heritage of folkways, mores and institutions; of habits, sentiments and ideals. Ginsberg, Giddings, Cole and Cuber take a structural view of society while McIver, Parsons, Lapiere, Cooley and Leacock have given functional definition of society.

The definition of society has undergone little variation from the standpoint of classical and modern scholars. For our understanding we can simply define society

as a group of people who share a common culture, occupy a particular territorial area and feel themselves to constitute a unified and distinct entity. It is the mutual interactions and interrelations of individuals and groups. Society is a group of people related to each other through persistent relations in terms of social status, roles and social networks. By extension, society denotes the people of a region or country, sometimes even the world, taken as a whole. Used in the sense of an association, a society is a body of individuals outlined by the bounds of functional interdependence, possibly comprising characteristics such as national or cultural identity, social solidarity, language or hierarchical organisation.

1.2.2 Characteristics of Society

According to McIver “society is a web of social relationships”, (McIver, 1931: 6) which may be of several types. To formulate a catalogue of social relationships would be an uphill task. The family alone is said to have as many relationships based on age, sex, gender, and generation. Outside the family there is no limit to the number of possible relationships.

McIver says “society means likeness”. Therefore, likeness is an essential prerequisite of society. The sense of likeness was focused in early society on kinship, that is, real or supposed blood relationships. In modern societies the conditions of social likeness have broadened out in the principle of nationality of one world. “Comradship, intimacy, association of any kind or degree would be impossible without some understanding of each by the other, and that understanding depends on the likeness which each apprehends in the other.

Society also implies difference but this sense of likeness does not exclude diversity or variation. Society also implies difference and it depends on the latter as much as on likeness. A society based exclusively on likeness and uniformity is bound to be loose in socialites. All our social systems involve relationships in which differences complement one another, for e.g., family rests upon the biological difference between sexes. Besides the difference in sex there are other natural differences of aptitude, of interest of capacity. While difference is necessary to society, difference by itself does not create society, **difference subordinate to likeness**. It has been argued that likeness is necessarily prior to the differentiation of social organisation. As McIver observed, – primary likeness and secondary difference create the greatest of all social institutions-the division of labour.

In addition to likeness, **interdependence** is another essential element to constitute society. Family, one of the important units of society with which we all are closely associated, is based on the biological inter-dependence of the sexes. None of the two sexes is complete by itself and therefore each seeks fulfillment by the aid of the other. The Social organisation diversifies the work of each, making each more dependent on others, in order that by the surrender of self sufficiency he may receive back thousand fold in fullness of life. This interdependence is both extensive as well as intensive.

Lastly, **cooperation** is also essential to constitute society. Without cooperation no society can exist. Unless people cooperate with each other, they cannot live a happy life. All social institutions rest on cooperation. The members in social institutions cooperate with one another to live happily and joyfully. Cooperation avoids mutual destructiveness and results in economy. For want of cooperation the entire fabric of society may collapse.

Thus likeness, interdependence and cooperation are the essential elements to constitute society. Besides these elements, McIver has also mentioned some other

elements of society; it is a system of usages and procedures, authority and mutual aid, of many groupings and divisions; it controls human behaviour and liberties. This view brings in several other elements of society firstly, in every society there are some usages concerned with marriage, education, religion, food, and speech etc., which differ from society to society. Secondly, there are procedures i.e., the modes of action in every society which maintain its unity and organisation. Thirdly, the presence of an authority is necessary to maintain order in society. Fourthly, no society can be stable unless there is a feeling of mutual aid among its members. Fifthly, in a society there are several groupings and divisions such as family, city and village etc. sixthly, liberty and control go together in a society. Without liberty man cannot develop his personality. Control upon an individual's behaviour is not meant to destroy his liberty but to promote and protect it.

Society is not just a mere agency for the comfort of the beings but it is the whole system of social relationships. The social relation of mother and child, for example, is revealed in their attitude towards each other. It is this social fact and not the biological fact which constitute society. The true nature of society consists not in the external factors of interdependence of likeness or authority but in the state of mind of the beings which compose society. It is the pattern, not the people, which is termed society. It is not a group but a process of relationships. It is said society is the extension of individuality, the transcendence of self-closedness, the vehicle of personal identity, the means of the continuation of personality through the generations, the nurse of youth, the arena of manhood and womanhood.

All societies, as is clear from the above discussion, involve a certain level of association, a level closer and lesser complex than an organism. Like an organism, a society also is a system of relations, but in the society this relation exists between organisms rather than between "cells". The constituent parts of society give to it a continuity and structure of its own so that the study of society cannot be reduced merely to a study of its individual members. Some social thinkers like Spencer, Radcliffe-Brown and Durkheim have sought to compare society to an organism. The analogy between organism and society is at best an analogy and not an identity.

Sociologist Gerhard Lenski based on the level of technology, communication and economy had differentiated societies into: a) hunters and gatherers, b) simple agricultural, c) advanced agricultural d) industrial, and e) special (e.g. fishing societies or maritime societies). This classification is more or less similar to the system earlier developed by anthropologists like Fried and Service. They classified societies as foraging or hunter gatherer, horticultural, agricultural, industrial, and then information-age (post-industrial) societies. In order of increasing size and complexity, there are bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and state societies. Societies may also be organised according to their political structure. These structures may have varying degrees of political power, depending on the cultural geographical, and historical environments. The term *society* is currently used to cover a number of political and scientific connotations as well as a variety of associations.

Reflection and Action

Use your learning material to write a brief definition of society and its characteristics based on what you have just read.

1.3 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Culture is a word, all of us use in our day to day parlance. In its daily usage, the

term culture refers to polished behaviour, personal refinements as classical music; the fine arts and world of philosophy etc. But anthropologists define and use the term in quite a different way. The term culture is used in a much broader sense by anthropologists as culture includes much more than just the “finer things in life.” There is no differentiation between “cultured” people and “uncultured” people, since all people have culture from the anthropological point of view.

1.3.1 Meaning and Definition of Culture

In an anthropological perspective every society has a culture, it is universal, though in some societies it may be simple, while complex in others. Likewise every human being is cultured and culture is an attribute of the genus Homo. Culture is design for living. It is the basis of human life. It rests on biology but is not biological. It is human biology such as a developed brain, nimble hands, and freely moving tongue which helped humans to acquire a design for living. What has been acquired as a design for living is not biological. It is a totality of mental, rational and material, technological processes and products. This totality is what anthropologists call culture.

It is not possible for human beings to live without the minimum material objects (tangible). Without a network of social relations among people, human life is impossible. Human existence is impracticable without ideas, rules, ideals, symbols and patterns of thinking (intangible). Symbols, ideas, rules, ideals, and patterns of thinking, network of social relations and material objects together comprise the mental, rational, and material, technological processes and products. They are integrated into a whole, the design of living. This design of living is called culture. It is the total way of life of the human being. Culture serves as a potential guide for human living. As a guide, it aids the human being to know what is good and bad, desirable, important and unimportant, rational and irrational.

Culture is a historically created design for living. Generation after generation new things are added to it and this is accountable for the development and change in culture. The culture we have at present combines what has been first created by our ancestors with what has been added to it by subsequent generations. To be brief, culture is dynamic in that, as time goes by, new items are added to those already existing.

Culture is unique to the human species. No species has ability like human beings in its complexity, i.e., to learn, to communicate and to store, process and use information to the same extent. Culture has moral force which serves as a guide for human action how to behave in a society. Neither monkeys nor apes have moral force in their life. Morality is a part of culture. Therefore human culture has moral foundation, but primate life has no moral basis.

Culture is a product of social learning rather than biological heredity which means **Culture is non-genetic.** It cannot be inherited by offspring from parents, but it can be transmitted socially from parents to children. Like animals, human cannot inherit behaviour. Animal behaviour is inborn. Animals inherit behaviour or at most, proto-culture, but humans acquire culture.

All people have culture, though not similar. Different groups of humans or societies have different cultures. This shows cultural diversity that means **Culture has unity as well as diversity.** All humans have culture, but all cultures are not alike. In this context, it is necessary to draw a distinction between “a culture” and “culture”. The term culture signifies the way of life of human societies as a whole and the

term “a culture” signifies the way of life of specific part of human society which is technically called a society.

Culture is the basic concept of anthropology and is central to all the sub-branches of anthropology. Anthropologists have been discussing and debating definitions of culture since the origin of the discipline in the 19th century. The classic definition of culture is given by E.B. Tylor in his book *Primitive Culture* in 1871. He stated ‘Culture or Civilization, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society’ (p.1). This is a very broad definition of culture, encompassing almost everything about a person’s overall way of life, from “knowledge” to “habits”. Herein, emphasis is on the fact that culture is something individuals acquire as “a member of society,” meaning that people obtain their culture from growing up with and living among a particular group. The major contribution of Tylor’s definition is that he was able to establish the differences between biologically determined characteristics and those attributes which are socially learned. The phrase “acquired by man as a member of society” in his definition is very important. It is not any habit or capability of man as a biological being, but man as a member of a social group. The acquisition of culture is not through biological heredity but through socialisation which is called enculturation. Enculturation is specifically defined as the process by which an individual learns the rules and values of one’s culture which begins at the family level right from the moment a child is born.

From the beginning of the discipline hundreds of definitions have been proposed, and their number continues to grow steadily. Today there are more than 200 definitions of culture. Different definitions of “culture” reflect different theoretical bases for understanding, or criteria for evaluating, human activity. Below a few definitions of culture are given for your understanding.

Reflection

Definitions of culture given by Anthropologists

Malinowski defined culture as an “instrumental reality, and apparatus for the satisfaction of the biological and derived need”. It is the integral whole consisting of implements in consumers’ goods, of constitutional characters for the various social groupings, of human ideas and crafts, beliefs and customs” (Malinowski, 1944:1)

“...Culture in general as a descriptive concept means the accumulated treasury of human creation: books, paintings, buildings, and the like; the knowledge of ways of adjusting to our surroundings, both human and physical; language, customs, and systems of etiquette, ethics, religion and morals that have been built up through the ages” (Kluckhohn and Kelly, 1945: 78)

“Culture...refers to that part of the total setting [of human existence] which includes the material objects of human manufacture, techniques, social orientations, points of view, and sanctioned ends that are the immediate conditioning factors underlying behaviour” or in simple terms he says culture is the “Man made part of the environment” (Herskovits, 1948:17).

A culture is the total socially acquired life-way or life-style of a group of people. It consists of the patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of a society (Harris 1975: 144).

“The concept of culture as everything that people have, think, and do as members of a society. This definition can be instructive because the three verbs correspond to the three major components of culture. That is, everything that people have refers to material possessions; everything that people think refers to those things they carry

around in their heads, such as ideas, values, and attitudes; and everything that people do refers to behaviour patterns. Thus all cultures comprise (a) material objects, (b) ideas, values, and attitudes, and (c) patterned ways of behaving” (Gary Ferraro, 1992:18-19).

Irrespective of the various definitions, conceptions and approaches to the understanding of the concept of culture, it is however agreed that culture is a way of life and morality is a part of culture. Practically all modern definitions share key features. Anthropologists say that culture is –

- *Learned, as each person must learn how to “be” a member of that culture*
- *Shared, as it offers all people ideas about behaviour*
- *Symbolic, as it is based on the manipulation of symbols*
- *Systemic and integrated, as the parts of culture work together in an integrated whole*

While summarizing the definition Bodley (1994) says culture is made up of at least three elements or components: what people think, what they do, and the material products they produce. The problem with defining culture as shared values and beliefs, as some anthropologists do, is that there can be a vast difference between what people think they ought to do (value) and what they actually do (behaviour). Moreover, we get much of our evidence for what people do from what people make – that is, from material things (what archaeologists study). Besides these components, culture has several properties or characteristics. So there are many elements and characteristics in a definition of culture. We shall discuss these elements and characteristics of culture in the next section.

Reflection and Action

Define culture based on the definitions that you have just read in the discussion above.

1.3.2 Elements of Culture

A culture is more than the sum of its parts. A mere listing of customs and norms and the material objects associated with them would by no means give a true picture of the culture. For the sake of anthropological analysis, culture may be broken down into the following main elements. These elements or components are: types of norms, sanctions, values, culture trait, culture complex and culture pattern.

Values

What is considered as good, proper and desirable, or bad, improper or undesirable, in a culture can be called as values. It influence people’s behaviour and serve as a benchmark for evaluating the actions of others. There is often a direct relationship between the values, norms, and sanctions of a culture.

Norms

Norms refers to a standard pattern of behaviour that is accepted by a society. Norms may differ from society to society. Generally there are two types of norms formal norms and informal norms. Norms that are written down and violation of which can lead to punishment is referred to as formal norms. By contrast, informal norms are generally understood and followed by a society though not recorded in black and white.

Sanctions

Sanctions consist of both rewards and penalties. It includes rewards for conducting the norms of the society as prescribed or penalties for defying the concerned social norms. Adherence to a norm can lead to positive sanctions such as a medal, a word of gratitude, or a pat on the back. Negative sanctions include fines, threats, imprisonment, and even unpleasant stares for contempt. The most cherished values of a culture will be most heavily sanctioned, whereas matters regarded as less critical will carry light and informal sanctions.

Culture Traits

Culture traits are the smallest (simplest) units of a particular culture. They are the building blocks of culture. Each trait can be material or non-material and it is analogous to the unit of the human body, the cell. Each cultural trait has a form, use, function and meaning. As several cells form a tissue, several traits form a complex culture.

1.3.3 Characteristics or Attributes of Culture

The classical definition of culture by Tylor was a turning point in the theoretical interpretation of culture, which attracted the attentions of various scholars from all over the world. Tylor postulated the theory of unilinear development of human culture ranging from savagery, barbarism to civilization, this sense of unilinear development attracted the attention of the like-minded scholars, who formed a big school of evolutionists, which will be discussed in detail in Block 3 unit 1.

The study of Culture took a significant turn after Malinowski's fieldwork among the Trobriand Islanders. Malinowski's definition of culture (as discussed above in definition paragraph) emphasised on the biological aspect of culture and explained the biological characteristics of human behaviour. He made distinction between "need" and "impulse" and emphasised on the satisfaction of need, which leads to a number of functions, Malinowski's interpretation of culture was not accepted by some of his contemporaries. Radcliffe-Brown for instance totally disagreed with Malinowski in the biological interpretation of culture. Radcliffe-Brown did not agree with the use of the word "culture" in studying social institution, but his analysis of "social structure" amounts to the wider perspective of culture, as it appears from the contents and themes of the subject dealt with on the social structure. Again, while discussing the social system in social structure he emphasised more on the arrangement of persons, who are the ultimate components of the study, rather than on the arrangement of activities (discussed in detail in Block 3 unit 2).

While the above British anthropologists were making different interpretations of culture and social systems, their counterparts in America emphasised more on the integral and psychological aspects of culture, which helped them develop various meanings and interpretations of culture, which led to the development of "pattern" and "culture and personality" school of thought (discussed in detail in Block 4 unit 1).

In the interpretations and study of culture in anthropology, anthropologists have identified several characteristics or attributes of culture which imply the qualities of culture and convey different meanings, which have further enriched the theories of culture. Some of these important concepts are given below for the benefit of learners.

Culture is socially learned

Culture is a natural outgrowth of the social interactions that constitute human groups whether in societies or organisations. Whenever and wherever people come together over time, culture develops. Culture is learned from our parents, surroundings, and friends and others through enculturation. And the learned behaviour is communicated in the group through forms of socialisation such as observation, instruction, reward, punishment and experience. The learning takes place in individual situation of experiences, social situation of imitating others and cultural situation of symbolic communication.

Culture is symbolic

Symbolic thought is unique and crucial to humans and to culture. It is human ability to give a thing or event an arbitrary meaning and grasp and appreciate that meaning. Symbols are the central components of culture. Symbols refer to anything to which people attach meaning and which one uses to communicate with others. More specifically, symbols are words, objects, gestures, sounds or images that represent something else rather than themselves. There is no obvious natural or necessary connection between a symbol and what it symbolizes. Culture thus works in the symbolic domain emphasising meaning, rather than the technical/practical rational side of human behaviour.

Culture is integrated

Elements or traits that make up a culture are not just a random assortment of customs but are mostly adjusted to or consistent with one another. *Traits* of a culture are attitudes, values, ideals, and rules for behaviour. All aspects of culture function as an inter-related whole. If one part of a culture changes it tends to affect another part.

Culture is adaptive and maladaptive

People adapt themselves to the environment using culture. The ability to adapt themselves to practically any ecological condition, unlike other animals, makes humans unique. This ability is attributed to human's capacity for creating and using culture. Culture has also maladaptive dimensions. That is, the very cultural creations and achievements of people may turn out to threaten their survival. When we see the contemporary problems of the environments, the side effects of rapid growth and in science and technology, etc, we see that culture is also maladaptive.

Culture is all-encompassing

Culture encompasses all aspects, which affect people in their everyday lives. Culture comprises countless material and non-material aspects of human lives; thus, it includes man-made objects, ideas, activities whether those of traditional, of the past or those created lately. Culture is the sum total of human creation: intellectual, technical, artistic, physical, and moral.

Culture is inculcated

All animals are capable of learning but humans alone seem to have considerable measure to pass on their acquired habits to their children. The process known as enculturation has been discussed earlier.

Culture is gratifying

Culture always and necessarily satisfies the basic biological and social needs of human beings. Cultural elements continue so long as they satisfy the needs of humans. If they fail to fulfill the wants of humans, they may be changed or replaced

by new ones to secure the satisfaction of human wants. Gratification of needs reinforces, strengthens and perpetuates cultural elements.

Culture is structured

Culture has a definite and proper structure. This implies that there is definite arrangement of its components and units. The structural components of culture are called traits and complexes. A given culture has many traits and these traits form into complexes, and each one acts as a unit. These traits and complexes are arranged in a systematic manner. This arrangement is the plan or structure of a culture.

Culture is patterned

According to Ruth Benedict cultures are not haphazard collection of customs and beliefs, but are integrated, patterned systems. The parts are interrelated. Culture is an integrated whole, that is the parts of culture are interrelated to one another. No one single cultural trait has its meaning outside of its integrated context.

People use culture creatively

There is difference between ideal culture and real culture. What culture-rules say and what people do may be different; cultural rules tell us what to do and how to do it, but we don't always do what the rules dictate. We use culture creatively.

Culture is stable and yet it changes

Culture is stable when we consider what people hold valuable and are handing over to the next generation in order to maintain their norms and values. Cultures are dynamic they are ever-changing. The change in a society can be of two types: internal changes (invention) and external changes (cultural diffusion).

Culture in Region

Socio-cultural anthropologists talk about culture region which is the geographical territory in which a particular culture prevails. It is marked by all the characteristics of a culture, including modes of dress, building styles, farms and field and other material manifestation. That is there are sub-cultures, regional cultures, national cultures, and international cultures.

Cultural Universals, specialties and alternatives

Cultural *universals* are features that are found in every culture, those that distinguish *Homo sapiens* from other species. Anthropology assumes that all human beings are fundamentally alike and they share the same basic biological, psychological, social and other characteristics. People all over the world have certain common obligations towards one another. All people are members of a single community; they all have the same root and destiny. This belief is either explicit or implicit in most of the great world religions. Certain biological, psychological, social and cultural features of human beings are universal; others are merely generalities, common to several but not to all human groups. Still other cultural features are particularities unique to certain cultural traditions (for details see Hammond, 1971).

Culture Shock

All of us, to some extent or other, take for granted the cultural practices of our society. As a result, it can be surprising and disturbing to realise that other cultures do not follow the same way of life. Culture shock can be set off either by the physical items of an unfamiliar culture or by the ways that people act. Yet we can experience culture shock even in our own society. Culture shock is the psychological and social maladjustment at micro or macro level that is experienced for the first

time when people encounter new cultural elements such as new things, new ideas, new concepts, seemingly strange beliefs and practices. No person is protected from culture shock. However, individuals vary in their capacity to adapt and overcome the influence of culture shock (*Ibid*, Angeloni, 1998; Howrad and Dunaif-Hattis, 1992).

Overt and covert

Overt and covert refer to the qualities of culture as detected by an observer. The observer may be an anthropologist, or a member of a society who is unfamiliar with certain parts of the culture. Overt means easily detectable qualities of a culture. These include artifacts, actions, utterances, which can be perceived directly. Artifacts include houses, clothes, books, tools etc. actions imply postures in various situations, curing practices, sports, externally manifested signs of respect etc. utterances include speech, songs, proverbs etc. An observer can easily detect these qualities because one has plenty of opportunities to see them, experience them and record them. On the other hand covert implies those qualities of culture which are not easily detected by an outsider. Sentiments, beliefs, fears and values are some of the cultural items which cannot be easily detectable i.e., they are covert. They are not amenable to direct observation and moreover people cannot always explain what they feel. It is generally difficult to express these abstract ideas.

Explicit and implicit

According to Kluckhohn explicit means the people's awareness of existence of the cultural items. Implicit implies the people's dim awareness or unawareness of certain cultural items. Explicitness and implicitness concern the experience of people possessing the culture, while overt and covert refer to the view of the observer. Explicit cultural items can be verbalised or criticized readily by the persons who possess them. But there are certain items of culture about which people are only dimly aware or unaware of. Hence they cannot give any clear accounts on such cultural items. These are implicit items of the culture.

Ideality and reality

Ideality of culture refers to how people say they should behave, or the way they would like to live. Reality is the actual way people behave. There is generally a discrepancy between ideality and reality.

Ethos and Eidos

Kroeber has drawn attention to these two aspects of culture. Ethos refers to the effective or emotional quality of a culture expressed in series of beliefs, thoughts and behaviour. It acts as a central force, interest theme or pattern and colors every item of culture. As it determines what people should have, do, think, and feel, prepares all the people in a culture to express the same emotional tone in all acts, thoughts and feelings. Whereas Eidos is the formal appearance of a culture derived from its constituents. Through cognitive processes operating within, a culture acquires its formal appearance or eidos. Eidos is the totality of items of culture. On the contrary ethos is the emotional quality coloring this totality. Ethos is affective but eidos is cognitive.

Organic and Superorganic

Culture is organic in the sense that it is ultimately rooted in the biological nature of human organism. Without humans to act, to think, to feel, or to make and use things, there would be no culture. Thus culture is organic. Culture is superorganic

while it is organic. Once created, culture acquires a superorganic quality or the quality by virtue of which culture exists on a level above that of the individuals who create and carry it. According to Kroeber, culture becomes a phenomenon in its own right, with its own laws and processed apart from the human carriers who sustain it. Culture is superorganic to the extent that it outlines the particular generation of people who carry it and so persists from one generation to another. This does not mean that its origin is other than biological. Culture is created by humans and it is dependent on human choice for its continuity. Culture can be altered through the decisions of human beings. But this does not mean it is easy to change culture. The superorganic may be injurious to the organic. Some cultural traits for instance, are definitely harmful to the organic life of the humans. The superorganic is an order of phenomenon different from the organic and goes its way with a certain amount of independence from the organic.

Universal and unique

Culture is universal in the sense that every man experiences it and uniqueness of culture implies its regional variations. Some cultural traits are necessary to all members of the society. These cultural traits are called cultural universals like for e.g. Incest taboo.

Civilization and Culture

The civilization represents a particular type of culture. The term “civilization” has been used almost synonymously with culture. This is because civilization and culture are different aspects of a single entity. Civilization can be viewed as the external manifestation, and culture as the internal character of a society. Thus, civilization is expressed in physical attributes, such as tool making, agriculture, buildings, technology, urban planning, social structure, social institutions, and so forth. Culture, on the other hand, refers to the social standards and norms of behaviour, the traditions, values, ethics, morality, and religious beliefs and practices that are held in common by members of the society. Both culture and civilization have been developed by the same human processes. Both are complimentary to each other. Culture needs a civilization for further growth. Civilization needs culture even for its vital force and survival. The two are therefore interdependent. Civilization cannot survive without strong stimulus and motive, however high may be its achievements in science.

Ethnocentrism and cultural relativism

The two concepts ethnocentrism and cultural relativism occupy key positions in socio-cultural anthropology. They are the most sensitive and controversial issues in sociology and socio-cultural anthropology. The general pattern is to judge the behaviour of other people in other groups by the standards of our own culture. In his book “Folkways” Sociologist William Graham Sumner coined the term *ethnocentrism* to refer to the tendency to assume that one’s culture and way of life are superior to all others. (Sumner 1906).

The ethnocentric person sees his or her own group as the center or defining point of culture and views all other cultures as deviations from what is “normal.” Anthropologists endeavor as far as possible to avoid ethnocentrism. *Cultural Relativism/ Cultural determinism* approach was first formulated by Franz Boas in North America in 19th century. He says no culture should be judged by the standards of another. *Cultural relativism* views people’s behaviour from the perspective of their own culture. It places a priority on *understanding* other cultures, rather than dismissing them as “strange” or “exotic.” Any part of a culture

must be viewed from within its cultural context-not that of the observer or the notion that there are no universal standards by which all cultures may be evaluated. Cultures must be analyzed with reference to their own histories and culture traits understood in terms of the cultural whole.

Reflection and Action

Do you think some cultures are 'superior' while others are 'inferior'? Discuss.

1.3.4 Culture and Society

Culture is the sum total of learned, shared and socially transmitted behaviour that includes ideas, values, and customs of groups of people. A fairly large number of people living in the same territory constitute a *society*. Members of a society share a common language, which facilitates day-to-day exchanges with others and participate in a common culture. Nadel in his work says it is necessary to make a distinction between "Culture" from its companion term "society." According to him culture is the way of life of the people; while a society is an organised, interacting aggregate of individuals who follow a given way of life. In simple terms a society is composed of people; the way they behave is their culture. (Nadel, S.F. 2006)

Since the time of Boas, culture became a tool for understanding and describing the exotic society. Anthropological study on cultural relativism allows a comparison of culture without assuming evolutionary hierarchies. It means that every culture has in its own rights to be different and does not stand for the purpose of other culture. In other words, all cultures express validity in their perspective of the world. Thus, it could be in-appropriate to judge cannibalism activity among society even if we use universal notion on violence. What we can do is try to understand the reason and rationalise such activity.

Early notion of culture was popularised among Anthropologist in order to understand homogeneous societies. In the modern world the relationship between culture and society is a complex one. Culture is produced and reproduced within the society and society acts in certain way in a culture. But how does culture work in the complex societies? Early Anthropologists used culture as the set of practical and contingent significations, while postmodernists use it to mark the domain of signifying practices.

According to Pertierra, (2004) society can be seen as the collection of individual members pursuing their interest in the context of formal rules administered by specialists and implemented by the state. It was also a constant state of self-constitution, whose members are engaged in individual life projects marked by purposive and value rationality. Society consists of individuals mostly unknown to one another but nevertheless linked through abstract categories such as class, nation, or gender. In this case society assumed as the real place or arena, an institution in which individuals play their roles in order to achieve their different objectives. When we see the relation between society and culture, society and culture are two elements that are complementing each other. Society expresses itself through culture. We can associate the group of people or society from the culture they practice, such as Asian society is characterised by Asian culture, or Javanese society with its Javanese culture.

Furthermore, culture is manifested in the socio economic structures as frames for the organisation of social relationship, it is embedded both in the material setting

and the social institutions of society. Material experiences are organised and group relations are structured through culture. But culture has also the medium through which the social world is experienced, interpreted and understood. In this sense, culture is something more basic than ideological superstructure. Culture is produced in a given society within the framework set by the socio-economic structure. The cultural process perpetually occurs among the different groups and classes in a society, and also affects social structure (Erna Herawati 2006).

1.4 SUMMARY

In this unit we have studied the anthropological meaning of the concept society and culture. It is derived from the Latin word *socius* which means companionship or friendship. We have come to know that a society comprises of a group of people who share a common culture, live in a particular area and feel themselves to constitute a unified and distinct entity. Society or human society is a group of people related to each other through persistent relations such as kinship, marriage, social status, roles and social networks. By extension, society denotes the people of a region or country, sometimes even the world, taken as a whole.

Culture is one of the basic concepts of anthropology. Anthropologists have been discussing and debating definitions of culture since the origin of the discipline in the 19th century. To review, we may say that culture is— *Learned*, as each person must learn how to “be” a member of that culture, *Shared*, as it offers all people ideas about behaviour, *Symbolic*, as it is based on the manipulation of symbols, and *Systemic and integrated*, as the parts of culture work together in an integrated whole.

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Sample Questions

- 1) Define anthropological meaning of the concept of culture.
- 2) Discuss the key characteristics or attributes of culture.
- 3) Discuss the relationship between society and culture.



UNIT 2 SOCIAL GROUP

Contents

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Primary Group
 - 2.2.1 Characteristics of Primary Group
 - 2.2.2 Importance of a Primary Group
- 2.3 Secondary Group
 - 2.3.1 Characteristics of Secondary Group
- 2.4 Community
- 2.5 Association
- 2.6 Organisations: Formal and Informal
- 2.7 Summary

References

Suggested Reading

Sample Questions



Learning Objectives

After studying the unit, you will be able to:

- understand what a group is, its formation and types;
- know about primary and secondary group and their characteristics;
- define a community;
- identify an association; and
- differentiate between formal and informal organisations.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Humans are social beings. They live together and form a society. Although they make society, neither they can see it nor can they touch it. But what all they can do is that they can perceive the society, they can feel the presence of society all around them. It is the basic reason behind calling society as an abstract entity. But if society is abstract, how can we study that abstract article?

Now, let us think of these aspects from different point of view.

When a human being takes birth, he or she has certain needs to fulfill for which he/she depends on other individuals. In this process, he/she interacts with other individuals of society and establishes social relationships. These social interactions take place between two or more individuals. The whole collection of individuals in which social interaction takes place is called as 'Social Group'. It is the group in a form or the other which fulfills various needs of an individual. It provides a medium for social interaction.

A person can easily identify those groups with which he makes relations in order to fulfill his needs. It means we can see the individuals that form a group. In other

words, through these groups, we can experience the society which is considered as abstract in itself. So we can say that even though group is small, still it is the true representative of society, reflection of society.

Till now three things are very clear regarding the group:

One, group is the basic element of society and is a concrete phenomenon; second, a group requires more than one individual; and third, there is a compulsory interaction between the individuals forming a group i.e. social relationships.

The elaboration of idea of social relations within a group of individuals can be seen in the writings of German Sociologist Max Weber. He opines that it is the mutual awareness or mutual recognition that establishes the relations among the group members. And it is the system of social relations that serves as a mean to fulfill the common interests of all the members. Talcott Parsons (1951) considers culture as a basic element behind social relationships. It is the culture which defines the patterns of behaviour in a group which are shared by all the members of the group. These shared norms or patterns define the roles of the members and differentiate them from non-members.

Anderson and Parker (1966: 102) give a comprehensive definition of group, "Groups are units of two or more people meeting in the same environment, or overcoming distance by some means of communication, who are influencing each other psychologically. The distinctive bond of the group is reciprocal interaction. Friends in conversation, a committee in action and children playing together are examples."

This definition of group implies that the relations among group members are not temporary, they are recurrent and influence the other members of the group i.e. members are conscious about the presence of other members. This consciousness of membership influences their behaviour and also differentiates a group.

Hence, Group is not only a physical collection of people or an aggregation; while it is a collection of people who shares common characteristics and organised pattern of persistent interaction and are aware of each other's presence.

Recurrent nature of interaction among the group members makes the group one of the most stable social units of the society. They endure for a longer period and make the society sustained. They are important for both to their members and for the society at large. As we have already discussed, groups fulfill the needs of its members. They also perform a number of functions like socialisation necessary for the maintenance of the society.

To sum up, we can say that social group is a social unit which has the following basic elements: a) an aggregation of two or more individuals, b) definite relations among the members comprising it, c) mutual awareness or consciousness.

Since, group is a collection of interacting individuals, the level of interaction can be of many types and group membership can be acquired in a number of ways. So social groups can be classified in a variety of ways. Different scholars have seen group from different point of views and classified groups in different ways. There is broad range of facts on whose basis groups have been classified. Some of the chief basis include functions, size, stability, status, rule of membership, degree of interaction and many more.

A very important classification of groups was made by C.H. Cooley (1909). On

the basis of his works two types of groups were identified i.e. PRIMARY and SECONDARY groups. Although, Cooley has never mentioned the term 'secondary group' in his writings but other scholars have popularised the term secondary group to those groups which do not fall in the category of primary groups.

Now, we would deal with these two types of groups in detail and would see their importance in social life.

2.2 PRIMARY GROUP

Primary group are those groups in which a small number of persons come into direct contact with one another. There is sense of mutual co-operation, companionship and sharing of personal feelings. They are small groups and every person necessarily belongs to any of the primary groups. Due to their important nature, they form the nucleus of the social organisation.

We have already mentioned that primary groups, for the very first time, were recognised by C.H. Cooley (1909) in his very famous book '*Social Organisation: Human Nature and Social Order*'. He has observed intimate and close social relations among the members of certain small groups and termed those groups as Primary groups. In his analysis of primary group he defined it in term of face-to-face interaction, co-operation and association, emotional involvement, identification and sentiments of loyalty. In primary groups emotions and sentiments carry more importance than the size of the group. Primary group is considered to be a product of long and intimate informal interactions. The relations among the members of primary groups are as in themselves not a mean to those ends.

For Cooley primary groups mean those characterised by intimate face-to-face association and co-operation. They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social order and ideas of the individual. He further adds that the result of intimate association psychologically, is a certain fusion of individualities in a common whole, so that one's very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life and purpose of the group. Perhaps the simplest way of describing this wholeness is by saying that it is a 'we', it involves the sort of sympathy and mutual identification for which 'we' is the natural expression. One lives in the feeling of the whole and finds the chief aim of his will in that feeling.

Cooley considers family, playmates of children, neighbourhood and community groups and groups of elders as primary groups. He believes in the universal presence of these primary groups in all the times and all the stages of development. He argues upon the presence of some degree of primary relations in all sorts of groups. This primary association create consensus which further adds a 'we' feeling among the group members. Thus primary association is seen in all the groups and cannot therefore be used as the bases of differentiation between primary and secondary groups.

A large number of people cannot interact in highly personal and face-to-face manner and they tend to break down into small, more intense cliques. So a primary group consists of a small number of people who interact in intense, direct and personal manner. The relationships between the members carry an emotional depth and the group is likely to endure for a longer time. The members know each other at personal level and share their experiences, gossip agreeably and fill the need for intimate human companionship.

Three essential conditions have been identified for a primary group formation:

- Close face-to-face proximity
- Smallness of the group
- Durability of the bond

For intimacy to develop, physical proximity is a necessity that is provided best by face-to-face association. Talking and seeking each other makes easy the exchange of ideas, feelings, opinions and sentiments. Physical proximity provides opportunity and conducive conditions for the development of primary groups.

Group size is also important. Sensory contact is not possible with many people at the same time. Small group tends individuals to come closer and facilitates personal interaction. The smaller the group the more intimate it will be. As the group becomes larger, it dilutes its intensity of relations among members and individuals also lose their individuality.

Intimacy is determined largely by the frequency and intensity of association. The longer people are together, the deeper the contacts between them. Gradual and regular interchanges of habits and ideas deepen the social ties.

Physical proximity, smaller size and long duration are the conditions that facilitate the development of close relationships. All the three conditions are not mandatory for the origin of a primary group rather they define the most favourable conditions for the development of high level of primary relations.

2.2.1 Characteristics of Primary Group

Characteristics of primary groups can be divided into two broad categories i.e. external characters and internal characters

External characters include following aspects:

- Physical proximity among group members
- Small size of the group
- Stability and durability
- Continuity in the relations

Internal characters include:

- Common objectives of the group
- The relations are ends in themselves
- Relationships are spontaneous
- Personal relationships
- Inclusive relations among members
- Control over the members

Primary groups are essential for social life. They play a very important role in an individual's life. They are significant at both individual and social level. They provide the medium through which we learn our culture and patterns of behaviour. Some of the main points regarding the importance of a primary group are given below.

2.2.2 Importance of a Primary Group

At the level of individual, a primary group

- Helps in development of personality
- Increases the efficiency of an individual
- Fulfills the psychological needs.

At the level of society, a primary group

- Transfers the culture from one generation to another
- Carries cultural norms of the society within the society
- Provides means of social control and helps maintaining the social order
- Ensures the performance of social roles in accordance with society norms.

Though primary relations and primary groups seem to be very important for the society, it would be over imperative to consider them as ideal for social interactions. At times primary groups interfere with other elements of the society. At the time of making objective decisions, primary relations create hurdle. For example, if a teacher shows leniency towards a student and gives him high marks which he does not deserve, it would be considered as dysfunctional.

Many situations arise in modern society where primary relationships are inappropriate at best and harmful at worst. In large bureaucratic structure, so necessary to contemporary organisations, impersonality is more appropriate than intimacy, routine is more important than spontaneity, and division of labour more necessary than versatility. Societies and sub-societies composed of tight network of primary relationships are often more tolerant of differences, more resistant to change, and less receptive to freedom than societies where relationships are more casual (Merill, 1969).

Moreover, primary group asserts its control over its members in the form of restrictions, conformity and reactions. For example, a family provides liberties to its members and at the same time imposes restrictions on them; a peer group fosters the conformity in the group. Primary group also resists the intellectual, industrial and educational changes in order to maintain its hereditary ties.

Reflection

Typical examples of primary group

- **The Army Group:** Soldiers form primary groups with their commandants and form informal relationships within formal settings in order to defend its members against the arbitrary authority of officers.
- **The Peer Group:** Boys and girls of the same age group and approximately same social background, as in a class, form a primary group and have personal social interaction which also helps in their personality development.
- **The Clique:** It is a form of friendship developed between two or more persons which bring them into joint activity. It satisfies the emotional needs of a person to be loved and respected by his peers. example, clique of Indian students in Australian universities.

In this discussion, we learnt that primary groups are the basic groups of the society. A human being starts life from the primary group, develops personality in primary group and throughout life one remains a part of one or another primary group. But there are other groups which are important equally if not more in an

individual's life. They are distinguished from primary groups and are called as secondary groups.

Now, let us read some more about secondary groups and the reason behind their formation.

2.3 SECONDARY GROUP

Primary groups play a vital role in a person's life; however, there are secondary groups which fulfill their maximum needs in life. Cooley did not provide any terminology for the groups other than primary groups and many writers came to speak of 'secondary groups' the tendency has been to consider secondary groups as those which depend for communication on indirect media, such as newspapers (Faris, 1937).

In secondary groups, the relations are formal, impersonal, segmental and utilitarian. These groups are less intimate as the level of interaction is restricted at a formal level. They do not give close identity to its members as primary groups do. In secondary group, we very often interact with people of diverse background because we need their services and we have certain obligations to fulfill. In case of utilitarian or contractual obligations, there is no need to develop personal relations. These relations remain based on reciprocal needs. Hence, members of these groups regard each other as means not an end in themselves.

MacIver and Page (1952) has pointed out that primary group relations are characteristics of simple or primitive societies. As the population and territory of a society increases, interests would have become diversified and so the needs. It gave rise to the need of indirect, impersonal and utilitarian relations. He called these newly emerged impersonal relations as 'great associations'. They are result of expansion of population and perhaps primarily, of growing cultural complexity. He considers secondary group a character of industrialised and urbanised complex societies. In these societies due to complexity in the nature of work, more complicated relations develop which provides a very limited scope for intimate relations.

Ogburn and Nimkoff (1966) say that the "groups which provide experience lacking in intimacy, can be called as secondary group." Here by experience he means the interaction with the varied kind of people in day to day life. At one hand secondary groups fulfill majority of the needs of an individual, on the other hand they also separate individuals' activities from the rest of the activities because in secondary group context every individual is supposed to play his own part. It also segments individuals' personality in contrast to primary groups where his whole personality reflects.

Reflection

Typical examples of secondary group

- **A group of co-workers:** A group of people working together in the same organisation form a secondary group as they have impersonal relations but spends most of the time together in the organisation.
- **Clubs:** Clubs are formed in order to fulfill some of the requirements of social life as fun clubs or sport clubs for entertainment, charity clubs for contributions or donations, hobby clubs for leisure pursuits and many more. These clubs are utilitarian in nature and form a secondary group as members of the group are less intimate.

- **University or college:** University or a college also form secondary group as they are segmental in nature. People are dependent on colleges for educational requirements but it reflects just a part of their personality and people form formal contacts.

In order to understand secondary group in more appropriate manner, let us look into their characteristics.

2.3.1 Characteristics of Secondary Group

- **Dominance of secondary relations:** Secondary group relations can be seen in reference to primary relations. Secondary group relations are impersonal, indirect, non-inclusive and utilitarian. Members are connected to each other through contractual obligations or interests. Due to self-interest, individuality develops among the members.
- **Voluntary membership:** Individuals are free to join or leave the group at any point of time i.e. membership of these groups are predominantly voluntary. But in case of secondary groups like 'state', membership becomes compulsory.
- **Large in Size:** Unlike a primary group, physical proximity is not the condition for secondary group and so size of secondary group becomes large. They might spread all over the world. For example, members of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) are scattered all over the world.
- **Goal Oriented:** Secondary groups are formed in order to fulfill the needs of the individuals. They serve the special functions in the society. Every secondary group emerges in response to specific purpose and joins the people having same type of need.
- **Indirect communication:** Mode of communication among the members of secondary group is indirect. In many of the cases, group members seldom or rarely or never come into direct contact to each other. They rely on different forms of mass media communication which include radio, telephone, television, newspaper, movies, magazines, post and telegraph etc.
- **Role decides a person's position:** In secondary groups, position of a person depends upon his role. Socially achieved status and its corresponding role remains the key factor behind the position of a person in the secondary group. His position is not being decided by his ascribed status neither he is treated on the basis of his birth.

However, an individual fulfills its majority of the needs through the secondary group, yet these groups are not exclusive and cannot replace the importance of primary groups.

In modern society, many of the former functions of the primary groups have been assumed by large, impersonal, goal-oriented groups. Each of these secondary groups creates a new network of primary groups that provide intimacy and personal response in many impersonal situations also. So we should not see both of them mutually exclusive.

The inflexible classification of groups into primary and secondary is not preferable as there is much overlapping of the two. Kingsley Davis (1957: 289) writes that "Cooley's emphasis on 'we' feeling cannot be taken as the distinctive element in the primary group as such feeling to some extent is necessary for any enduring community." In between primary group like the family and a formal and rigid group

like army there are hundreds of groups, some of which are more primary than others. Even in modern organisations, efforts are made to create a friendly atmosphere among the employees.

Hence, we can say that in modern societies both primary and secondary groups are important and it is not easy to substitute one for the other.

Action

- 1) Identify the various people with which you interact often and try to categorise them into primary and secondary group members in your reference.
- 2) Classify the following groups into primary and secondary groups

Nuclear Family	Co-Workers
Sports Team	Church Congregation
FCCI	Mafia Brothers
Alcoholic Anonymous	Democratic Party
Unmarried Partners	Polo Club
Fraternal Groups	College Clique
Army Battalion	Boy Scout Troop
Neighbourhood Watch	Rotary Club
Cancer Support Club	Senior Citizen Club

2.4 COMMUNITY

We have understood the concept of group in the above discussion. The elementary point of a social group is the presence of social relations. Now, just think of a group in which an individual spends most of the time of his life and what if this group is restricted to a particular locality or place or geographical area? It becomes a community in which people spend most of their time and keep a feeling of belongingness with it.

A community is called as a collection of people with residential ties to particular locality. It is the territorial boundary which differentiates a community with other groups because the concept of group is not restricted to a particular locality. It may be considered as a permanent local aggregation of people having diversified as well as common interests.

Word 'Community' is comprised of two Latin words namely 'com' and 'munis'. In English 'com' means together and 'munis' means to serve. Thus, community means to serve together. It implies that the purpose of a community is to serve.

According to MacIver and Page (1952: 9) "Community is a group of people who live together, who belong together, so that they share, not ties or that particular interest, but as a whole set of interests, wide enough and complete enough to include their lives." Kingsley Davis (1957) has defined community as the smallest territorial group that can embrace all the aspects of social life. These definitions give emphasis on the structural and functional aspects of the community. While we should keep in mind that community is not an exclusive entity, it should not be seen as a separate part of society. They are within the society and form their integral part.

An individual cannot live his whole life within an organisation or an association while he can live his life in a village or in a city. So we can say that community provides the individual a conducive environment to live wholly within it and also summarize his social relationships within it.

In the simple societies, communities are considered as self-sufficient but in modern time character of community has become very complex. Moreover, community is a relative term. People live within a greater community such as a village within a district, a district within a region, a region within a state and a state within a country.

Sometimes, it becomes difficult to differentiate a community from other social form like society and groups. But, there are some basic characteristic features of the communities.

Characteristics of a Community

- **Definitive geographical area:** Community is a spatial entity. A community is always considered in relation to a physical geographical area or territory. It is a compulsory condition for a community. But it should not be confused with those groups who live together without any separate physical boundary. As four friends living in a room do not form a community. Community is a broader term.
- **We feeling or community feeling:** It is home instinct which lays the foundation of people's attachment to their house, community or nation. It's the 'we' feeling through which people recognises their community and themselves. Community sentiments develop during a period of time within community.
- **Common culture and common life:** Life of the people in a community is more or less same. Due to their common ecological conditions, they develop same type of culture, habits and behavioural patterns. Cultural uniformity and uniformity in their mode of life can be observed.
- **Close relationships:** As a person mostly lives in a community, proximate relations develop. Collective participation becomes a common affair which brings people together and gives a chance to primary relations to develop. Thus, the psychological feelings of a community become more important.
- **Completeness of life:** Community covers all the aspects of life. Community helps in the socialisation and also helps in developing the community sentiments in a person as well.
- **Permanent nature:** Communities are never formed with any particular aim or objective. It grows itself spontaneously and so it is durable.
- **Not a legal body:** A community is not a legal body i.e. it cannot sue, nor it can be sued. In the eyes of law, community has no rights and duties.

Apart from these basic elements, community shares feeling of one-ness and has a particular name. Though a community does not form with a particular aim, its ends remain wider and natural.

MacIver and Page (1952) has considered village and tribal societies as the best examples of community. Apart from it, they have also kept asylum and prison into the category of community.

2.5 ASSOCIATION

In our day to day life, we come across a number of associations like trader's association and urban development association etc. but we hardly pay any attention

to what an association is? In anthropology, association represents a group created for fulfillment of common needs.

Human beings can fulfill their needs through three ways. One, independently; second, through conflict with one another and third, on co-operative basis i.e. in company. This co-operative pursuit may be determined by customs of the community. So when a group organises itself especially for the purpose of pursuing certain interests, an association is born.

As MacIver and Page (1952: 209) says that “an association is an organisation deliberately formed for the collective pursuit of same interest or set of interests, which its members share.” This definition clearly indicates the nature of association, its structure and functions.

Hence, it can be said that an association is a group of people organised for a particular purpose. It implies that there are certain conditions to constitute an association:

Firstly, there must be a group of people; Secondly, the group of people should be organised i.e. there must be certain rules for conduct; Thirdly, there must be common purpose of the specific nature to follow.

Since, men have several interests and several purposes to pursue; they establish many associations to fulfill them. For example: political associations to serve the political motives, student associations to give out student welfare, professional associations like ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research), FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) to serve the interests of concerned people and international associations like Rotary Club, Y.M.C.A. (Young Men’s Christian Association) etc.

As society moves towards complexity, needs of the human beings also become diversified and this finally lead to more and more number of associations. In contemporary times, associations perform more than their conventional functions. Now people use associations to discharge their social obligations. Society is considered as a combination of associations and healthy associations represents a healthy society.

Characteristics of association

- Association requires at least two individuals. It is considered as a concrete form of group.
- Association has its own aims and objectives. No association can be formed without any aim. Aim can be broad or particular.
- Association is always a result of deliberate action. Like communities, they do not grow spontaneously. They are deliberately created by men in order to fulfill certain aims.
- In an association, membership remains voluntary. Members can join the association or establish an association as per their needs.
- There are certain rules to get membership of an association. Every association establishes on the ground of certain rules and regulations. It also contains code of conduct for the members. On any contradictory action or disobeying the regulations, a member may be expelled from the membership.

- Associations are subjected to be terminated. The life of an association is upto the achievement of the aim for which it has been created. The existence of the association after the achievement of the objectives becomes meaningless and immaterial.

In simple societies, where there is less division of labour, there are a few associations and they are more inclusive. Thus, they lack specific limited functional character. They take such forms as age groups, kin groups and sex-groups etc. while in modern societies; associations are tend to be specialised so that each stands for a particular type of interest.

So we see that associations are formed to achieve certain general goals and in order to attain these goals, certain rules and regulations are developed. Formation of an association can be understood from the following example:

In a society, everybody needs a house to live. It is everybody's aim but can we achieve it by our own exclusive efforts and resources? The answer is 'No' and for that purpose Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) was established. Associations are formed in this manner only. As needs increased, people kept on making associations to meet those needs.

Hence, we can say that associations are those functional units of society through which a man fulfills his basic social needs. They are deliberately formed in order to attain certain purposes.

Reflection and Action

Are family, school and hospital associations?

If we observe them carefully, we find that all of these three have following characteristics:

- i) More than one member
- ii) A definite structure
- iii) Have specific aims and objectives
- iv) Voluntary membership (after certain period of time, one can decide that whether he/she wants to stay in the family or not)

On the basis of above features, family, school and hospital can be considered as associations.

Activity

- 1) Differentiate between community, association and society.
- 2) Make a list of all those associations to which you belong.

2.6 ORGANISATIONS: FORMAL AND INFORMAL

Now, we know about social groups, communities and associations. We learnt in association that they are organised groups with a specific purpose. While organisations are those associations of individuals through which certain value oriented interests are satisfied. They are systematically arranged units of individuals in which each person has a formal status and role, (Anderson and Parker, 1966).

Organisations are principally formed in order to attain certain goals. They emerge 'when explicit procedures are established to coordinate the activities of a group in the interest of achieving specific objectives. The collective effort of the members of the group may become formally organised either because all of them have some

common interests or because a sub-group has furnished inducements to the rest to work on behalf of its interests. Trade unions, government bureaus and army are few examples of organisations.

In modern society, needs of human being are diversified and so a number of organisations exist. Organisations provide a medium for expressing the interests like education, architecture, music, sports, cultural activities, etc. Parsons (1960: 9) says that “organisations are social units that are deliberately constructed and reconstructed to pursue specific goals.” The government, trade unions, sports authorities and clubs are social structures formed to achieve certain objectives with special purposes. These all are counted as organisations.

Generally, organisations can be divided into formal and informal organisations.

An organisation is developed when there is collectivity of people associated with one another. But, mere collection of individuals does not form a formal organisation. The defining criteria of a formal organisation is the existence of procedures for mobilising and coordinating the efforts of various, usually specialised, sub-groups in the pursuit of joint objectives.

Formal organisations are further divided into four types on the basis who benefits from the organisation. One type is mutual benefit organisations where the members are beneficiaries, for example a labour union. Another type is represented by business concerns where the main beneficiaries are owners. Third type is client-centered as in case of service organisations. The fourth type is the common-wealth organisations which are meant for the benefit of the public. Formal organisation has fixed set of rules of intra-organisation procedures and structures. These rules are set out in writing leaving a little scope for interpretations. In some societies or in some organisations, such rules may be strictly followed; in others, they remain at the level of formalisation only. The informal organisations are informally organised by the participants themselves, and they compliment those formally organised for them by the management. It is the interlocking social structure that governs how people work together in practice. It is the aggregate of behaviours, interactions, norms, personal and professional connections through which work gets done and relationships are built among people who share a common organisational affiliation. It consists of a dynamic set of personal relationships, social networks, communities of common interest and emotional sources of motivation. Informal organisation originates or evolves spontaneously in response to changes in the work environment.

Characteristics of formal organisation

- Enduring unless deliberately altered
- Static
- Very specified written rules
- Equates person with roles
- Hierarchical
- People are bounded together with formal rules and procedures

While informal organisations have following characteristics:

- Evolve or emerge spontaneously
- Dynamic and responsive

- Rules are not specified if written
- Treat people as individuals
- No hierarchical relations

Membership of an organisation along with its privileges entails duties and responsibilities. It is just like availing a new status in order to make the individual aware of his new responsibilities and status; many organisations go through the initiation ceremony along with oath taking process. Some organisations maintain secrecy which builds a kind of social distance between members and outsiders for example Mau Mau, a secret organisation of West Africa (Verghese, 1992).

In a large organisation, many smaller organisations exist. These smaller organisations, which are themselves formal organisations, work as sub units of larger network. This whole network of organisations and its sub units is known as ‘complex organisations’. Etzioni (1961: 464) opines, “Complex organisation constitutes one of the most important elements which make up social web of modern societies. Most citizens of modern societies are born in a hospital, educated in school, work in one organisation or another; and to the degree to that they participate in religious and political activities, these two, frequently take place in complex organisation. In short member of modern societies obtain a large part of their material, social and cultural satisfaction from large scale organisations”.

Activity

- 1) Name five formal and informal organisations found in your society
- 2) Find out the characteristics of bureaucratic organisation of your society

Modern organisations differ in three ways with social groups (i) division of labour; (ii) power centers; and (iii) substitution of personnel. Contemporary organisations are specialised and are likely to be formed when there is a complimentary or common interest which may bring the members together for activities of mutual interest.

2.7 SUMMARY

In this unit you have learnt about social groups including primary and secondary groups, communities, associations and formal and informal organisations. Social groups are based on social interaction and the degree of interaction decides the nature of the group. While community is a spatial phenomenon having ‘we’ feeling, on the other hand associations and organisations are formed in order to fulfill certain purpose with specific objectives. These concepts would help you in understanding the society and its structure in a better way.

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Suggested Reading

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Sample Questions

- 1) Primary Groups play a pivotal role in a person's life. Explain.
- 2) Primary Groups can be formed within the secondary groups. Comment.
- 3) How is a community different from an association?
- 4) Organisations form a network of roles and duties. Elucidate.

UNIT 3 SOCIAL IDENTITY AND MOVEMENTS

Contents

- 3.1 Introduction: Identity
 - 3.1.1 Society, Self and Identity
 - 3.1.2 Culture and Identity
 - 3.1.3 Identity, Self Recognition and Meaning
 - 3.1.4 Identity: Reasons and Choice
- 3.2 Transformation of Identity
 - 3.2.1 Identity and Domination
 - 3.2.2 Identity, Power and Changing Society
 - 3.2.3 Identity in Networked Society
- 3.3 Collective Actions, New Identity and Social Movements
- 3.4 Resurgence of Multiple Collective Identities in India
- 3.5 Summary

References

Suggested Reading

Sample Questions

Learning Objectives



After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- elaborate the concept of identity;
- discuss the process of transformation of identity;
- analyse the process of rejuvenation of identity in the context of social movement and its transformation; and
- delineate the resurgence of multiple collective identities as taking shape in grassroots movements in India.

3.1 INTRODUCTION: IDENTITY

In general sense of the term, it is widely stated that an identity is what “I am” or “we are”, “he is” or “they are”. The “I” and “we” similarly “he” and “they” is neither independent/autonomous social product nor remain fixed forever. One’s identity is constructed through the processes of interaction, and daily engagement both with the local and global society. These processes of construction get widely influenced by the social and cultural institutional arrangements of the society like the caste, religion and ethnicity, class, political party, state and the like. Thus the process of identity construction get negotiated both with the localised conditionalities, historical experiences and inter connections with the wider society. It is a complex and dynamic process through which individual collective self gets constructed, reformed and rejuvenated. Hence the summations of identity represent the collective self. Generally speaking human beings are born in society and societal conditions widely shape the identity.

3.1.1 Society, Self and Identity

The issues of ‘self’ and ‘identity’ are frequently used in the *symbolic-interactionist* theories. To them ‘self reflects society’, i.e., ‘society shapes self which shapes social behaviours’ (Mead 1934; Cooley 1902; Blumer 1969). Society however is not a homogenous undifferentiated identity. It is having eclectic dimension. Hence the *structural symbolic–interactionist* visualises societies as ‘highly differentiated yet organised systems of interactions and relationships encompassing a wide variety of crosscutting lines based on social class, age, gender, ethnicity, religion and more’. Here ‘self’ must be seen as ‘multifaceted, as comprised of a variety of parts that are sometimes interdependent and sometimes independent of other parts, sometimes mutually reinforcing and sometimes conflicting and that are organised in multiple ways. Self is conceptualised as sets of discrete identities or internalised role designations. It is also argued that identity varies in their salience. That a given identity can be invoked in a variety of situations or it ‘can be defined as differential probability’. Thus choice between or among behaviours expressive of particular roles will reflect the relative location of the identities associated with those roles (Stryker 1990: 873–74).

3.1.2 Culture and Identity

Philosophically identity is not a universal but a culture-specific discursive construction. Hall (1990) talks about cultural identity that is formed continuously: ‘Cultural identity is not an essence but a continually shifting description of us’. Hall’s (1996) argues that there is no automatic connection between various discourses of identity, namely, class, gender, race, age, etc. as they can be articulated in different ways. In this connection, the issue of multiple identities as propagated by several social scientists is highly relevant. To Barker and Galasinski (2001) ‘we may reflect on the multiple identities of the contemporary subject, that is the weaving of the patterns of identity from the discourses of class, race, gender, etc. We can thus conceive of people as operating across and within multiple subject positions constituted by the intersections of discourses of race, gender, age, nation, class, etc. Thus there is an element of plasticity in the formation of identity. Here to Hall (1996), it is the very plasticity of identity that makes its cultural and political significance, for the shifting and changing character of identities chronicles the way that get transformed over time and as a result, they tend to be subjective construction of mainly their objectively fixed phenomena (Hall 1996).

3.1.3 Identity, Self Recognition and Meaning

Furio Cerutti (2001) is of the view that the change in self-perception of the actor plays a crucial role both in the formation and transformation of identity. To him ‘there is a symbolic interaction (before and above any calculations and sometimes against the same calculations) that explains the development of the actor’s self, his actions, his transformations and his undoing’. The resurgence of identity also signifies a shift in attention ‘from structure to agency’.

Reflection

Cerutti (2001) emphasised two important dimensions related to the process of establishment and transmission of identity: (a) it creates a source of meaning to provide legitimacy to the decisions, action and unity of the group’s existence, and (b) it also defines the outer limits of group solidarity.

Identity in question thus, should be considered as an evolving identity and not a static one. Thus collective identity is a dynamic process and is a social construction.

Such a construction also involves the social production of boundaries reflecting the process of inclusion and exclusion. Self-recognition is an essential aspect of identity formation, which is produced by collectively operated individualisation of value, norms, life forms, etc. (Furio Cerutti 2001).

To Castells (1997) identities are sources of meaning for actors themselves, and by themselves constructed through a process of individuation. Identity refers to the process of construction of meaning on the basis of cultural attributes, or related sets of cultural attributes that is/are given priority over sources of meaning by set of social actors. Although identities can also be originated from dominant institutions, they can only become identities only when and if social actor internalises them and construct their meaning around their individuation. He distinguishes identities from roles. To him identities are stronger source of meaning than roles because of the process of self construction and individuation that they involve. In simple terms, identities recognise the meaning while roles recognise the functions. He again defines meaning as the symbolic identification of the purpose of action by a social actor (Castells, 1997:7).

3.1.4 Identity, Reasons and Choice

While examining the problematic aspects of identity, Amartya Sen (1999) underlines that the sense of community and fellowship relates closely to the idea of social identity. According to Sen, 'There are strong influences of the community, and of the people with whom we identify and associate, in sharpening our knowledge and comprehension as well as our ethics and norms. In this sense, social identity cannot but be central to human life' (Sen, 1999: 4). The centrality of human life is conditioned by inherited socio cultural processes on the one hand and by reasons and alternative choices on the other. Identity also shapes through societal recognition. In the interactive world individuals are posted with varieties of choices. This provides the opportunity to associate and to form and reform identities either based on reason, tradition or else. Sen extensively examines the question as to whether our identities emerge by choice or by reasoning or by passive recognition. He mentions that the choice to be identified is not permanent in the society and that there are limits to what we choose to identify with. He also mentions that one can discover his or her identity. However, to him choices have to be made even when discoveries occur. 'Choices do exist, and any denial to this fact leads to the uncritical and unquestioning acceptance of conformist behaviour with several conservative implications. To him, 'the unquestioned presumptions are merely unquestioned not unquestionable'. The unquestioning acceptance of social identity may also involve a radical shift in the identity having accepted as discovery rather than reasoned choice. **For example** a shift from the holistic to sectarian identities may be a product of unquestioning acceptance of coercive arrangement. This unreasoned identity shift may lead to devastating effects, like in Rwanda or Yugoslavia. Here he explains the phenomena of 'new tyrannies' in the form of newly asserted identity that tyrannizes by eliminating other identities. These identities may have a political role. However these may be oppressive if no room is given to other claims. To Sen, 'to deny plurality, choice and reasoning in identity can be a source of repression; choice is possible and important in individual conduct and social decisions even if we remain oblivious of it' (Sen 1999: 22).

3.2 TRANSFORMATION OF IDENTITY

Social movements not only help generate new collective identity or common identity, but also provide a broad field for the transformation of social identity [this lead

to the formation of a unified group out of scattered individuals e.g., transforming *serie* into *groups en fusion* (Sartre 1960), or this may lead to the transformation of a collectively into a self-conscious groups for collective ‘class-in-itself’ to ‘class-for-itself’ (Marx 1974), etc.]. Sartre calls *serie* the normal state of crowds, that is, a series of atomized individuals, each one seen as isolated in his or her inner world and going his or her own way without caring about others’ ways. What Sartre is pointing out is that whenever and wherever this figure is actually doing something or even just walking in the street, it has a silent companion: ‘social control’. The public space is wholly under the control of the established power. Every individual, whatever she or he thinks of the manifest public discourse “All is well” and its latent content “Nothing can be changed” (cf. Bertaux 1990: 150) whether he or she accepts the rule of this power or rejects it, does so secretly, thus behaving as if accepting it. Therefore each one, looking at all the others who work, comply and keep quiet, thinks they are alone in secretly rejecting this social order. When, however, frustration mounts in each person individually, it takes only a small event to trigger an instantaneous and massive change of state, from *serie* to *groupe en fusion*. As soon as each person in a serialised mass realises that some others contest the established power, as he or she takes one step forward to openly express support, a chain reaction spreads through the atomized series and transforms it into a fluid group (*groupe en fusion*) which instantly moves from the status of subordinated passive object to that of subject capable of action’ (cf. Bertaux 1990: 155–56). Indeed, social movements provide the required platform for such transformation.

In the Marxian analysis transformation in the collective identity has been viewed as transformation of class identities from that of ‘class-in-itself’ to ‘class-for-itself’. An identity is constructed not only through objective economic conditions but through a subjective consciousness about economic conditions that transform the social collectivity into a self-conscious entity to bring transform in the pre-existing social order. The social collectivity with common economic position and conflicting economic interest vis-a-vis the other form objective basis of a class-in-itself. This is social class without identity and it is incapable of collective action as it lacks subjective consciousness. The class-in-itself acquires collective identity of class-for-itself getting mediated through class-consciousness. In this analysis of transformation of identity all pre-existing identities like caste, gender, race, ethnicity etc are subsumed under the class identity.

3.2.1 Identity and Domination

To Longman (2010) in face of the structural crises, contradictions and dislocations due to globalisation, there is often a migration from the political economic to cultural/collective identity and emotional realms. Customary identities regarding work, gender, gender orientation, religion etc. face economic and/or cultural challenges and crises that in turn impact identities and cause emotional distress to actors.

For Foucault, power and domination work through the inscription and control of identity through various disciplinary/discursive practices. (cf. Buechler, 2000). Gramsci’s notion of cultural hegemony depends on mediation through identity to naturalise the historical (Langman, 2000). Thus a crucial aspect for certain contemporary social movements is rejection or refashioning of identities/values, to influence the future directions of a society. From what has been said, collective identity can be seen as a contested terrain in struggles for hegemony. The historic

blocs in power defend their power and privilege by fostering identities in which subjugation is cloaked and most people accept their domination (ruling block interests) as “normal”, “common sense” and “in their best interests”. In other words, the production of identities is a part of hegemonic processes that sustain structures of domination at the level of the person. And the acceptance and performances of those identities is not without certain emotional gratifications for most people most of the time. The extent to which such identities are embraced without question, and reproduced in performance over time, sustains the continuity of the society. This has been the essential nature of the structuration process for Giddens and the nature of the *habitus* for Bourdieu. Most notions of identity locate the person/group within certain structures of hierarchy and domination. This may be racial or ethnic. Colonisers impose subaltern identities upon on the colonised—the acceptance of which empowers the coloniser—even if the colonised turns violence on his/her self (Fanon, 1986). Women have been socialised to be subordinate to men—but as Simone de Beauvoir noted the suffering of women as Other, what Freudian called the illness without a name. Gays have long suppressed their identities.

3.2.2 Identity, Power and the Changing Society

Identity is also linked to broad societal arrangement. Each of the societies—primitive, agrarian, industrial and post-industrial is represented by their own variety of identities. In recent years the process of construction of collective identity has taken a complex shape in the wake of the initiation of new economic orders, introduction of new technologies and unprecedented flow of new technology and increasing flow of human and material objects across the globe. Manuel Castells (1997) in his famous work *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture: The Power of Identity* elaborates the process of emergence of identity that challenges the processes of globalisation and cosmopolitanism. To him:

“Along with the technological revolution, transformation of capitalism, and the demise of the statism, we have experienced the wide spread surge of powerful expression of collective identity that challenges globalisation and cosmopolitanism on behalf of the singularity and people’s control over their lives and environment. These expressions are multiple, highly diversified following the contours of each culture, and the historical sources of formation of each identity. They include practice of movements, aiming at the transforming human relationship at their most fundamental level” (Castells, 1997:10).

Though it is easy to accept that identities are constructed, to him the real questions are how and for what. He is of the opinion that the identities are constructed in the context of power relationship and he proposes three forms of the origins of identity building.

Legitimising identity: Introduced by the dominant institutions of the society to extend and rationalise their domination vis-a vis social actors. **Legitimising identities** sustaining the social order—typically these include patriotic, religious or consumerist orientations. Such identities, the most typical in any society, maintain the status quo.

Resistance Identity: Generated by those actors that are in positions/ conditions devaluated and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from or opposed to those permeating the institutions of society (Castells 1997) **Resistance identities** attempts to retain or restore waning identities that oppose globalisation and its impacts. For example, the fragmentation of community, often tied to economic

decline, leads some people to turn away from the global and embrace reactionary movements from nationalisms to fundamentalisms that would restore a [mythical] lost world or “Golden Age” of strong communities of the past and defend a particular cultural framework that would secure heretofore privileged, traditional identities. In some cases, there may be progressive forms of resistance albeit romantic and anarchic, and so individualistic; they are unlikely to foster mobilisations (Longman 2010).

Project Identity: When social actors on the basis of whatever cultural materials available to them build a new identity that redefines their positioning in society, by so doing, seek the transformation of the whole structure (Castells, 1997:8). For our purposes, the most important, if often least frequent pattern are the **project identities** that challenge the hegemony of the dominant class at several levels, not the least of which are proposing alternative identities that typically resist rationalisation and/or commodification and consumerism. These project identities pose fundamental challenges to late capitalist modernity in which rational technologies, as forms of domination, colonise the life world as well as collective identity, child rearing, family life, work, organisational spheres and even the pursuit of pleasure (Giddens 1991, Habermas 1975, Hochschild 1997). The attempts to re-negotiate and/or fashion new forms of tolerant democratic identities that embrace alternative futures, in turn act to impel progressive social transformations. Such people seek to transform people and society in terms greater equality, freedom and democracy. But these project identities are emergent in the interaction of struggle, they are neither *a priori* nor clearly envisioned as goals.

He again maintains that “identities that start as resistance, may reduce project and may also along with the course of history, become dominant in the institution of the society, thus becoming a legitimising identities to rationalise their domination. Thus to him there is per se no progressive or regressive identities except its historical context. However in his each type of identity process leads to a different outcome in constituting society. Legitimising identity generates a civil society, i.e. a set of organisation and institutions as well as a series of structured and organised social actors, which produce albeit sometimes in a conflict manner the identity that rationalises the source of structural domination” (Castells, 1997:2). This is indeed the original concept of civil society as formulated by Gramsci. The Gramscian sense of civil society is formed by a series of apparatuses such as the church, unions, parties etc on which on the one hand prolonged the dynamics of the state, on the other hand deeply rooted among the people.

The identity for resistance leads to the formation of communes or communities. It constructs forms of collective resistance against other unbearable oppression, usually on the basis of the identities that were apparently defined by history, geography or biology making it easier to essentialise the boundaries of resistance”. Here the examples of are religious fundamentalism, nationalist self affirmation, etc the expressions being ***exclusion of the excluded by the excluders***.

The project identity according to him produces subjects. They are collective actors through which individuals reach holistic meaning of their experience. In this case the building of identity is a project of different life... expanding towards the transformation of the society (Castells, 1997:10).

3.2.3 Identity in Networked Society

To him, the dynamics of identity is central to the network society and herein he accepts the tenets of Giddens’s characterisation of identity in the late modernity.

Locating self-identity within the interplay of local and global he accepts Giddens view that “self identity is not a distinctive trait possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his/her biography... To be a human being is to know both what is one doing and why one is doing it... In the context of the post industrial order, the self becomes a reflexive project... Reflexively organised self planning...becomes a central feature of the structuring of the self identity” Giddens (1991).

To Castells, however the raise of network society calls into question the process of construction of self identify. It is because the network society is based on the systemic disjunction between local and global for most individuals and social groups. Therefore, reflexive self planning becomes impossible, except for the elite inhabiting in the timeless space of flows of global network and their ancillary locals.

Under such new conditions, civil societies shrink and disarticulate because there is no longer continuity between the logic of power making in the global network... The search for meaning takes place then in the reconstruction of defense identified around communal principles. Most of the social actions becomes organised in the opposition between unidentified flows and secluded identities... (and) that the condition of the subject at the heart of the process of social change takes a different route to one we knew during modernity and late modernity: namely subjects if and when constructed, are not built any longer on the basis of civil societies, that are in the process of disintegration, but as prolongation of communal resistance... This is the actual meaning of the new primacy of identity politics in the network society (Castells, 1997:11).

Castells while explaining the process of emergence and transformation of social movements in the context of the network society states that information technology is transforming the world and it is causing disintegration of existing mechanism of social control and political representation. All over the world, there is perceived loss of control over lives, environment, jobs, economies, governments, countries and ultimately over the fate of the earth. There is an emerging new global order, and alternative projects challenge the logic embedded in the new global order. Now there are unexpected ways of reactions and mobilisations. In his view social movements can be categorised by three principles: the movements identity, the movements adversary and the movements goal which was originally propagated by Touraine (1966). The identity refers to the self definition of the movement of what it is, adversary refers to the principle enemy, as explicitly defined by the movement; and the social goals refers to the vision of the social order the movement would wish to attain.

To him in the information age, bypassed by global network of wealth, power and information, the modern nation state has lost much of its sovereignty. In this age the legitimising identities are drained away. He however has visualised the emergence of a powerful resistance identities both retrench in the communal heavens and built around proactive social movements’ which choose to establish their autonomy in their communal resistance’ for example the women’s and the environmental movements. In the network society together with the state apparatuses, global networks, and self centred individuals, there are also communes formed around resistance identity. However their logic excludes each other.

In this backdrop he visualises the emergence of project identities from the development of the resistance identities that arise from a commune. The commune

of resistance defends their space, and their places against the placeless logic of the space of flows characterising social dominations in the information age. In the network society power is diffused in the global network of wealth, power and information, and images. The social movements according to Castell are emerging from the communal resistance to globalisation, capitalist restructuring, organisational networking, uncontrolled informationalism and patriarchy. Such of them are of ecologist, feminists, religious fundamentalists, nationalists, and localists.

3.3 COLLECTIVE ACTIONS, NEW IDENTITY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Among the new social movement scholars the issue of collective identity formation has got a place of prominence whereby issues such as collective participation, group solidarity, and cultural integration and so on have been widely emphasised. How are these identities formed? What are their implications for a social movement? To Pizzorno the direct participation in collective action is an essential component of collective identity formation. This participation in the collective action, to him, need not be seen in terms of gain or loss, but in terms of production of solidarity. These kinds of action are ‘connecting a process of formation for an identity’ (Pizzorno, 1978: 293).

It is now imperative for us to look into the nuances of identity perspective that has been widely used in West European countries to study social movements since early 20th century. This intellectual tradition has emerged backdrop of proliferation of preponderant labour movements, development industrial democracies, Fabian socialism and welfare state in the UK and other countries on the one hand, and mobilisations of nationalist feelings in the countries like Germany on the other. Indeed institutionalisation of reformist and social democratic labour movement in Western Europe affected the way social movements were conceived by social scientists in these countries (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991:17-18).

However since 1960s, going away from the economic determinism and newness were the major thrusts to study social movements. Touraine (2006) makes it very explicit: “After the World War II and even very recently—especially in the 1960s—many people, including myself tried to discover new forms of collective actions in a so called, at that time, post-industrial, society and what we call now an information society ...I was convinced at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty- first century, the social and the political scene would be dominated by the growing role of these new and the cultural movements... Many people were convinced that priority should be given to the formation of what I had myself called ‘new social movements’” (Touraine, 2006: 89-92).

It was widely realised that not merely the empirical and the economic class position, but rather the issue of values, culture, subjectivity, morality, empowerment etc. have also played crucial roles towards the formation of new collective identities in these movements. Touraine (1981, 1983) observed ‘new social movements as potential bearers of new social interests’ and that social movements are characterised by the realisation of historicity, by self-conscious awareness and collective identity. Bertaux (1990) has added the view that “subjectivity” and “idealism” are essential elements of social movement and that “subjectivity refers to the subject in its totality...it concerns with the drastic change in the fabric of social life that takes place when a new movement is born.” (Bertaux, 1990:153). Social movements help generate sense of collective identity and new ideas that recognises the reality

from new perspective. Collective identities are formed as an achieved definition of a situation, constructed and negotiated through the constitution of social networks which then connect the members of a group or movement through collective action to provide distinctive meaning to collective action. Thus social movements grow around relationship of new social identity that are voluntarily conceived “to empower” members in defense of this identity (Melucci 1992, 1996). To Melucci ‘newness of the new social movements is a relative concept and it had a temporary function to indicate the comparative difference between the historical forms of class conflict and today’s emergent form of collective action. ‘The reality in which we live has in entirety become a cultural construct and our representations of it serve as filters for our relationship with the whole world... Social movements too seem to shift their focus from class, race, and other more traditional issues towards the cultural ground.....’ (Melucci, 1996:8-9).

In the world of cultural interactivity and co-construction social movement provides public spaces for generating new thoughts, activating new actors, generating new ideas. ‘Thus by producing new knowledge, by reflecting on their own cognitive identity, by saying what they stand for, by challenging the dominant assumptions of the social order, social movements develop new ideas those are fundamental to the process of human creativity. Thus social movements develop worldviews that restructure cognition, that re-cognize reality itself. The cognitive praxis of social movements is an important source of new social images and transformation of societal identities’ (Eyerman and Jamison 1991: 161-166). Thus social movements involve actions for ‘doing’. ‘The involvement in an action is a matter of conscience and emotion, of responsibility and intention, of reflection and (com) passion, it is basically moral, global and individual (Hegedus, 1990: 266).

Social movements are also linked however not only to the understanding of common social identity but also of common interest (Scott 1991: 6) With the growing space for globalism and informationalism while the notion of identity has emerged to be idealistic and hegemonic at one end, it is also tending to be diluted, fragmented and self oriented on the other. In view of the changes in the contemporary society critiquing the domination of the identity theory has also been a possibility and necessity. It is widely delineated that, with the technological revolution, transformation of capitalism, and the demise of the statism, informationalism is disintegrating the existing mechanism of social control and political representation. With the exception of a small elite of global politics (half beings, half flows), people all over the world recent loss of control over their lives. In the network society, “thus on the one hand the dominant global elites inhabiting in the space of flows tend to consist of the identity less individuals (citizens of the worlds); while on the other hand, people insisting economic, cultural, and political disfranchisement trend to be attracted to communal identity” (Castells, 1997).

Hence the concept of collective identity has also become an obstacle to explore the forms of mobilisations increasingly taking place in the networks, scapes and flows. The fluid like characteristics of emerging society with increasing unequal flows of people, information, money, images risks, practices and emotions with no clear beginning or the end points. Within these emerging complexities social systems increasingly manifest fluid-like characteristics and become increasingly subject to shockwaves fluidarity rather than solidarity, public experience of self rather than collective identity are the emerging paradigm of contemporary social movements (Urry 2000 cf. McDonald, 2002).

comprehending social movement theoretically, and in understanding the nature of collectivities on which the very foundation of social movement is laid. Social movement group is understood as a variant of social collectivities and is usually understood within the conceptual formulation of ‘community’. Now it has also been understood as collectivity of informal networks which mobilise about conflictual issues through the frequent use of various forms of protest” (della Porta and Diani 1999:16). Moreover, there are diverse types of adherent in social movements i.e. activists, participants, sympathisers (Neidhardt and Rucht. 2002). Social movement collectivities are loosely formed many a times independent of geographical boundary. Their collective identity is formed based on temporarily perceived articulated ideals and common interests, and that many participants tends to be members of more than one collectivities simultaneously. Significantly many of these collectivities do have contradictory interests and goals. Hence, it is inevitable that membership is fluid and are of varying strength. Thus the fluid and the fuzzy membership and the emerging fluidity of identity make the social order of social movement in communities very weak. The emergence of net work society adds more odds with the concept of community.

Though the identity theorists locate identity within the broad interactive social processes, they also simultaneously advocate the notion of autonomy of identity. Their focus has been on the theme of political autonomy against ideological determinism, personal autonomy, and autonomy from localised formulation. Away from the perspectives of these theorists, autonomy is also understood as process of formulation from below. E.P Thompson (1963) in his seminal history from below underlined the autonomous discourse by popular strata. To him, two processes are to be integrated to define popular movements; integration in the collective action of the popular strata, definition of an autonomous and independent discourse. ‘If such a definition is general, encompassing different historical realities, it might be useful as a methodological suggestion to attempt the interpretation of the actual, located in the time and space...’ Indeed the issue of autonomy has emerged to be an integral part of social movement analysis in the context of emerging fluidity of identity, emergence of resistance from below and formation multiple identities both at the global and the local levels.

Notwithstanding their contradictory theoretical positions from those of the political process and the new social movements theorists, the dependency theorists now recognise that in the world system there have existed multiple identities and varieties of social movements- the socialist, labour, women, nationalist liberation, peasant, ecology even some religious movements- within the capitalist world economy. Since late 1960s these have been “primarily triggered by the sense that the old movements – the social democrat, the communist and the nationalists had failed in many of their objectives... and that there has been a major crisis in the anti systemic social movements” (Wallenstein 2002). It is again pointed that the anti systemic movements “overshadowed the ever present other social movements who are now gaining significance while the performances and promise of other social movements are declining. The increasing failure of the state/ political parties labour movements/ parties, socialism/Marxist parties as well as people’s increasing refusal to be manipulated by these, now also increasingly draws the new other social movements” (Gunder Frank and Matra Fuentes 2002:177). “In the present moment of the society is ‘marked by the appearance new problems and new social movements which can no longer be explained by invoking another order of the phenomena- the laws of the capitalist development or the consequences of modernisation.’ It is also a different intellectual moment ‘causing to the inability

to the ‘traditional left’ to understand social and the political events’ of this era. Our most urgent need is to learn how to name and analyze the new social practices and the new forms of collective action which are shaping the societies of today and tomorrow” (Tourine (2005)11-12, 25).

In the changing society while most of the social movements have remained institutionalised, working class movements are also on a decline and have emerged to be incapable of rising to the level of historicity to challenge the over all control of the major orientations of collective life, new forms of social movements are also in the making to articulate new forms of identity and interests. Significantly enough the end of cold war and emergence of new phase of economy with globalisation has marked the proliferation of ‘global movements’ involving numerous struggles on the question of environment, human rights, vision of ‘another world’ demand of recognition of cultural identities and so on [Wieviorka(2005)]. In the changing world conflict is now getting institutionalised and social movements becoming permanent component of political interest mediation, and legitimate factors in contemporary societies. All these are leading to the conspicuous formation of the ‘movement society’. All these indicate the trends of potential emergence and sustenance of plurality of social movements taking up long term and permanent positions in society on diverse issues and interests (Rucht and Neidhardt 2002). With the emergence of multiplicity of social movements in the movement society, social movements are to encounter its inverted image— “the social anti movements which instead of promoting a social or a cultural identity, champion of some abstract entity, essence or symbol, and speak in the name of a purity or homogeneity. Again instead of building relationships with other actors, agreeing on the principles of debates and negotiations, they champion absolutes, and adopt do or die attitudes. And if they appear in an arena where social movements also exist, they try to destroy these movements, and fight against them” (Wieviorka 2005:18).

In the wake of globalisation and the emerging interplay of several new forces a large part of the society is undergoing a profound process of socio-cultural de-contextualisation. These have generated new varieties of social change and mobility and have led to the articulation of diverse interests and identities; and expression of diverse varieties of protests, conflict, collective mobilisation and social movements. Significantly many of the processes are intertwined with each other. Societies in India are experiencing fast processes of transformation in response to global forces and internal fluid situations which has resulted in emerge of various new movements.

3.4 RESURGENCE OF MULTIPLE COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES IN INDIA

In recent years societies in India have borne witness to the proliferation and resurgence of varieties of identities. These are widely caused by increasing quantum of interconnectivity, social mobility and interpenetration of new technologies on the one, and persisting poverty, unemployment, ill-health, livelihood insecurity, social subordination and coercion of the dominant section of the population on the other. Hence many of the pre-existing identities have got redefined and rejuvenated in the changing context to become protest identities in the contemporary society.

Societies in India now widely experience the proliferation of fluidity of collective identity. The conventional and the pre-existing patterns of vertical social mobility have been diluted in the wake of decline in the land man ratio, and the increase in the occupational diversification and rural to urban migration. Vast segment of the

population are now horizontally mobilised from agriculture to non agricultural activities and a good number of them from rural to the urban areas. It has widely contributed to the increasing informalisation of Indian economy to accommodate 92% of the work force who can't spend Rs 20 per day towards consumption. Indeed in spite of occupational mobility, the economic vulnerability of the marginalised segment of the population has not been altered. The vast segments of the population, due to the lack of proper education, training and social capital, look for alternative avenues of employment not by choice but by compulsion. This has led to the emergence of multiple employer-employee relationship even in rural areas. The pre-dominant and stable forms of agrarian employer employee relationships (landlord-tenant or land lord-agricultural labourer etc) are now being replaced by unstable, infrequent relationship with multiple employers or the service users. The traditional structure of authority and the primordial form of domination has been widely questioned with the emergence of NGOs activities and the functioning of Panchayat Raj institutions at the grass roots. Now gender, caste and ethnic identities are articulated to frame collective mobilisations against the hostile forces of patriarchy, feudalism and caste and ethnic hegemony. The struggles of the Dalits and the tribes for economic emancipation have been extended to the areas of struggles for political empowerment and to the struggles for their caste and ethnic identity. The practice of democracy at the grass-roots has generated a space for self-assertion among the marginalized groups on diverse issues and have contributed to the continuity of the culture of collective mobilisations and re-articulation of regional, ethnic, gender etc identities. For example the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh which has visualised the proliferation of peasant movements (viz. the Telangana 1948-52, Naxalite movements 1972 onwards) has now seen the proliferation of numerous collective mobilisations at the grass roots through the resurgence of multiple identities. For example the resurgent separate Telangana statehood movements based on the ethnic identity of the Telangana people, mobilisation of the agrarian poor and sustained agrarian conflict spear headed by the CPI(ML), (Peoples' War Group) and various other Naxalite outfits, mobilisation for the protection of civil rights of citizen by Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), Organisation for the Protection of Democratic Rights, Citizens Forum etc, mobilisation of scheduled Tribes by Thudum Debba (a militant organisation of the scheduled tribes), mobilisation of Madiga (a scheduled caste) by Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) for re-categorisation of the scheduled castes into four groups based on their contemporary educational and economic status for the purpose of reservations in jobs, education, etc.), mobilisation of cultivators by Roytu Seva Samithi, Jala Sandhana Samithi (demanding irrigation facilities for the peasants), anti arrack movement to mobilise women against production and consumption of liquor and also for women's liberty, political participation and social development and so on are the contemporary realities of collective mobilisations in rural Andhra Pradesh.

Similarly, West Bengal which has experienced the proliferations peasant and class identities through the Tebhaga (1946-47) Naxalite (1967-71) Operation Barga movement (1977 onward) has been experiencing the rejuvenation of Gurkhaland Movements 1980s of the Gurkha hill tribes for a separate statehood, Kamtapur movement of the Rajbanshi (Scheduled Castes) since 1980s for the recognition separate statehood, movements against acquisition of agricultural lands by the Krishi Jami Suraksha Committee (Committee to Protect Agricultural lands) in Singur and the Bhumi Ucced Pratorodhi in Nandigram, Tribal villagers resistance against police oppression in the Midnapore District and several other grass roots mobilisations. Indeed all these movements have constructed distinctive protest identities against domination of various forms.

It is again that the state now has provided the liberal democratic space to articulate issues, interests, and identities for collective mobilisations. Within this available space many of the radical mobilisations have got transformed to be institutionalised, co-opted, and have sustained them being partially reformative. Evidences from West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh show that sustained mobilisations have opened up the possibility of articulation of new issues, identities and mobilisations of the marginalised sections of the population.

The society now sees the cropping up of several new issues, new patterns of conflict, mobility and mobilisation, while many of the old ones have taken a new shape in the present context. In the emerging scenario the relationship between social mobility, conflict, mobilisation and social movements have been extensive and implicit. Within the emerging dynamics the pre-existing forms of social collectivities got a significant place not only to protect their identity, but also their social, economic and political interests. These identities have also been encapsulated as a project to attain specific political goals. Hence they not only question the bases of legitimacy of pre-existing arrangements but also assert for a share in the social, economic and political spheres in the established order. These identities and conflicts however are not fixed. Even as the tribal and the Dalit identities are constructed in the Telangan region of Andhra Pradesh for getting better share of protective discrimination, they are simultaneously linked with the whole of Telangana regional identity. Similarly gender identity also cut across the caste and the ethnic identity. Thus collective identities are in a state of flux. They get articulated and rejuvenated both synchronically and diachronically on diverse issues in diverse context. They move like a pendulum in these mobilisations getting fixed at one end and liberated at the other (Singharoy 2004).

3.5 SUMMARY

Collective identity is constructed through the process of interaction and engagement with contemporary social processes on the one hand and historical experiences on the other. As, this engagement and experiences are historically circumscribed there have been diverse processes of construction and transformation of social identity. Though at times identities operate in silence, it also becomes idiom of public projections of collective solidarity becoming parts of organised and spontaneous social movements. As social collectivity, human beings respond to varieties situations, articulate multiple identities and get associated with multiple networks cross cutting the predefined boundaries of given social groups. Herein, the process formation and transformation of social identity is complex and fluid. This unit besides providing you conceptual clarification on identity, its formation and transformation has also discussed the location of identity within the local and wide social processes. We have learnt the intertwining between society, self and identity, relation between culture and identity, the interface of identity with reasoning and available social choices. As identity gets transformed its gets interlinked with process of formation, rejuvenation and reconstruction of identity. This unit has also discussed the emerging facets of fluidity in identity in the wake of the fast transformation of societies caused globalisation and emergence of network societies. Besides discussing the theoretical issues, this unit has also provided you a glimpse of the emergence of multiple identities as reflected in the grass roots collective action in rural India.

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Sample Questions

- 1) What is Identity?
- 2) Describe the relation between Society, Self and Identity.
- 3) State the causes leading to transformation of Identity.
- 4) Delineate the Collective Actions New identity and Social Movements.
- 5) Discuss the resurgence of Multiple Collective Identities in India.

UNIT 4 SOCIAL CHANGE IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Contents

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Colonial Rule and its Impact
- 4.3 Hinduisation and Sanskritisation
 - 4.3.1 Sanskritisation
- 4.4 Westernisation and Modernisation
 - 4.4.4 Modernisation
- 4.5 Multiculturalism and Globalisation
 - 4.5.1 Globalisation
- 4.6 Summary

References

Suggested Reading

Sample Questions



Learning Objectives

Once you have studied this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the nature of social change in Indian society;
- describe Hinduisation, Sanskritisation, Westernisation, Modernisation, Globalisation and Multiculturalism; and
- understand how these processes are responsible for social change in India.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Like any other society Indian society, too, has been changing. However, the pace of change increased rapidly since the advent of British rule in India. British colonial rule had a profound impact on Indian society. This change took place both in its structure and functioning. Then came independence and what makes the social change in the contemporary Indian society specially significant and noteworthy is the fact that, to a great extent, it is planned, sponsored, directed and controlled by the state. Since the last decade or so Globalisation has entered into the economic, social-cultural, and political spheres of Indian society adding yet another dimension to social change in Indian society.

4.2 COLONIAL RULE AND ITS IMPACT

In any discussion or discourse on social change in Indian society the impact of the British colonial rule occupies an important place. British rule, Christian missionary and English education played very important role in changing the face of Indian society. At this juncture, it is prudent to understand and distinguish the impacts of pre-capitalism colonialism/imperialism and colonialism during the age of capitalism. Pre-capitalism colonial rulers though derived all the benefits and advantages through exploitation of their colonies, but could never intervene effectively in the economic base of the societies they ruled. They simply dominated and subordinated the traditional economies and sustained their rule. The British colonial rule was based on the capitalist system and hence was in a position to make radical interventions

in the economic systems of their colonies which facilitated its expansion. They not only changed the land tenure systems changing the nature of land ownership, they also intervened effectively in the selection of crops, production system and their distribution.

The British colonial rulers, in order to bring about desired changes in the points of view of the people, brought out a new system of education. In the initial stages the British rule influenced the port and coastal cities. They brought out changes in the legal, cultural and even in the field of architecture. A new system of education was introduced to achieve the goal of nurturing a class in India which would sustain the British rule. But significantly, the same western education became instrumental in the development of national consciousness and anti-colonial movement. As K.M Pannikar (1966) points out, the most important achievement of British colonial rule was the unification of India for a better administrative system to serve the colonial interests but it served the purpose for uniting India for the future freedom movement. To serve their own interests the British rule introduced a new western education, new means of transport and communication, new technology and a new system of judiciary. These, in turn released new forces of change and the Indian society could never be the same again. Thus, in a way, the British colonial rule may be seen as the agent of cultural and technological modernisation of India. Since there is a lot of overlapping between the impact of colonial rule and impact of westernisation and modernisation on Indian society several issues not covered under the present heading shall be covered under Westernisation and Modernisation.

4.3 HINDUISATION AND SANSKRITISATION

The process of Hinduisation has been all pervasive within the domain of Indian civilization. However, in the context of tribal populations, it has been studied most and most of the debate has been with reference to the Hinduisation of tribes. G. S Ghurye (1963), by describing the tribal population as Backward Hindus, initiated intense debate among the anthropologists and sociologists. Perhaps, his description was in response or reaction against the missionary activities in some tribal areas and he wanted the Indians to beware of religious conversion into Christianity. However, his apprehensions did not come true as even today the Christian tribals may not be more than 5% of the total tribal population in the country.

N K Bose and Surajit Sinha looked into the phenomenon of Hinduisation with more academic rigour. N K Bose (1975), in his landmark paper on Hindu method of Tribal Absorption, based his thesis on the role of 'Culture Contact' or 'acculturation'. He says that the Hindu method of tribal absorption is entirely different from that of Islam, which involves complete conversion. Bose is of the view that the Hindus generally exercised a policy of laissez-faire with regard to the social, and religious practices of tribal people and moved on subtly.

Reflection

Bose's observed three distinct features in the absorption of the tribal into the Hindu fold.

- a) Although the policy was not to displace the original culture of the tribes, something had to be done 'to bring the tribal cultures in line with Brahmanism'.
- b) Once the tribe comes under the influence of the Brahmanical people a strong tendency was set up with it to remodel its culture more and more closely in conformity with the Brahmanical way of life.
- c) However, the tribes could not be allowed to come very close to their superiors; the Brahmins very often step in to check such progress. Thus, many forms of culture come into existence.

However, Surajit Sinha took a different view. He opposed the existing idea that tribes were an isolated people. On the basis of his study of Bhumij, Munda, Gond and other tribes of Central India (1959, 1962, 1982), Sinha identified the urge of Bhumij to move away from tribal base to acquire a Kshatriya status. In 1951, when the Bhumij were labeled as one of the scheduled tribes of this region, they were shocked and protested against this. Sinha realised that to understand tribes in India, one has to put them in a proper perspective. He says that it was the British scholars who felt that tribes were outside the frame of Varna-Jati system. He further talked of ‘mutually adaptive strategies of Indian civilization’ vis a vis tribal cultures. The civilization absorbed the tribes but maintained their identity and also determined their isolation. The modern nation- state is trying to ensure full participation of tribes as equals.

In contemporary India, tribal regions have become an arena for competitive faiths to the detriment of tribal societies. Though the tribes, except those of north-eastern region, have been moving towards a loose form of Hinduism which most of them found compatible with their religious systems, the country in recent years has witnessed “the most aggressive form of proselytization and communal mobilisation of the tribals by *Hindutva* forces directed against the Christian missions and the converts to Christianity in parts of Orissa, Gujarat and Chattisgarh leading to loss of lives, arson, destruction of homes, and displacement of terrorised and traumatised affected population” (Dharmendra Kumar and Yemuna Sunny, 2009). This is a cleverly crafted campaign to not only reconvert the Christian tribal but also to Hinduise the tribes which still practice their own animistic religions

4.3.1 Sanskritisation

Contrary to the ‘book view’ the Indian caste system has never been absolutely rigid and static. This observation has led progressively to various attempts to explain, in systematic terms, the manner in which change or more precisely mobility occurs within it. The process of hypogamy may be the earliest attempt in this direction. Broadly speaking, four approaches could be delineated in the study of social mobility in India. These are (i) individual or family mobility approach, (ii) corporate or group mobility approach, (iii) comparative approach and (iv) reference group approach. M. N. Srinivas is the main protagonist of the corporate mobility approach in India.

Although some stray attempts have been made to develop theoretical postulations and methodological exercises during the pre-independence period, the first systematic attempt to define, analyse and understand the process of social change in Indian society was made by M. N. Srinivas in his significant and path breaking study, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1952).

The term Sanskritisation used by Srinivas in his study of Coorgs was primarily meant to describe the process of cultural mobility in the traditional rural India. Srinivas holds the view that Hindu caste system has never been so rigid that individuals or castes cannot alter or raise their status. He defines Sanskritisation as the “process by which a low caste or tribe or other groups takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and life style of a higher caste and in particular ‘twice born’ (*dwija*) caste” Srinivas, (1952). For instance, a low caste or tribe or any other group may give up non-vegetarianism, consumption of liquor, animal sacrifice, etc. and imitate the Brahmin’s life style in matter of food, dress, and rituals. By following such a process, within a generation or two, they may claim a higher position in local caste hierarchy. Originally, Srinivas used the term

“Brahminization” to denote this process, however, when he was confronted with other models of emulation he gave up the term ‘Brahminization’ in preference to the term ‘Sanskritisation’. Moreover, Sanskritisation is much broader a concept than ‘Brahminization’ because not only it encompasses non-Brahmin models like Kshatriya model, Jat model, Vaishya model and models of other ‘twice born’ castes but also denotes a wide spectrum of values and life styles.

The talk of cultural imitation should be in concrete terms so that one could visualise the scenario as it exists. Sanskritisation may result in the erosion of cultural autonomy of the womenfolk which includes erosion in the freedom to choose life partner and adoption of a rigid sexual morality. Changes in family structure include a movement towards the orthodox Hindu joint family and the concomitant stronger authority of father, monogamy, a stronger caste organisation with increased tendency of outcasting/ostracism. Also, a rigid commensality prevails along with changed food habits- outlawing beef and pork eating, and consumption of liquor, more emphasis is placed on the acquisition of higher education, adoption of dowry practices instead of the token bride price etc. In the realm of religion and religious practices, it frequently results in the donning of sacred thread, giving up sacrifice of pigs at the time of wedding and increased emphasis on pilgrimage etc.

Srinivas has further explained that political and economic factors have also affected the process of Sanskritisation. With the establishment of British rule in India the lower castes got more opportunities to sanskritise themselves and subsequently raise their social status because the new rulers and a new political order were not socially involved in the dynamics of caste hierarchy.

Sometimes, a lower caste aspiring to climb upward in caste hierarchy through the process of Sanskritisation may have to face hostility from the higher castes especially of middle strata. Sanskritisation refers to a cultural process but it is essential to realise that it is usually a concomitant of the acquisition of political or economic power by a caste. Both are parts of the processes of social mobility.

Talking of new agents of Sanskritisation, Srinivas, (1992) talks of the festivals of the village deities and the calenderical festivals being increasingly sanskritised. Hari Kathas, Yagna, Jagran etc. are being celebrated with much more ostentation in Indian towns and cities. Religious figures, in ochre robes promising salvation or more concrete things to the people, continue to appear on the Indian scene. In fact, they enjoy audience which they could not have dreamt of before the newspapers, the microphone and the radio/television became popular. Everyone of them can be regarded as a Sanskritising agent. Indian films frequently make use of religious themes taken from the epics and Puranas. The availability of low priced books has enabled people to become acquainted with Hindu religious literature in a way not possible ever before.

Sanskritisation as a process of social mobility may be observed empirically even among the non-Hindu communities especially those with well defined social hierarchy such as Muslims and Sikhs and in lesser degrees among other communities too. Cultural emulation for the sake of status elevation has been the prime motive force among the non-Hindu communities too.

When we talk of cultural imitation of the higher castes/dominant castes by an aspiring lower caste we must not forget that in several cases the motive force is not always cultural imitation per se but an expression of challenge and revolt against socio-economic deprivation and frustration like in the case of a lower caste insisting to carry his bride in a palanquin or the bridegroom riding a horse.

Because of erosion in the importance of the ritual component of our lifestyle, especially in towns and cities, some observers make the comment that the process has lost its' relevance in determining social status. While it is true that power and wealth are the main components of secular status, any status achieved by such means is still sought to be legitimised through acceptance into a higher born social group or by burying one's community identity or birth origins. Thus, these new principles of status operate contingently together with the caste principle of social stratification and only rarely do they operate autonomously.

4.4 WESTERNISATION AND MODERNISATION

Westernisation seems to be a much simpler concept when compared with its' twin concept of Sanskritisation. It refers to all cultural changes and institutional innovations in India as this country came into political and cultural contact with the western nations specially Britain. More precisely, it is "the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule. The term subsuming changes occurring at different levels- technology, institutions, ideology and values" Srinivas, (1972). He prefers to call this process westernisation and not modernisation. On a wider plane westernisation includes a scientific approach, emphasis on materialism rather on spiritualism, individualism, liberal approach towards various problems of the society, humanism, equality, egalitarianism and rationalism. Establishment of scientific technology and educational institutions, rise of nationalism, new political culture and leadership in the country are all by products of westernisation.

The impact of Westernisation on Indian society may clearly be observed in a number of spheres. It has influenced caste system and the lessening rigidity may be assigned, to a great extent, to the impact of Westernisation; it has promoted the disintegration of joint family and it has induced a number of social reforms movements. In the economic and political sphere it has disintegrated cottage industries, promoted variety in cultivation, introduced new measures in land management; it has promoted democratic values and ideals, national consciousness, social justice, and a uniform administrative system in the whole length and breadth of the country. To be more precise, emphasis on humanitarianism and rationalism, as a part of Westernisation, led to a series of institutional and social reforms in India.

Srinivas expresses the view that increase in Westernisation does not retard the process of Sanskritisation; both go on simultaneously. Interestingly, in some cases, increase in Westernisation accelerates the process of Sanskritisation. For instance, the expanding means of communication like postal facilities, railways, newspaper, western technology etc. have given fillip to pilgrimages, religious propaganda, and caste and communal congregations. Moreover, a significant by product of Westernisation is that under its impact many higher castes (who are more exposed to Westernisation through English education) give up their traditional life style.

It is observed that usually the westernised ones live minimally in the universe of caste and maximally within the universe of class; they may practice non-traditional occupations, ignore rules of ritual pollution, dietary restrictions and may marry outside the caste/region/religion; they may give up the practice of maintaining *gotra* or caste names, adopt non-vegetarianism, give up the practice of eating in the kitchen or *chauka* and may give up sacred thread. In other words, the westernised ones tend to adopt western models and lifestyle. The lower castes aspiring to attain higher status in the caste hierarchy try to fill this vacuum by

adopting the sanskritic models given up by the higher castes under the impact of westernisation. This is yet another instance of westernisation and sanskritisation going together.

It may be observed that the lower castes spend a lot of energy on sanskritisation while several higher castes turn to westernisation as a means of maintaining the social distance between themselves and the lower castes which is no longer possible within the old order in the face of the later's current ability to sanskritise themselves. Supplementing this line of argument further, Harold Gould (1988) comments that if one is already sanskritised, as the Brahmins and the Rajputs are, then one cannot go any higher up further in the traditional stratification system. If one cannot maintain things as they are through the application of political and economic power, then one can only go down or accept the notion of equality which means accepting the nullity of caste system itself and hierarchical relationship in general. This is patently impossible for the higher castes with the deeply embedded conception of their inherent superiority and so they must ironically move outside the caste system which spawned them in order to preserve their pretensions to paramount status in Indian society. Meanwhile, "the lower castes keep chasing the mirage of equality with the higher castes. But by the time they reach their destination, they discover that the Brahman has himself vacated the spot and moved on to the higher hill of westernisation where he still gazes contemptuously down upon them from an elevated perch." (Gould, 1988. *ibid*). Perhaps that is why in a number of cases the well off and aspiring sections of the lower castes in towns and cities may be going straight to westernisation. But for the majority of the lower caste population the idiom of westernisation may be too complex, incomprehensible and difficult to understand and adopt. Thus we find an important and dynamic interplay between the processes of sanskritisation and westernisation.

However, the term westernisation itself is not free from controversy and complications. Some scholars have advocated the term 'de-sanskritisation' for westernisation. Moreover, Srinivas equates westernisation with the British impact on India. This may not be a correct assessment when viewed in totality. The post-independence period has witnessed a lot of Russian and American influence on India. The Russian and American versions of modernisation in our economic measures of far reaching importance have also influenced the Indian society to a large extent. The continuing five year plans, emphasis on public sector and nationalisation or socialisation (till recent years) in our economic planning are the instances of distinct socialist impact. Of late, some Chinese impact is also discernible in our health care measures especially in rural areas. To some other scholars the term westernisation sounds value loaded because of its colonial connotation. Hence, they advocate the term modernisation.

4.4.1 Modernisation

Modernisation has been a dominant theme after the second world war specially in nineteen fifties and sixties and a central concept in the 'sociology of development,' referring to the interactive process of economic growth and social change. Modernisation studies typically deal with the effects of economic development on traditional social structures and values. The process of modernisation is related to the industrialisation, urbanisation, high standard of living, development of civilization and broadness of view point. Defining modernisation Eisenstadt (1966) says that "from a historical viewpoint modernisation is the process of change towards those types of social, economic, and political systems which were developed in Western Europe and North America from the 17th to 19th century and after that spread

over to South America, Asia, and Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries”. In the context of contemporary times the concept of modernisation is the response of western social science to the many challenges faced by the third World in the decades immediately following the second world war. Therefore some scholars considered modernisation to be the child of westernisation. In a brilliant analysis of the ethical aspect of modernisation, S.C Dube (1988) says that “an attractive feature of the concept was that it showed an apparent concern for the cultural sensitivities of both the elites and the masses of the third world. The term modernisation was much less value loaded than its predecessor westernisation”. Most countries in the Third World were proud of their cultural heritage and deeply attached to it. While desiring western standards of plenty they had no desire to abandon their own life styles and values. The concept of modernisation recognised the strength of roots; it did not pose any overt threat to the cultural identity of the people aspiring for rapid change. To the elite of the third world the ideal of westernisation was difficult to swallow; they accepted modernisation readily because it did not appear to offend their cultural dignity. According to Lerner (1958), three features constitute the core of modernised personality – empathy, mobility, and high participation. Empathy is the capacity to see things as others see them. All societies possess this capacity in some measure but to sharpen and strengthen, it can make a qualitative change in human interaction. Such a change is desired in modernised societies. The second attribute, mobility, does not refer only to geographical mobility- it is used in a more comprehensive sense. The imperatives of change demand a capacity to assume, as occasions demand, new statuses and learn to play associated roles. Unlike the traditional society, which had ascribed statuses and roles, the modernised society has an open status system. The third attribute-high participation- refers to the increased role of individuals in realising social goals and objectives in more active ways; high participation requires the capacity in individuals to visualise new goals or alter objectives and modify their roles accordingly. In traditional societies social objectives are not open to question; the core of modernisation is, of course, rationality.

One of the most significant features of modernisation is that modernised societies operate through institutional structures that are capable of continuously absorbing the change that are inherent in the process of modernisation. Let us see very briefly as to how the contemporary Indian society is striving to adopt modernisation for economic growth and social change. On the agricultural and industrial fronts the country’s performance is not as poor as some of its critics make it out. Our record in these fields is better than that of many Third World countries. But the development has been lopsided and full of regional imbalances. The distributive aspects of economic growth and the diffusion of the benefits of modernisation appear to have received little serious thought. The growth of elitism is alarming and it should be curbed. Rampant corruption and nepotism are the product of the prevailing state of moral decay. All possible political and administrative steps should be taken to arrest this trend. The cohesive bonds of society should be strengthened.

As very rightly observed by S. C. Dube (ibid), “there is no standard model of modernisation and no fixed path for its attainment. Developing societies can adopt a model of their choice and can chalk out their own path for its realisation.” We have chosen democracy and secularism as the basis of the aspired for modernised Indian society. Adoption of modern science and technology alongwith a scientific temper shall go a long way in the achievement of India’s cultural and technological modernisation.

4.5 MULTICULTURALISM AND GLOBALISATION

‘Multicultural’ and ‘Multiculturalism’ are terms frequently used to describe the ethnic diversity that exists everywhere in the world today. However, there is some confusion about what precisely they signify. Terms like ‘plural’ and ‘diverse’ have also been present in the discourse on multiculturalism. These terms are commonly used to describe societies having different religions, ethnic groups languages and cultures. Interestingly these words are used interchangeably; plurality suggests the presence of ‘many’ but does not stipulate anything about the nature of ‘many’. Does this simply describe diversity? We must be very clear as to why multiculturalism has overtaken pluralism as the dominant concept. It was common in social science before the rise of the word ‘multiculturalism’. Multiculturalism as a coherent theory with its distinct conception of democracy and citizenship, has emerged only in recent past. As Gurpreet Mahajan (2002) points out, “the simultaneous presence of many cultures and communities within the same social space points to a plural social fabric, but it should not be taken as the presence of multiculturalism. The latter entails something more than the mere presence of different communities or the attitude of tolerance in society. Multiculturalism is concerned with the issues of equality; it asks whether the different communities living peacefully together, co-exist as equals in the public areas?” Thus it is the emphasis on equality that distinguishes multiculturalism from pluralism; pluralism remains silent about the status of different groups or communities.

Extending the debate to more serious analysis David Theo Goldberg (1994) in his seminal work writes “that multiculturalism stands for a wide range of social articulation... The systematic sectoral division of the world into discrete spheres of control and management of human population creates a severe challenge to creating a truly democratic, equal, diverse, but coherent world.”

The term ‘multiculturalism’ has not been much used in India, except in the recent times by the left-liberal intellectuals. When we look at the contemporary situation in India we find that the Indian constitution is the main source of multicultural state policies. It may be seen as the basic multicultural document in the sense that it provides political and institutional measures for the recognition and accommodation of the country’s diversity in the post-independence period. Right to equality, in all respects, is the cornerstone of multiculturalism in India and it has unleashed forces of social change, changing the fabric of hierarchical Indian society in which all the groups never enjoyed equal share in the power structure. Creation of tribal states and sub-states such as Tribal District Councils may be seen as the acceptance of multiculturalism as state policy.

As Gurpreet Mahajan (1999) rightly points out, this concern for equality and non-discrimination of people of minority communities links multiculturalism to democracy in a fundamental way. The single most important value of democracy is non-discrimination. Thus, the concept of multiculturalism contributes to the agenda of democratisation and non-discrimination. It also provides safeguards against ‘majoritarianism’ coming in the garb of democracy. Till the time Indian democracy becomes mature, the threat of majoritarianism shall always be there. Thus we can say that how much flawed and immature Indian democracy may be, if the state continues to follow multiculturalism, society in India will continue to change.

4.5.1 Globalisation

Globalisation is as fascinating a term these days as modernisation, development, and change have been in the 20th century. Globalisation has emerged as one of the

most important and talked about phenomena of the present age with its social, economic, and political dimensions. The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology (1985) described globalisation as “a process in which social life within societies is being increasingly affected by international influences based on everything from political and trade ties to shared music, clothing styles and mass media”. Perhaps, the most powerful form of globalisation is economic in which planning and control expand from a relatively narrow focus such as a single firm doing business on a regional or national basis to a broad global focus in which the entire world serves as a source of labour, raw materials and markets.

Analysing the necessity of international economic and socio-political management in the face of globalisation, Samir Amin (1997), a renowned and strong voice on the issue of globalisation and its implications for the third world countries, says that the globalisation of the capitalist system is certainly nothing new, but it has undeniably taken a qualitative step forward during the most recent period. Rise of ethnicity as a political response to economic globalisation is yet another important dimension of globalisation. The rise of *Hindutva* forces in India pretending to be nationalist but, in reality, opposed to pluralism and consequently anti-minority in character, the emergence of Muslim fundamentalism in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and some other nation-states exhibiting similar trends has been strengthened by the process of globalisation; ethnic violence of the worst type is an alarming trend in the face of globalisation.

When we analyse the impact of globalisation on Indian society in the sphere of economy, the ‘new economic policy’, liberalization’, its consequences are accepted as the direct fallout of globalisation. But, if we wish to see it in concrete sociological terms, we find that it has impacted various social groups in a variety of ways.

Women in India have been badly affected by globalisation-economically and socially. Because of scarcity of food and other necessities of life the poor, for sheer economic reasons, feed their girl children less than their boys, as boys are perceived as major bread earners. This also contributes to the widening gap in sex ratio. With decreasing subsidy on food, the food security has been shrinking rapidly and the poor women have to spend more hours on unproductive and meaningless labour. With growing retrenchment of their men folk, women previously working as agricultural labour are mostly consigned to the organised sector in urban areas at starvation or less than starvation wages. Hiring women workers seems to be more convenient for the employers because women workers face more difficulties in getting organised than the male workers and hence more susceptible to exploitation. On the other hand, upward climbing middle classes and elite are getting more opportunities to take up diverse roles. Women entrepreneurs are far more visible now than at any point of time in the past.

While globalisation is making people more materialistic and money minded, the greed for dowry is also increasing rapidly and the poor parents are being further pushed into difficult and humiliating conditions. With increasing globalisation, a frenzy has been created over the so called beauty contests. As Arvind (2002) rightly point out, “while the benefits of this frenzy are reaped by the multinational corporations who advertise their products via these phenomenon, the entire display has had its impact on the minds of urban women particularly middle class and lower middle class young women”. The vast proliferation of beauty parlours and rapidly increasing cosmetics industry are the natural corollary of this phenomenon. Equally, by the logic of the ‘market economy’ prostitution is a perfectly legitimate activity – one more industry of the ‘service sector’. In this age of globalisation,

girls from even well to do families are going into prostitution and call girl profession either directly or through the so called beauty parlours, massage parlours and 'make a friend industry' through telephonic and internet communication. Market of pornography has also expanded astronomically. Commoditization of women has increased many folds. Consumerism and consumer culture has taken under its shadow, first the urban India, and now the rural society is trapped in it.

Globalisation, no doubt, has impacted adversely the socially and economically weaker sections of Indian society. The dalits and tribals are the worst sufferers. Dalits belong to a large section of the society, which has been subjected to human indignities on account of the caste differentiations perpetrated for centuries and millennia. They still bear the burden of acute poverty and social degradation. The increasingly lower allocations for social sector, in the wake of 'new economic policy' and 'liberalization' adversely affect the poor – mainly dalits and the tribal communities. It is the poor who depend largely on public services and any reduction in budget allocations contribute to the reduction and availability of social services and their consequent higher costs. In social-economic terms the small gains made by the dalits through reservation are being reversed. More than 75% of the dalit workers are still connected with land; only 25% of which are marginal and small farmers. In urban areas, they mostly work in the unorganised sector. Under the impact of the new economic policy, the direct fallout of globalisation, land reforms, the key question for their development, are being pushed out of agenda and are being substituted with corporatization of farming for the global agricultural market.

Tribal population of the country shares a number of features of the impact of globalisation with the dalits. As with the dalits, the systematic cuts in welfare expenditure, dismantling of the public distribution system etc. have also hit the tribals hard. In the name of 'development' the tribal people are being driven off their lands, their forests are being snatched, their sources of income are being sapped, and they are, thus, being virtually pushed to death. The entry of multinational companies into industrial mining and commercialisation of forest products are likely to increase inequalities of income and consumption between regions and peoples. The new agricultural policy enunciated by the government is capital intensive; improved seeds, pesticides, and fertilizers are costly and subsidies are being withdrawn. There is also encouragement to mechanized farming. This is harmful to the tribal interests. Globalisation is also promoting over-consumption of industrial and consumer goods, thus changing the life style of the tribal and other deprived people, to their disadvantage. Disruption of their traditional crafts and theft of their indigenous knowledge system by foreign companies is making their life miserable. The tribal population has always been known for their strong community life and collective spirit, and they have been using it as part of their 'survival strategy'. This is rapidly being eroded through the promotion of private rights at the cost of community rights. Thus, the tribal people are going to be the worst sufferers and the most coveted sacrificial goat for globalisation.

4.6 SUMMARY

In this unit you studied various aspects of social change in India from colonial rule to the advent of globalisation as an important factor of social change. It is true that, like any other society, Indian society, too, has been changing even before the advent of British rule. Yet, the British rule released such new forces of change that contributed to much faster pace than ever before. It can be said that the British rule contributed immensely to the cultural and technological modernisation of India.

The process of social mobility in Indian society cannot be understood without a fairly good understanding of Sanskritisation as it has deeply affected the caste system and its dynamics. Needless to say, caste system is one of the most important social institutions in India and any change in it would affect the entire Indian society.

Globalisation and Multiculturalism are comparatively new actors but they have started impacting the Indian society in a variety of ways. Just to make it clear, the impact of globalisation on various segments of Indian society such as tribal communities, dalits, and women has been explained with the help of suitable examples scattered all around us.

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Sample Questions

- 1) In what way the British rule contributed to social change in India?
- 2) How does Sanskritisation explain mobility in the caste system?
- 3) Distinguish between Westernisation and Modernisation.
- 4) Distinguish between Pluralism and Multiculturalism.
- 5) Deliniate how the process of Globalisation is affecting various segments of Indian society?