

**BSO-3**  
**Block-1**



ଓଡ଼ିଶା ରାଜ୍ୟ ମୁକ୍ତ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ, ସମ୍ବଲପୁର  
**Odisha State Open University**  
**Sambalpur**

# **BASO**

*BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONOURS) IN*  
**SOCIOLOGY**

**INDIAN SOCIETY**

***Composition of Indian Society and  
Approaches to the study of Indian Society***





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Odisha State Open University, Sambalpur, Odisha  
Established by an Act of Government of Odisha.

# **BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONOURS) IN SOCIOLOGY (BASO)**

**BSO-3**

**INDIAN SOCIETY**

## **BLOCK-1**

### **COMPOSITION OF INDIAN SOCIETY AND APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF INDIAN SOCIETY**

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**UNIT 1 RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION, LINGUISTIC  
COMPOSITION AND RACIAL COMPOSITION**

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**UNIT 2 UNITY IN DIVERSITY**

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**UNIT 3 NATIONAL INTEGRATION--MEANING AND  
THREATS (COMMUNALISM, LINGUISM,  
REGIONALISM)**

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**UNIT 4 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF INDIAN  
SOCIETY: STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL,  
MARXIAN AND SUBALTERN**

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## **BSO-3 INDIAN SOCIETY**

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Every society has its own peculiar structure and there are some institutions universal to every society, but with their unique manifestations in each society. There are some agents and initiatives that enable the society to change with the passage of time. This course focuses on the structure of the Indian society and the changing aspects with the processes operating change agents and initiatives. The course comprises of four Blocks. **Block 1** describes different composition of Indian society such as linguistic, religious and racial. It also discusses the concept of unity in diversity and various approaches like Marxian, Structural-Functional and Subaltern to study Indian society. **Block 2** presents the bases of Hindu social organization. It includes Varna Vyavashtha, Ashrama Vyavastha, Purusartha and Doctrine of Karma. **Block 3** explains marriage and family system in India. Various forms and types of marriage among Hindus, Muslims and Tribes are discussed in this Block. Changing patterns of marriage and family in India are also highlighted. **Block 4** elucidates the caste system in India. It covers the meaning, definition and features of caste system. Functions and dysfunctions of caste system and various factors responsible for changes in the caste system are also discussed in this Block.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

After studying this course, you will be able to:

- Get an impression about the basic composition of Indian society, its historical moorings, basic philosophical foundations of the society and the institutions.
- Learn about the changing institutions, the processes, the agents and the interventions that bring about changes in the Indian society.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

This course is expected to bring familiarity in a student about Indian society. It will present a comprehensive, integrated and empirically –based profile of Indian society. It is hoped that the structure and processes operative in the society, the change agents operating in Indian society presented in this course will also enable learners to gain a better understanding of their own situation and region.

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## **BLOCK 1    COMPOSITION OF INDIAN SOCIETY AND APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF INDIAN SOCIETY**

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This Block intends to provide a clear understanding about the composition and approaches to the study of Indian Society. It consists of four Units. **Unit 1** explains religious, linguistic and racial composition of Indian Society. **Unit 2** describes the concept of unity in diversity in India. The meaning and concept of national integration is defined in **Unit 3** and this unit also discusses different threats to national integration such as communalism, linguism and regionalism. The last and **fourth Unit** outlines various approaches such as Structural-functionalist, Marxian and Subaltern perspective to study Indian Society.

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# **UNIT 1 RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION, LINGUISTIC COMPOSITION AND RACIAL COMPOSITION**

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## **STRUCTURE**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Objectives
- 1.3 Religious Composition in India
- 1.4 Linguistic Composition
- 1.5 Racial Composition
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 Glossary
- 1.8 References

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## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

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India is a pluralistic society. Different compositions of cultures, religions, languages and racial characteristics of people maintain the notion of unity in diversity. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Jainism are different religions prevailing in India. Besides this, there is diversity in regard to racial composition, linguistic composition in India. This Unit covers these aspects particularly religious, linguistic and racial composition in India.

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## **1.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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

- Describe the religious composition in India;
- Explain different languages spoken in India;
- Discuss racial composition of Indian Society.

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## **1.3 RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION IN INDIA**

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Religion has its origin in fear and ignorance; such is believed by many. In the ancient age, when human beings were merely savages and were unable to explain the forces of nature like lightning, rain, wind and fire. In order to appease these formidable forces they started worshipping them. Thus Gods came into existence. ‘Religion’ is derived from the Latin word ‘Religio’ which denotes bonding. Charles A. Ellwood (1938) described religion as the search for truth and especially for eternal values. Herbert Spencer defined religion as “the recognition that all things are manifestations of a Power which transcends our knowledge” (Hick 1987). According to James Martineau, “Religion is the belief in an ever living God.” The problem with defining religion is that these definitions might be able to capture the essence of a few

religions while excluding that of the others. For instance, a definition that stresses on the presence of a divine being overlooks the fact that some religions do not acknowledge such a presence (Clothey, 2006). Karl Marx considered religion as solace to those who are distressed. According to him, religion serves the interest of the exploiters by justifying suffering and concealing the actual truth. It creates an 'illusory happiness' for the oppressed. Weber on the other hand maintained that religious ideas can have a crucial influence on changing the society. In his work on Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber regarded religion as an impetus behind the development of capitalism.

In India, religion is referred to as 'Dharma'. The term originated from the Sanskrit word 'Dharana' which means 'to sustain'. In defining religion in the Indian context, T.N. Madan (2003) stressed on some major features such as the difference of conceptualization between dharma and religion. Dharma, according to him denotes the path of righteousness and steadfastness; while religion indicates complete devotion. He pointed to the fact that, religion in India is inseparable from other domains such as politics. Religion in India according to him is marked by pluralism which is evident not only across the religions but within these religions. Acceptance of religious plurality can also be found in the religious reform movements. M. Mohiuddin (1987) referred to the Bhakti and Sufi movements as 'cross fertilization' of Hinduism and Islam. Both of these movements stressed on 'fundamental equality' of all religions. Besides other religions, Weber also studied Hinduism and Buddhism.

India is called home by people whose religious faith varies to a wide range. According to a 2011 census, majority of the population is Hindu while 13.4% are Muslims, 2.3% are Christians, and 1.9% are Sikhs. A significant number of people have their faith in Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism.

## **Hinduism**

Clothey (2006) while discussing the religions in India warned against the romanticized portrayals of religions. He cited the example of glorified representation of Hinduism as 'sanatana manav dharma' which evolved as a reaction to colonial criticism. According to K. N. Panikkar, what is known as Hinduism today, was actually different sects, cults and deities who came together after the advent of Islam because of social necessities. Hinduism according to him is synonymous with Brahminism, which claims its origin in the Vedas.

All the sacred scriptures of the Hindus belong to Shruti and Smriti. Shruti refers to those which were heard while Smritis are those which were remembered. Shrutis are also known as eternal truths heard by the sages. Vedas are a part of Shruti. There are four Vedas. RigVeda, YajurVeda, SamaVeda and Atharva-Veda. The Rig Veda is considered the earliest one and contains hymns. The Sama Veda consists of hymns in musical notes while Yajur Veda provides guidance for rituals. The Atharva Veda is different in character than the other three and is believed to represent folk religions. Each of these Vedas contains four parts namely Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishad. The other sacred scriptures such as Puranas, Itihasas, Darshanas, Dharma-

Shastras, Tantras come under Smritis. The other sacred texts such as Grihya Sutras, Dharma Sutras and Shrauta Sutras which came gradually after the Vedas were guidelines for performing domestic religious ceremonies, public rituals and social ethics (Madan 2003).

These ancient texts divided the society into Varnas, namely Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. According to the spiritual texts, these divisions were made on the basis of qualities (Guna) and acts (Karma). Purity, energy and ignorance specified Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras respectively. Krishna Chaitanya (1986) described these four castes as “the seers and sensitives, the statesmen or administrators of polities; entrepreneurs and technicians; the unspecialised masses”. Max Weber (1958) defined Indian caste system as a ‘closed status group’, as caste was ascribed on a person during birth and no mobility was allowed. He believed that the success of this system lied in the notion of transmigration and the hope of attaining a dignified life in the next incarnation. However, practice of caste system is not as simple as it sounds. T. N. Madan (2003) noted that the ritualistic practices of these castes vary according to the regions.

Based on people's perception of Supreme Being, Hinduism was also divided into denominations (Sampradaya) such as Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism and Smartism. These Sampradayas were further divided into sub-sects. While most of these forms were originated from Vedism, Tantrikas were believed to be non-vedic. Currently, eighty per cent of India's total population belong to Hinduism. While Hinduism along with Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism are considered of Indic origin, Islam came from outside.

## **Islam**

Muslims are a majority in Jammu and Kashmir, Lakshadweep, Assam and west Bengal. Islam means “the willing and active recognition of and submission to the command of the one, Allah” (Waines, 2004). People who follow this path are known as Muslims. Islam is monotheist in nature and the origin of Islam can be traced back to 610 AD in the preaching of Prophet Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad was born in 570 AD in Mecca. He was believed to be the messenger of God. The Quran, the holy book of the Muslims carries the dictation of Prophet Muhammad. Muslims are divided into two sects; Shias and Sunnis. The division was created over the conflict regarding the right successor to carry on Prophet Muhammad's work. The Sunnis who constitute the majority of the Muslim population believe that Abu Bakr, Prophet Muhammad's father-in-law is the true successor of the Prophet. Shias on the other hand follow Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad. It is believed that Islamic people first arrived on the Indian subcontinent at the beginning of the eighth century though the actual invasion began in the eleventh century. The invaders and their rich culture over a period of hundreds of years were gradually absorbed. According to T.N. Madan (2003), the spreading of Islam happened more through the efforts of Ulama and the Sufis, though incidences of coercive conversion were not absent.

Islam put great emphasis on compassion for others. The Quran asks its followers to



spend one-tenth of their income for the welfare of poor, orphans, widows and those who are in need (Engineer 2011). It also asks to cultivate virtues such as mercy, benevolence, compassion and justice. These virtues have been upheld by the Sufi tradition. Sufism advocates asceticism and relies more on morals than rituals. Sufism has been described by Junayd al-Baghdadi, a sufi master, as "self-annihilation in God". According to Asghar Ali Engineer (1998), Sufis developed the notion of 'unity of being', that is, God is one and is the source of all human beings. Therefore, all human beings deserve equal respect. Sufis went on the path of finding the essence of being, which lies beyond what one can perceive normally and they live a life of purity in accordance with God's demand. Sufis, share belongingness with those people who are weak and suffer from social vices. Compassion is a crucial virtue for Sufis. The stories suggest that their compassion extends not only to human beings but all living beings. In India four traditions of Sufism can be found. These are Chishti, Naqshbandi, Qadiri and Suhrawardi (Madan 2003).

Islam too has its internal hierarchies and practices of inequalities. Shiahs all over the World are considered inferior to Sunnis. This schism is a perennial source of conflict between them. Muslims in India can be divided into three categories namely Ashraf or the noble born, Ajlaf or people born in low castes and Arjal or the excluded (Ahmad, 2009). Among Muslims, these divisions are referred as jatis and there are complex subdivisions based on occupation, birth and ritualistic practices. Imtiaz Ahmad noted that people who belong to Arjal community maintain distance from other communities. In some places, they even have separate burial grounds and mosques. Sometimes, though their presence is tolerated in a Mosque, they are forbidden to sit in front of upper castes.

### **Christianity**

According to tradition Christianity entered India after 50 years of its inception through Thomas one of the apostles of Christ. Thomas landed on the coast of Kerala around 52 A.D. and established seven churches in that area. These early Christians were generally confined to Kerala. With the advent of European missionaries in early 16th century Christianity spread to all parts of India. The Portuguese were the first followed by the Dutch, the French, the British and other European and American missionaries. According to 1991 census Christians in India number 16.77 million or 2.43 per cent of the total population and are spread throughout the country. Their main concentration is in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura.

Christianity is also considered as a revealed or divine religion (like Islam and Judaism). The religious precepts of Christianity are contained in their holy book called the Bible. Jesus Christ is considered the central figure in Christian faith. He was born around two thousand years ago. During his life he performed miracles, healed the sick and even gave life to the dead. He was crucified by his enemies at the young age of 33 years. According to Christian belief he rose again on the 3rd day of his burial and ascended into heaven. He is considered as a true man and true God by his disciples. He commanded his followers to spread his mission to all parts of the

world.

According to Christian faith God is one but has revealed himself as three persons - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This concept of God is described as Unity in Trinity. Jesus is God, the Son, form of the Virgin Mary who conceived the Holy Spirit. According to the Christian belief the incarnation of Christ as a human being is a part of the divine plan for the atonement of the sins of mankind. The Bible is the holy book followed by the Christians. It consists of two collections of books: i) the Old Testament and ii) the New Testament. The Old Testament contains the sacred scriptures of the Jews as well as the early Christian scriptures. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew. The New Testament was written in the 2nd half of first century A.D. By the end of the second century the greater part of the New Testament was accepted as authoritative. It consists of 27 books and was originally written in Greek. It contains the life and deeds of Christ, the works of his companions and other saints and covers a wide range of things.

Christians in India have two major denominations - Catholics and Protestants. The Protestants emerged acquired a repatriate denomination during 16th century. They claimed that the church and society was in a state of crisis. They demanded reforms in such a situation and came to be called as Protestants. The Catholics on the other hand felt that there was no crisis and ascribe the rise of Protestantism to the interplay of certain complex and powerful forces. The Protestants do not believe in the authority of Pope which Catholics consider him as the main authority. The main Protestant sects in India are Calvinist, Anglican and Anabaptist. The main Catholic sects in India are Syrian Church, Latin Church and Malankara.

### **Sikhism**

Sikhism originated from Sant tradition in the early sixteenth century. It started as a philosophy which later converted into a religion. Guru Nanak is considered the founder of this religion. He was born in 1469 in an upper caste Hindu family. However, he soon realised the futility of idol worshipping, rituals and rites. He showed his followers the way to salvation through the continuous remembrance of the divine being or, the 'Akal Purakh'. 'Kirat Karo, Vand Chhako, Naam Japo' (do labour, share and eat, recite God's name) (McLeod 1989) was the preaching of Guru Nanak. By rejecting the notion of difference among human beings he emphasized on devotion, effort and morality. He also put emphasis on meditation as a mean to realise the omnipresence of 'Akal Purakh' (McLeod 1989). People who followed him were known as Nanak-panthis and afterwards Sikhs. Sikh religion had ten Gurus. After Nanak, there were Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan, Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Harkrishan, Guru Teghbahadur and Guru Govind Singh. Guru Granth Sahib is the sacred scripture of Sikhs that holds the essence of this religion. According to W. H. Mcleod (1989), after Nanak it was necessary to have a successor to protect this evolving religion from oblivion. He believed, without a successor Nanak-Panth wouldn't have survived. He also noted that as the followers grew in number, the philosophy of Nanak was ascribed on new members at birth. McLeod pointed to the fact that with growing number of disciples and expansion of

geographical area, there was an increasing pressure for certain changes. Therefore, came into existence the system of supervision, through which people were appointed to act on behalf of the guru. The concept of Langar also arrived during this time. Langar system brought inspiration from Nanak's preaching against caste-system and unequal treatment of human beings. The story of the establishment of Sikhism is incomplete without a brief glimpse into the emergence of Khalsa. According to the most popular belief, Guru Govind Singh baptised Sikhs to instigate them against the oppressive ruling and injustice of Mughals. Khalsas are those who go through an initiation ceremony and follow certain codes of conduct which consist of abstinence from liquor, tobacco, practice of dowry or, casteism and protecting the defenceless. Their duties also include worshiping one divine being and contributing one-tenth of earnings for religious purpose. McLeod cited a few more traditional explanations of the origin of Khalsa. One of those suggests that after Guru Tegh Bahadur who died a horrifying death at the hands of Mughals, the Sikhs became terrified, which provoked Guru Govind Singh to turn them into Khalsas 'to ensure that never again would Sikhs be able to take refuge in anonymity'. (McLeod 1989)

In spite of Guru Nanak's preaching against outward rites and practices, Sikhism fell prey to institutional worships and rituals such as the Gurudwara and initiation ceremonies. W.H. McLeod explained these changes as responses towards changed situations, which he believed was necessary as "a growing and maturing Panth could never have sustained the informality of the first Guru's practice". Like many other religions, Sikhism could not avoid internal divisions and was split into Amritdharis, Keshdharis and Sahajdharis. Baptized Sikhs who follow all the tenets are Amritdharis; while Sikhs who are not baptized are known as Keshdharis. Sahajdhari Sikhs are those who are not born within Sikhism and choose to become one by following the doctrines. McLeod also noted that caste distinction was not absent among Sikhs though there was no caste based discrimination. By referring to local narratives, he showed that not only all the Gurus were from Khatri caste; but they also followed old traditional practices of marriage. Studies showed that though the lower castes as well as outcastes embraced Sikhism, the way they used to be treated did not change much. The Jats who according to Hindu Varna system were treated as 'Shudras', were attracted to egalitarian nature of Sikhism and converted themselves into Sikhs (Puri 2009). Gradually, they earned land, wealth and high social status. Later colonial rulers elevated the position of Jat Sikhs in British Indian Army. Jats were glorified as loyal, courageous and racially 'pure' (Puri 2009). Possession of Land became synonymous with 'dominant caste'. Mazhabi, Balmiki Sikhs, who did not have any right over land and used to perform menial works, became outcastes. Mazhabi, Rahtia, Ramdasia Sikhs along with few other groups were considered untouchables and prohibited from accessing wells and entering into the Golden Temple. The instances of discrimination during Langar are not uncommon. Incidences of prohibiting entry of Dalit Sikhs into Gurdwaras and proscribing them from using common cremation grounds led to establishment of separate Gurdwaras and cremation grounds for Dalits.

While Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam are theistic in nature, Buddhism and Jainism are what Clothey (2006) described as 'heterodoxies'. According to him, heterodoxies

were those who challenged the Vedic authority and put emphasis on action (Karma) rather than on wisdoms. They not only rejected God but refused to accept the existence of life after death. Buddhism and Jainism attracted merchants (Vaishyas) with its simplistic principles which stressed on morality and working ones way towards salvation (Clothey 2006).

## **Buddhism**

Buddha refers to one who has attained complete spiritual awakening (Lillie 1975). It means 'the enlightened one'. Gautam Buddha was born in the fifth century BC at Kapilavastu (Kapilavatthu). He was named Siddhartha (Siddhattha) Gautama. At a young age he realised that suffering is inevitable and went in search of truth. The notion of impermanence and suffering is in the core of Buddhism (Frauwallner 2010). The suffering emanates from ignorance about the 'real nature of things'. Therefore, Buddha explained four truths and eight paths that can enable one to live a life without misery (Krishna 2010). There was no concept of God in Buddhism during the nascent period. However, at a later stage Buddha was deified and rituals evolved. The followers were divided into two sects; Mahayana and Hinayana. The Mahayana sect perceives Buddha as a divine being while followers of Hinayana recognize him as an enlightened human being.

'Human beings are one and the same in their essential characteristics' (Krishna 2010. P.104); this was the preaching of Buddha. Buddhist philosophy didn't really go beyond this immediate life and dealt with 'eternity'; neither did it try to answer questions regarding existence or, non-existence of God. Rather, Buddhism tried to end the suffering of human beings that emanates from desire and greed. The Scholars believe that Buddhism improved the life of women as it emphasized on equal treatment of both genders. Bhikkhuni Sanghas brought rays of hope for women, who got the opportunity to educate themselves. It also criticized the caste system and untouchability that was prevalent among Hindus. Buddha undermined the position of Brahmin by saying that every person has the right to reach the 'highest perfection' irrespective of their gender or, socio-economic background. Buddha asked human beings to abstain from violence, killing and practicing slavery. Buddha emphasized on rational thinking and discussion on resolving issues as opposed to believing something blindly on account of its being tradition, old or, written. Buddha's teachings have been collected in Tripitakas. Buddhism, because of its non-discriminating feature attracted those people who were downtrodden and suffered on account of being at the lowest strata of social order.

Buddhism and Jainism are not only similar in principles, but similarity can also be found in the stories regarding the early life of Buddha and Mahavir. Both were from royal families and renounced their wealth afterwards (Clothey 2006).

## **Jainism**

Jainism is considered as one of the oldest religions of India. The term Jain came from 'Jina'. Jina is the one who has been liberated from worldly emotions and enlightened with 'infinite knowledge' (Sangave 2001). Self-control, morality, meditation,

omniscience and non-violence are the pith of Jainism. Jainism is divided into Digambar and Shvetambar sects. However, it has not been possible to figure out the exact reason of this division. The differences between these two sects are also minimal.

It is believed, Jinas, who strive for the liberation of the human beings, appeared as Tirthankaras at different periods of time. According to Jain philosophy, there are twenty four Tirthankaras. Mahavir Jain is believed to be the last one of them. Jainism also encouraged charity or, 'dana'. In Jainism, charity is believed to be a way of controlling one's greed which is the source of violence (Sangave, 2001). It promoted charity by means of offering education, medicine, food and shelter.

Unlike all these religions, Christianity came to India at a recent period. It arrived with Christian missionaries who saw the opportune of proselytization in people's indignation towards the prejudiced caste system. Apart from these, there are many other religions as well as cults which are less heard of. Bauls which can be found in Bengal is the example of one such cult which is similar to Sufism. They are wandering minstrels, who renounced their previous connection to Hinduism or, Islam. In north-eastern India old animistic tribal religion still prevails. According to Clothey (2006), origin of some of the Gods and Goddesses in Hinduism can be found in Tribal religions. It can also be assumed that all the religions which claim hegemony over others on account of being old or, ultimate are delusional.

### **Religious Composition of Indian Society**

<b>Religious Composition</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Hindus	96.62 Crores	79.80
Muslims	17.22 Crores	14.23
Christians	2.78 Crores	2.30
Sikhs	2.08 Crores	1.72
Buddhists	84.43 Lakhs	0.70
Jains	44.52 Lakhs	0.37

**Source: Census Data 2011, GOI**

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#### **1.4 LINGUISTIC COMPOSITION**

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"Language" means a system of mutually intelligible vocal symbols by which the members of a society communicate. "Written language" is a special kind of language. "Dialect" is the speech system of a regionally or socially defined group, marked by a combination of shared linguistic features (Friedrich, 1962:343). In a broader sense language plays an essential role in constructing a sense of identity. It serves as a medium of communication and expression of and for the masses, thereby instilling in them a sense of belongingness and oneness. India is one such country which is home to more than one billion population comprising of numerous major and minority communities with its own ethnocentric and distinctive profiles of spoken and written languages. On record, there are approximately 400 languages and more than 300 dialects spoken across twenty nine states and seven union territories of India. According to the 2011 linguistic survey census data report records that there are a

total of 121 languages and 270 mother tongues. The 22 languages specified in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India of which Hindi is the predominant language spoken by about 43.63 per cent of the population, followed by Bengali (8.03 per cent), Marathi (6.86 per cent), Telugu (6.70 per cent), and Tamil (5.70 per cent). However, despite such linguistic multifariousness, there exists a strong relationship between language and power. It's important to deconstruct facts of how language and power reciprocally reproduce different magnitude of social hierarchies, political power, cultural and economic inequalities. As Sarangi (2009) argues that in order to gain insights into the problematic language question in India, we need to deeply probe into the structures of relationships between language, history, culture, ideology, power and economy and politics.

### Linguistic Composition in India (2011 Census)

S. No.	Language	Persons who returned the language as their mother tongue	Percentage to total population
1	2	3	4
1	Hindi	52,83,47,193	43.63
2	Bengali	9,72,37,669	8.03
3	Marathi	8,30,26,680	6.86
4	Telugu	8,11,27,740	6.70
5	Tamil	6,90,26,881	5.70
6	Gujarati	5,54,92,554	4.58
7	Urdu	5,07,72,631	4.19
8	Kannada	4,37,06,512	3.61
9	Odia	3,75,21,324	3.10
10	Malayalam	3,48,38,819	2.88
11	Punjabi	3,31,24,726	2.74
12	Assamese	1,53,11,351	1.26
13	Maithili	1,35,83,464	1.12
14	Santali	73,68,192	0.61
15	Kashmiri	67,97,587	0.56
16	Nepali	29,26,168	0.24
17	Sindhi	27,72,264	0.23
18	Dogri	25,96,767	0.21
19	Konkani	22,56,502	0.19
20	Manipuri	17,61,079	0.15
21	Bodo	14,82,929	0.12
22	Sanskrit	24,821	N

N - Stands for negligible.

Source: Census Data 2011, GOI

## 1.5 RACIAL COMPOSITION

Race remains one of the most complex concepts in sociology. In popular usage 'race' may mean human race or any category of people can be called as belonging to certain race. Race according to some is a group of people who may be separated from other groups by distinctive physical features like colour of skin, hair, structure of jaw, structure of eyes. Race as a term gained usage around 16th Century and began to be referred to family, lineage and breed. It was in the 18th Century period especially

during the Enlightenment – Age of Reason that the idea of race began to be explored more systematically. Scientific theories of race arose in 18th and 19th centuries. As Trautmann (1997) states that terms such as ‘race’, ‘nation’, and ‘stock’ were used interchangeably in the 18th Century but with the advent of race science as well as European Nationalism in the later 19th Century, they began to take on political meanings. They were used to justify the emerging social order as England and other European nations became imperial powers ruling over subject territories and populations (Giddens, 2005). Rattansi (2007) puts forth three important dimensions that need to be taken into account while analysing race; one the idea of race contains both biological and cultural elements, for example skin colour, religion, and behaviour. Secondly the biological and cultural aspect projects itself in different degrees in any definition of a racial group and that depends not only on the group but also the historical period in question. Finally ‘racial status’ is subject to and conditioned upon political negotiation and transformation.

Ethnic Groups in India Indian society has a complex history of more than 5000 years. It's a history of series of migrations, assimilations, accommodations, invasions and wars. There is no written account of the early India therefore it is impossible to identify the earliest inhabitants of India. According to Dube (1990), we can speculate about the original people of India on the basis of information provided by physical anthropology regarding the ethnic elements, i.e. the racial groups, in the population of India. The most authoritative and widely accepted classification is by Guha (1944) who identified six major racial elements in the population of India – Negrito, Proto – Australoids, Mongoloid, Mediterranean, Western Brachycephals, and Nordic. The Negroids from Africa are considered as the earliest people to have come to India. The Jarawas, Onges, Sentinelese and the Great Andamanese are some of the examples. Proto Australoid is numerically more significant groups which forms most of the tribes of middle India. Mongoloid are the tribals of north east. Mediterraneans are the people of South India. They are believed to be residents of the land before the Aryans. Western Bracycephals include the Alpinoids, Dinarics and Armenoids. The Parsis and Kodavas fall in this category. They are the broad headed people living mainly on the western side of the country such as the Ganga Valley and the delta, parts of Kashmir, Kathiawar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Nordics or the Indo-Aryans- These groups were the last one to immigrate to India. They came to India somewhere between 2000 and 1500 B.C. They are now mainly found in the northern and central part of India. The Nordics were the last major ethnic element to arrive in India and make a profound impact on its culture and society. (Guha, 1944; Dube, 1990) With the advent of Aryans around 2000 and 1500 B.C the process of Aryanization began. The Aryans influenced Indian society in a fundamental way. The ideological and social framework of Indian society began taking shape when the area of interaction between the indo-Aryans and the earlier inhabitants widened. Its earlier phase was characterized by considerable cultural conflict and warfare. Gradually pluralism was being stabilized and a cultural mosaic being formed (Dube, 1990).

India has a history of more than 5000 years and there have been migration for centuries from various parts of the world. After Aryans many others like the Greeks,

the Arabs, the Turks, the Mughals, the Portuguese, and the British invaded India at various epochs in history. With these invaders came their culture and religion. As a result various types of groups with their own unique culture proliferated in India. As a result Indian population is polygenetic and is a blend of various cultures and races from the world. The contemporary Indian culture is product of amalgamation of all these cultures. The metaphor 'unity in diversity' is a result of this.

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## 1.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit, we have learnt that India is among the most diverse societies with a plurality and diversity of cultures which marks it out as perhaps the largest multicultural society in the world. People from all the major religions in the world—Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Zoroastrians (Parsis) constitute its vast population. Although Hindus constitute the majority of the population, India is home to the second-largest population of Muslims in the world. The diversity is coupled with enormous cultural diversity that is based on such factors like language, caste, and ethnicity. According to the 2011 census, there are 121 spoken languages in this country; of these, 22 are spoken by more than one million people.

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## 1.7 GLOSSARY

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- Culture:** a way of life of a group of people--the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.
- Language:** a system of mutually intelligible vocal symbols by which the members of a society communicate
- Race:** A race is a large biological human grouping with a number of distinctive, inherited characteristics which vary within a certain range
- Religion:** is a system of beliefs, values, and practices concerning what a person holds sacred or considers being spiritually significant



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## 1.8 REFERENCES

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## **UNIT 2    UNITY IN DIVERSITY**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 2.1    Introduction
- 2.2    Learning Objectives
- 2.3    Concepts of Unity and Diversity
  - 2.3.1    Meaning of Diversity
  - 2.3.2    Meaning of Unity
- 2.4    Forms of Diversity in India
  - 2.4.1    Racial Diversity
  - 2.4.2    Linguistic Diversity
  - 2.4.3    Religious Diversity
  - 2.4.4    Caste Diversity
- 2.5    Bonds of Unity in India
  - 2.5.1    Geo-Political Unity
  - 2.5.2    The Institution of Pilgrimage
  - 2.5.3    Tradition of Accommodation
  - 2.5.4    Tradition of Interdependence
- 2.6    Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7    Glossary
- 2.8    Check Your Progress: Answer Keys
- 2.9    References

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### **2.1    INTRODUCTION**

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This unit deals with unity and diversity in India. You may have heard a lot about unity and diversity in India. But do you know what exactly it means? Here we will explain to you the meaning and content of this phrase. For this purpose the unit has been divided into three sections.

In the first section, we will specify the meaning of the two terms, diversity and unity. In the second section, we will illustrate the forms of diversity in Indian society. For detailed treatment we will focus on the four forms of diversity, race, language, religion and caste. In the third section, we will bring out the bonds of unity in India. These are geopolitical, the culture of pilgrimage, tradition of accommodation, and tradition of interdependence. Above all, we will note that the unity of India is born of a composite culture rather than a uniform culture.

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## 2.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit you should be able to:

- explain the concept of unity and diversity
- describe the forms and bases of diversity in India
- examine the bonds and mechanisms of unity in India
- provide an explanation to our option for a composite culture model rather than a uniformity model of unity.

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## 2.3 CONCEPTS OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY

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We begin by clarifying the meaning of the terms diversity and unity.

### 2.3.1 Meaning of Diversity

Ordinarily diversity means differences. For our purposes, however, it means something more than mere differences. It means collective differences, that is, differences which mark off one group of people from another. These differences may be of any sort: biological, religious, linguistic etc. On the basis of biological differences, for example, we have racial diversity. On the basis of religious differences, similarly, we have religious diversity. The point to note is that diversity refers to collective differences.

The term diversity is opposite of uniformity. Uniformity means similarity of some sort that characterizes a people. 'Uni' refers to one; 'form' refers to the common ways. So when there is something common to all the people, we say they show uniformity. When students of a school, members of the police or the army wear the same type of dress, we say they are in 'uniform'. Like diversity, thus, uniformity is also a collective concept. When a group of people share a similar characteristic, be it language or religion or anything else, it shows uniformity in that respect. But when we have groups of people hailing from different races, religions and cultures, they represent diversity. D.N. Majumdar wrote a book with the title, *Races and Cultures of India*. Mark the words in the plural: Races (not Race); Cultures (not Culture).

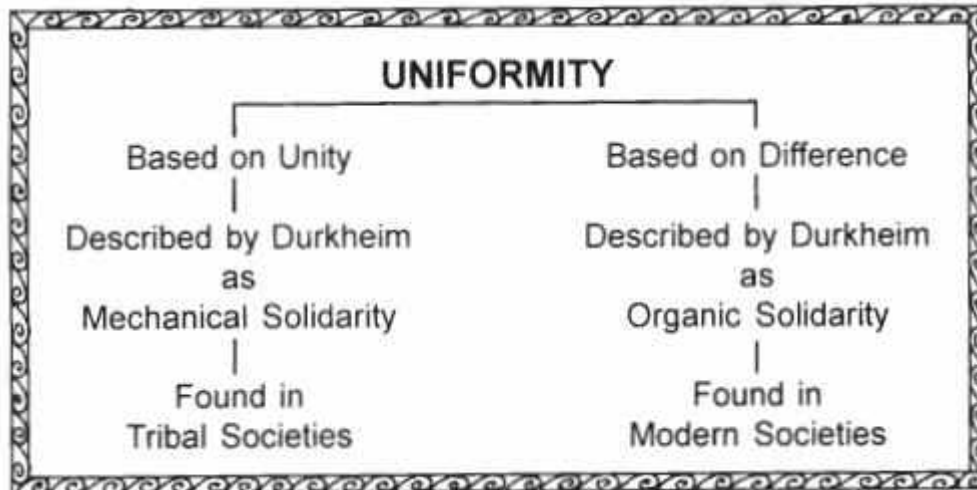
Thus, diversity means variety. For all practical purposes it means variety of groups and cultures. We have such a variety in abundance in India. We have here a variety of races, of religions, of languages, of castes and of cultures. For the same reason India is known for its socio-cultural diversity.

### 2.3.2 Meaning of Unity

Unity means integration. It is a social psychological condition. It connotes a sense of one-ness, a sense of we-ness. It stands for the bonds, which hold the members of a society together.

There is a difference between unity and uniformity. Uniformity presupposes similarity, unity does not. Thus, unity may or may not be based on uniformity. Unity

may be born out of uniformity. Durkheim calls this type of unity a mechanical solidarity. We find this type of unity in tribal societies and in traditional societies. However, unity may as well be based on differences. It is such unity, which is described by Durkheim as organic solidarity. This type of unity characterizes modern societies. Let us see it in a diagram



**Fig 2.1 Two Types of Unity**

The point to note is that unity does not have to be based on uniformity. Unity, as we noted earlier, implies integration. Integration does not mean absence of differences. Indeed, it stands for the ties that bind the diverse groups with one another.

**Check Your progress Exercise 2.1**

**Note:**

- I. Write your answer in the space given below.
- II. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

**Q.1** Mark which of the following is the correct meaning of diversity?

- a) Differences between two individuals
- b) Similarities among the members of a group
- c) Dissimilarities among groups

**Q.2** Mark which of the following is the correct example of social diversity?

- a) Temperamental differences between men and women
- b) Property differences between the two neighbours
- c) Differences of religious belongingness between two groups.

**Q.3** Indicate which of the following statements are true and which are false.

**Use T for True and F for False**

- a) Unity means absence of differences.

- b) Unity is opposite of diversity.
- c) Uniformity is a necessary condition for unity.
- d) Unity in diversity is a contradiction in terms.
- e) Mechanical solidarity is based on uniformity.
- f) Unity signifies integration

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## 2.4 FORMS OF DIVERSITY IN INDIA

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As hinted earlier, we find in India diversity of various sorts. Some of its important forms are the following: racial, linguistic, religious and caste-based.

Let us deal with each one of them in some detail.

### 2.4.1 Racial Diversity

You may have seen people of different races in India. A race is a group of people with a set of distinctive physical features such as skin colour, type of nose, form of hair, etc.

Herbert Risley had classified the people of India into seven racial types. These are (i) Turko-Iranian, (ii) Indo-Aryan, (iii) Scytho-Dravidian, (iv) Aryo-Dravidian, (v) Mongolo-Dravidian, (vi) Mongoloid, and (vii) Dravidian. These seven racial types can be reduced to three basic types-the Indo-Aryan, the Mongolian and the Dravidian. In his opinion the last two types would account for the racial composition of tribal India. He was the supervisor of the census operations held in India in 1891 and it was data from this census, which founded the basis of this classification. As, it was based mainly on language-types rather than physical characteristics; Risley's classification was criticised for its shortcomings.

Other administrative officers and anthropologists, like J.H. Hutton, D.N. Majumdar and B.S. Guha, have given the latest racial classification of the Indian people based on further researches in this field. Hutton's and Guha's classifications are based on 1931 census operations. B.S. Guha (1952) has identified six racial types (1) the Negrito, (2) the Proto Australoid, (3) the Mongoloid, (4) the Mediterranean, (5) the Western Brachycephals, and (6) the Nordic. Besides telling you what the various types denote, we shall not go into the details of this issue, because that will involve us in technical matters pertaining to physical anthropology. Here, we need only to be aware of the diversity of racial types in India.

**Negritos** are the people who belong to the black racial stock as found in Africa. They have black skin colour, frizzle hair, thick lips, etc. In India some of the tribes in South India, such as the Kadar, the Irula and the Paniyan have distinct Negrito strain.

The **Proto-Australoid** races consist of an ethnic group, which includes the Australian aborigines and other peoples of southern Asia and Pacific Islands. Representatives of this group are the Ainu of Japan, the Vedda of Sri Lanka, and the Sakai of Malaysia. In India the tribes of Middle India belong to this strain. Some of these tribes are the Ho of Singhbhum, Bihar, and the Bhil of the Vindhya ranges.

The **Mongoloids** are a major racial stock native to Asia, including the peoples of northern and eastern Asia. For example, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Eskimos, and often American Indians also belong to this race. In India, the North Eastern regions have tribes of brachycephalic Mongoloid strain. A slightly different kind of Mongoloid racial stock is found in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Mikir-Bodo group of tribes and the Angami Nagas represent the best examples of Mongoloid racial composition in India.

The **Mediterranean** races relate to the **caucasian** physical type, i.e., the white race. It is characterised by medium or short stature, slender build, long head with cephalic index (the ratio multiplied by 100 of the maximum breadth of the head to its maximum length) of less than 75 and dark (continental) complexion.

The Western Brachycephals are divided into the following three sub-groups: (1) The Alpenoid are characterised by broad head, medium stature and light skin, found amongst Bania castes of Gujarat, the Kayasthas of Bengal, etc. (ii) The Dinaric- They are characterised by broad head, long nose, tall stature and dark skin colour, found amongst the Brahmin of Bengal, the non-Brahmin of Karnataka, (iii) The Armenoid- They are characterised by features similar to Dinaric. The Armenoid have a more marked shape of the back of head, a prominent and narrow nose. The Parsi of Bombay shows the typical characteristics of the Armenoid race (Das 1988: 223).

Finally, the Nordic races belong to the physical type characterised by tall stature, long head, light skin and hair, and blue eyes. They are found in Scandinavian countries, Europe. In India, they are found in different parts of north of the country, especially in Punjab and Rajputana. The Kho of Chitral, the Red Kaffirs, and the Khatash are some of the representatives of this type. Research suggests that the Nordics came from the north, probably from south east Russia and south west Siberia, through central Asia to India. (Das, 1988: 223).

#### **2.4.2 Linguistic Diversity**

Do you know how many languages are there in India? While the famous linguist Grierson noted 179 languages and 544 dialects, the 1971 census on the other hand, reported 1652 languages in India which are spoken as mother tongue. Not all these languages are, however, equally widespread. Many of them are tribal speeches and these are spoken by less than one percent of the total population. Here you can see that in India there is a good deal of linguistic diversity.

Only 18 languages are listed in Schedule VIII of the Indian Constitution. These are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Out of these 18 languages, Hindi is spoken by 39.85 percent of the total population; Bengali, Telugu and Marathi by around 8 percent each; Tamil and Urdu by 6.26 and 5.22 percent, respectively; and the rest by less than 5 percent each as per 1991 census report (India 2003).

The above constitutionally recognized languages belong to two linguistic families:

Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu are the four major Dravidian languages. The languages of Indo-Aryan family are spoken by 75 percent of India's total population while the languages of Dravidian family are spoken by 20 percent.

This linguistic diversity notwithstanding, we have always had a sort of link language, though it has varied from age to age. In ancient times it was Sanskrit, in medieval age it was Arabic or Persian and in modern times we have Hindi and English as official languages.

### 2.4.3 Religious Diversity

India is a land of multiple religions. We find here followers of various faiths, particularly of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, among others. You know it that Hinduism is the dominant religion of India. According to the 2011 census the Hinduism has 79.80 percent followers to the total population. 14.23 percent followed Islam and 2.3 percent followed Christianity. Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism followed by 1.72, 0.70 and 0.37 percent, respectively.

Then there are sects within each religion. Hinduism, for example, has many sects including Shaiva, Shakta and Vaishnava. Add to them the sects born or religious reform movements such as Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Ram Krishna Mission. More recently, some new cults have come up such as Radhaswami, Saibaba, etc. Similarly, Islam is divided into Siya and Sunni; Sikhism into Namdhari and Nirankari; Jainism into Digambar and Shvetambar; and Buddhism into Hinayan and Mahayan.

While Hindu and Muslim are found in almost all parts of India, the remaining minority religions have their pockets of concentration. Christians have their strongholds in the three southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and in the north-eastern states like Nagaland and Meghalaya. Sikhs are concentrated largely in Punjab, Buddhists in Maharashtra, and Jains are mainly spread over Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat, but also found in most urban centres throughout the country.

#### Check Your progress Exercise 2.2

**Note:**

- I. Write your answer in the space given below.
- II. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

**Q.4** List, in one line, some of the major forms of diversity found in India.

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**Q.5** According to Grierson, how many dialects and languages are spoken in India?

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**Q.6** What are the various religions found in India? Use two lines for your answer.

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#### **.4.4 Caste Diversity**

India, as you know, is a country of castes. The term caste is generally used in two senses: sometimes in the sense of Varna and sometimes in the sense of Jati. (i) Varna refers to a segment of the four-fold division of Hindu society based on functional criterion. The four Varna are Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra with their specialised functions as learning, defence, trade and manual service. The Varna hierarchy is accepted all over India. (ii) Jati refers to a hereditary endogamous status group practising a specific traditional occupation. You may be surprised to know that there are more than 3,000 *jati* in India. These are hierarchically graded in different ways in different regions.

It may also be noted that the practice of caste system is not confined to Hindus alone. We find castes among the Muslim, Christian, Sikh as well as other communities. You may have heard of the hierarchy of Shaikh, Saiyed, Mughal, Pathan among the Muslim. Furthermore, there are castes like teli (oil pressure), dhobi (washerman), darjee (tailor), etc. among the Muslim. Similarly, caste consciousness among the Christian in India is not unknown. Since a vast majority of Christians in India are converted from Hindu fold, the converts have carried the caste system into Christianity. Among the Sikh again you have so many castes including *Jat* Sikh and *Majahabi* Sikh (lower castes). In view of this you can well imagine the extent of caste diversity in India.

In addition to the above described major forms of diversity, we have diversity of many other sorts like settlement patterns - tribal, rural, urban; marriage and kinship patterns along religious and regional lines; cultural patterns reflecting regional variations, and so on.

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## **2.5 BONDS OF UNITY IN INDIA**

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In the preceding section we have illustrated the diversity of India. But that is not the whole story. There are bonds of unity underlying all this diversity. These bonds of unity may be located in a certain underlying uniformity of life as well as in certain mechanisms of integration. Census Commissioner in 1911, Herbert Risley (1969), was right when he observed: “Beneath the manifold diversity of physical and social



type, language, custom and religion which strikes the observer in India there can still be discerned..... a certain underlying uniformity of life from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin". We will describe the bonds of unity of India in this section. These are geo-political unity, the institution of pilgrimage, tradition of accommodation, and tradition of interdependence. We will now describe each of them in that order.

### **2.5.1 Geo-political Unity**

The first bond of unity of India is found in its geo-political integration. India is known for its geographical unity marked by the Himalayas in the north end and the oceans on the other sides. Politically India is now a sovereign state. The same constitution and same parliament govern every part of it. We share the same political culture marked by the norms of democracy, secularism and socialism.

Although it has not been recognised till recently, the geo-political unity of India was always visualized by our seers and rulers. The expressions of this consciousness of the geo-political unity of India are found in Rig-Veda, in Sanskrit literature, in the edicts of Asoka, in Buddhist monuments and in various other sources. The ideal of geo-political unity of India is also reflected in the concepts of *Bharatvarsha* (the old indigenous classic name for India), *Chakravarti* (emperor), and *Ekchhatradhipatya* (under one rule).

### **2.5.2 The Institution of Pilgrimage**

Another source of unity of India lies in what is known as temple culture, which is reflected in the network of shrines and sacred places. From Badrinath and Kedarnath in the north to Rameshwaram in the south, Jagannath Puri in the east to Dwaraka in the west the religious shrines and holy rivers are spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. Closely related to them is the age-old culture of pilgrimage, which has always moved people to various parts of the country and fostered in them a sense of geo-cultural unity.

As well as being an expression of religious sentiment, pilgrimage is also an expression of love for the motherland, a sort of mode of worship of the country. It has played a significant part in promoting interaction and cultural affinity among the people living in different parts of India. Pilgrimage can, therefore, rightly be viewed as a mechanism of geo-cultural unity.

### **2.5.3 Tradition of Accommodation**

Have you heard of the syncretic quality of Indian culture, its remarkable quality of accommodation and tolerance? There is ample evidence of it. The first evidence of it lies in the elastic character of Hinduism, the majority religion of India. It is common knowledge that Hinduism is not a homogeneous religion, a religion having one God, one Book and one Temple. Indeed, it can be best described as a federation of faiths. **Polytheistic** (having multiple deities) in character, it goes to the extent of accommodating village level deities and tribal faiths.

For the same reason, sociologists have distinguished two broad forms of Hinduism: sanskritic and popular. Sanskritic is that which is found in the texts (religious books like Vedas, etc.) and popular is that which is found in the actual life situation of the vast masses. Robert Redfield has called these two forms as great tradition of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and the little tradition of worship of the village deity. And everything passes for Hinduism.

Another evidence of it lies in its apathy to conversion. Hinduism is not a proselytising religion. That is, it does not seek converts. Nor has it ordinarily resisted other religions to seek converts from within its fold. This quality of accommodation and tolerance has saved the way to the coexistence of several faiths in India.

Mechanisms of coexistence of people of different faiths have been in existence here for long. Take for example, the case of Hindu-Muslim amity. Hindus and Muslims have always taken part in each other's functions, festivities and feasts. How did they do it? They did it by evolving the mechanism of providing for a separate hearth and a set of vessels for each other so as to respect each other's religious sensibility. This always facilitated mutual visiting and sharing in each other's joy and grief. They have also done so by showing regards for each other's saints and holy men. Thus, both Hindus and Muslims have shown reverence to the saints and Pirs of each other. And this holds as well for the coexistence of other religious groups like Sikh, Jain, and Christian and so on.

#### **2.5.4 Tradition of Interdependence**

We have had a remarkable tradition of interdependence, which has held us together throughout centuries. One manifestation of it is found in the form of *Jajmani* system, i.e., a system of functional interdependence of castes. The term "jajman" refers generally to the patron or recipient of specialised services. The relations were traditionally between a food producing family and the families that supported them with goods and services. These came to be called the *jajmani* relations. *Jajmani* relations were conspicuous in village life, as they entailed ritual matters, social support as well as economic exchange. The whole of a local social order was involved (the people and their values) in such *jajmani* links. A patron had *jajmani* relations with members of a high caste (like a Brahmin priest whose services he needed for rituals). He also required the services of specialists from the lower *jati* to perform those necessary tasks like washing of dirty clothes, cutting of hair, cleaning the rooms and toilets, delivery of the child etc. Those associated in these interdependent relations were expected to be and were broadly supportive of each other with qualities of ready help that generally close kinsmen were expected to show.

The *jajmani* relations usually involved multiple kinds of payment and obligations as well as multiple functions.

We shall also discuss the *jajmani* system in the next unit on Rural Social Structure. Here it will suffice to note that no caste was self-sufficient. If anything, it depended for many things on other castes. In a sense, each caste was a functional group in that

it rendered a specified service to other caste groups. *Jajmani* system is that mechanism which has formalized and regulated this functional interdependence.

Furthermore, castes cut across the boundaries of religious communities. We have earlier mentioned that notions of caste are found in all the religious communities in India. In its actual practice, thus, the institution of *jajmani* provides for inter linkages between people of different religious groups. Thus a Hindu may be dependent for the washing of his clothes on a Muslim washerman. Similarly, a Muslim may be dependent for the stitching of his clothes on a Hindu tailor, and vice-versa.

Efforts have been made from time to time by sensitive and sensible leaders of both the communities to synthesize Hindu and Muslim traditions so as to bring the two major communities closer to each other. Akbar, for example, founded a new religion, *Din-e-Ilahi*, combining best of both the religions. The contributions made by Kabir, Eknath, Guru Nanak, and more recently Mahatma Gandhi, are well known in this regard.

Similarly, in the field of art and architecture we find such a happy blending of Hindu and Muslim styles. What else is this if not a proof of mutual appreciation for each other's culture?

Quite in line with these traditional bonds of unity, the Indian state in post-Independence era has rightly opted for a composite culture model of national unity rather than a uniform culture model. The composite culture model provides for the preservation and growth of plurality of cultures within the framework of an integrated nation. Hence the significance of our choice of the norm of secularism, implying equal regard for all religions, as our policy of national integration.

The above account of the unity of India should not be taken to mean that we have always had a smooth sailing in matters of national unity, with no incidents of caste, communal or linguistic riots. Nor should it be taken to mean that the divisive and secessionist tendencies have been altogether absent. There have been occasional riots, at times serious riots. For example, who can forget the communal riots of partition days, the linguistic riots in Tamil Nadu in protest against the imposition of Hindi, the riots in Gujarat during 1980s between scheduled and non-scheduled castes and communal riots of 2002? The redeeming feature, however, is that the bonds of unity have always emerged stronger than the forces of disintegration.

### Check Your progress Exercise 2.3

**Note:**

- I. Write your answer in the space given below.
- II. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

**Q.7** List the bonds of unity in India, in the space given below.

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.....  
**Q.8** Indicate the mechanism of the following set of terms, in the space provided Unity and Diversity against each.

- a) Geo-political unity .....
- b) Geo-cultural unity .....
- c) Religious accommodation .....
- d) Social interdependence .....

**Q.9** Distinguish between great tradition and little tradition, in the space given below.

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**Q.10** Distinguish between composite culture and uniform culture models of national integration, in the space provided below.

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## 2.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you have studied that diversity refers to i) patterned differences between groups, ii) socio-cultural variety, and iii) lack of uniformity. Unity means integration that may or may not be based on uniformity, a sense of oneness arising from the bonds that hold the members together or that bind the diverse groups with one another.

You have also studied that there are major forms of diversity in India: race, language, religion and caste.

Underlying all the diversities there is a remarkable measure of unity. We have noted four bonds of unity in India: geo-political, geo-cultural, religious accommodation and functional interdependence. Closely related to these bonds are four mechanisms of integration: constitution, pilgrimage, provision of a separate hearth, cook and kitchenware for members of other religious community, and jajmani.

Finally, we have noted that India has opted for a composite culture model of unity rather than uniform cultural model.

<b>Brachycephalic:</b>	In terms of anthropometric measures, heads with a breadth of 80 cephalic index and over are categorised as broad or brachycephalic. Those with an index under 80, but not under 75, are classified as medium heads or meso-or mesati-cephalic. Long or dolicho-cephalic heads are those heads, which have the cephalic index of below 75.
<b>Caucasian</b>	Relating to the white race of mankind as classified according to physical features.
<b>Cephalic Index</b>	The proportion of the breadth of the head to its length is expressed as a percentage and it is called the cephalic index.
<b>Mechanical Solidarity</b>	The condition of unity or of one-ness in a society may be based on the elements of uniformity or similarities. Such condition is described by Durkheim as mechanical solidarity.
<b>Mediterranean</b>	Relating to a physical type of the Caucasian race characterized by medium or short stature, slender build, long head with cephalic index of less than 75 and dark complexion.
<b>Mongoloid</b>	A major racial stock native to Asia including peoples of northern and eastern Asia. For example, Malaysians, Chinese, Japanese, Eskimos, and often American Indians also belong to this race. In India, besides several others the Naga tribes in north east belong to this race.
<b>Negrito</b>	A people belonging to the African branch of the black race. In India, the south Indian tribes like Kadar, the Irula, etc. are said to belong to this race.
<b>Nordic</b>	Relating to the Germanic peoples of northern Europe and specially of Scandinavia. This is a physical type characterized by tall stature, long head, light skin and hair, and blue eyes. In India, they are found in different parts of north of the country such as Punjab and Rajputana.
<b>Organic Solidarity</b>	The condition of unity or one-ness in a society may arise out of differences of socio-cultural characteristics. Such unity as described by Durkheim as organic

solidarity.

**Polytheistic**

Relating to the worship of more than one god.

**Proselytising**

Converting from one religion to another.

**Proto-Australoid**

Relating to an ethnic group including the Australian aborigines and other peoples of southern Asia and Pacific islands, including the Ainu of Japan the Vedda of Sri Lanka. In India, the Chotanagpur tribes of Bihar called Ho and Bhil are considered to be of this race.

**Western Brachycephals**

They have been divided into three types:

- i) The **Alpenoid** is characterized by broad head with rounded occiput (the back part of the head or skull) prominent nose, medium stature, round face. Skin colour is light; hair on face and body is abundant, body is thickly set. This type is found among the Bania of Gujarat, the Kathi of Kathiawar, the Kayastha of Bengal etc.
- ii) Amongst the **Dinaric** people, the head is broad with rounded occiput and high vault; nose is very long, stature is tall, face is long, forehead is receding; skin colour is darker, eyes and hair are also dark. This type is represented in Bengal, Orissa and Coorg. The Brahmin of Bengal and the Kanarese Brahmin of Mysore are also some of the representatives.
- iii) The **Armenoid** is in most of the characters like the Dinaric. In the former, the shape of occiput is more marked and the nose is more prominent and narrow. The Parsi of Bombay show typical Armenoid characteristics.

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**2.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: ANSWER KEYS**

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**Answer to Q.1:** C

**Answer to Q.2:** C

**Answer to Q.3:** a), b), c) and d) are false. E) and f) are true.

**Answer to Q.4:** Racial, linguistic, religious and caste-based.

**Answer to Q.5:** 179 languages and 544 dialects

**Answer to Q.6:** Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Bahaism

**Answer to Q.7:** Geo-political, geo-cultural, tradition of accommodation, interdependence

**Answer to Q.8:** a) constitution  
b) pilgrimage  
c) separate cook and kitchenware  
d) *jajmani*

**Answer to Q.9:** Great tradition is sanskritic, based on sacred texts and scriptures, and elitist. Little tradition, on the other hand, is oral, village-based and popular.

**Answer to Q.10:** Composite culture model provides for cultural pluralism while uniform culture model implies dominance of one culture.

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## **UNIT 3 NATIONAL INTEGRATION--MEANING AND THREATS (COMMUNALISM, LINGUISM, REGIONALISM)**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Objectives
- 3.3 National Integration: Meaning and Threats
- 3.4 Communalism
  - 3.4.1 Communalism in India
  - 3.4.2 Communal Riots
  - 3.4.3 Reasons for Communal Riots
  - 3.4.4 Economic and Social Dimensions
  - 3.4.5 Inter-Community Dynamics
- 3.5 Linguism
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- 3.6 Regionalism
  - 3.6.1 Regionalism in India: A Brief Background
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- 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
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- 3.9 Check Your Progress: Answer Keys
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### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

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India is a country marked by huge diversity in terms of geography, culture, caste, class, language, religion, region, art, food etc. With this remarkable diversity comes the challenge to keep it intact and integrated. Indian history, despite its belief in ‘unity in diversity’, has shown several traces of conflicts and clashes over religious, cultural, linguistic and regional differences. State response to such conflicts has had the tendency to be knee-jerk. While this has helped to temporarily cool tempers, it has not offered long-term solutions that have kept in mind the diverse fabric of the Indian nation or the issues that have been raised by conflicting groups that have mobilized themselves around these issues time and again. Communities, especially those that perceive themselves to be marginalized and ignored, feel isolated from government policies that they consider to be unfair to them and tailor-made for the national or regional elites. This leads to the genesis of demands for rights, adequate



expression, identity recognition and integration with the national economy (Vinod 2014). This Unit speaks about the meaning and threats of national integration which includes communalism, linguism and regionalism.

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### **3.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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This unit shall analyse the problems relating to National Integration in India. Here, the issues of Communalism, Linguism and Regionalism are identified as the three major threats to national integration. After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define the meaning of national integration;
- Discuss the concept of communalism and communalism in India;
- Trace the linguistic conflict and movements in India;
- Highlight the background of regionalism in India and its effects.

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### **3.3 NATIONAL INTEGRATION: MEANING AND THREATS**

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India is a multi-ethnic society. There are a large number of ethnic groups which vary in size from highly localized cast and tribal groups, to very large language and religious groups. No single group is clearly dominant, and the boundaries between the various groups are not entirely fixed.

In such a situation, the difficulties involved in presenting the theme of principles of Indian unity are of a fundamental nature. Of late, there has been a tendency in the literature on political development to focus upon national integration as a policy which seeks assimilation of the entire population of a state to a common identity and which recognizes only individual rights, privileges and duties.

Such a policy is to be distinguished from one of political integration, which seeks to maintain the cohesion and territorial integrity of a political unit, but does not necessarily demand the cultural assimilation of diverse groups to either a dominant or composite culture. Without going into the validity of these two processes, one can question the extent to which either individually or together, have contributed to the process of nation building. In fact, today, one finds that on issues like language, religion, caste, tribe and region the divisive forces due to their vested interests are threatening to break the very fabric of Indian unity. In this unit, we look into the historical background of the problems of communalism and regionalism in relation to national unity. This is because today these are possibly the greatest impediments in the task of national integration.

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### **3.4 COMMUNALISM**

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While discussing the nature of politics in the new states of Africa and Asia, Clifford Geertz, an American anthropologist (1963 : 105-157), wrote, "When we speak of communalism in India we refer to religious contrasts, when we speak of it in Malaya we are mainly concerned with racial ones, and in the Congo with tribal ones". Here the significant link is between communal and political loyalties. Thus when we talk of

India we are talking mainly of religion based oppositions. Communalism has been described as a sectarian exploitation of social traditions as a medium of political mobilization. This is done to punish the interests of the entrenched groups. Thus communalism is an ideology used to fulfil socio-economic hopes of a community or social groups. It requires proposals and programmes to ensure its very existence. These become active in phases of social change. Communalism arose in India during its colonial phase. Communal politics bases its strategies on religion and tradition. The interpretation of history is for purposes of mobilisation. Communal organisations have little room for democracy. Secondly they may also involve racist contrasts and perpetrate the same. They consider egalitarianism as abnormal and support patriarchy, as a familial and social norm. Communalism is therefore a

- i) Belief system
- ii) Social phenomena

Communalism arises out of a belief system, and assumes great solidarity within a community which is not always true. We find that there are often intercommunity quarrels. Further, the protagonists of communalism hold a particular view of history and take care to point out that a community has been identified with common sufferings and goals as a whole. The exclusiveness of the community is stressed vis a vis other communities, and it is therefore considered logical to fight for one's rights in a literal way.

Communalism in India has, as noted earlier, a colonial legacy wherein the rulers (Britishers) used religious contrasts, existing among the different communities to their advantage by giving them prominence.

After Independence economic modernization of India expanded economic opportunities but not enough to curb unhealthy competitiveness. Independence from the colonial power unleashed a horrendous communal holocaust, caused by the partition of the country into two parts on the eve of Independence in 1947.

### **3.4.1 Communalism in India**

The ideology of communalism in India was, and still is, that the different communities in India cannot co-exist to their mutual benefit, that the minorities will become victims of Hindu subjugation and that the neither historically created situation nor culture will allow cooperation.

Communalism took deep roots in Indian polity during the later phase of the national movement and this was encouraged by the colonial rulers. This process was a continuation of the weakness and inadequacy of secularism as conceived and practised during the anticolonial struggle.

Implicit in all the theories has been the assumption that the growth of Hindu-Muslim tension was not the natural and inevitable outcome of changes taking place in the Indian society. Partition was the culmination of the conflict which could and should have been avoided. Further this line of reasoning states that nation building

essentially, means obliteration of communal moulds and creation of a common identity which decries the existence of differentiated groups based on religion, caste or language. Communal forces are therefore viewed as division and a sign of political underdevelopment. *Communalism arises when one or two characteristics of ethnic identity e.g. religious beliefs are taken and emotionally surcharged. Communal movements are often brief and exist in a dyad, comprising an opposing force or ideology which has to be countered. Unlike fundamentalism, communalism can only exist dyadically.*

Hindu-Muslims riots reflected the religious fears and socio-economic aspirations of the Hindus and Muslims. Sometimes these riots occur for very minor reasons such as quarrels between Muslim and Hindu shopkeepers (Ghosh, 1981: 93-94). The important point is that these are not isolated acts but often deliberate mechanizations of various socio-religious organisations. Recurrent collisions were engineered on festivals by stopping them and various religious occasions by interfering in their process. This was done to inflame communal passions and bitterness. According to Ghosh (1981) the acme of communal rioting was reached in August 1946 in Calcutta when the Muslim League observed a 'Direct Action Day'. Bombay did the same in the following month. Thus Independence was erected on the corpses of many thousands of people. With Mahatma Gandhi's assassination the riots abated awhile, and this situation was basically sustained by Nehru. Again the passing away of Nehru in 1964 and the deteriorating socioeconomic circumstances led to the resurrection of communal violence.

### **3.4.2 Communal Riots**

During the late 60s and 1970s there were large scale communal riots in Ahmedabad, Baroda, Ranohi, Jamshedpur etc. Communal configurations in towns such as Ranchi cast a shadow over predictions and beliefs in the future of workers unity. Again in Bhiwandi where there was carnage in 1969, it was a shock for the leftists. The grassroots movement among the handloom workers fostered by committed communists was unable to stem the on rush of communal violence.

In 1969 itself a communal riot occurred in Ahmedabad. The inflammatory factors were insults to Holy Scriptures and sacred cows. It was suspected however that these riots were politically motivated.

These riots indicated clearly that there were various political factors behind the surface level factors of religion based tensions and confrontations. In the mid-seventies the communal riots abated a bit both due to the Emergency and the Janata Regime. The first exercised iron control and discipline the second aroused the hopes of both Hindus and Muslims. The first ix years of the eighties once more created an upward incline in the riot-graph. Pitel (1990) feels that Communal violence is backed by religious arguments and backing. He feels that those resorting to it are neither true Hindus nor true Muslims. Religion does not preach enmity. However the causes which are often given for communal violence are hurt religious sentiments. The causes are flimsy such as playing music before a mosque, insulting the Prophet or the

Holy Quran. This is sufficient to provoke violence among some of the Muslims. So also disturbing by Muslims of a religious yatra is enough to rouse Hindu ire. (Patel, 1990: 41-42).

### **3.4.3 Reasons for Communal Riots**

In the context of our section of communal riots we turn now to some further reasons for the same. As Ghosh (1981) points out the several arguments have been forwarded for the existence and continuation of communal riots. These are:

- i) Riots are part of progress in an under developed country. The class struggle is converted into a communal struggle weakening the solidarity of the proletariat class. Further the middle and backward classes have acquired greater political and economic strength and influence and these often assert themselves. Economic conflicts lead to riots as in Bihar Sharif and Bhiwandi.
- ii) Electoral politics determine the objectives and direction of communal violence e.g. Delhi 1986.

These explanations cannot be binding-they cannot be held to the necessary and sufficient. Often economic reasons emerge after (not before) the rioting has begun. Again in a developing society economic factors where competitive or one lagging behind the other can lead to a riot. The same applies to reductionist political causes. The idea of behind-the-scene political manipulation may not be valid.

### **3.4.4 Economic and Social Dimensions**

Regarding gaining economic benefits after the eruption of communal riots we find that in Godhra, Hindu Sindhi refugees from Pakistan gave competition to Hindu merchants. But riots have frequently emerged between Sindhis and Muslims. Again in Punjab while Ramgarhia and other Sikhs have gone beyond the Hindu Khatri in commerce there have been no riots because of this.

Lastly in the Punjab tragedy, the terrorist acts while antagonising the Hindus, are not considered to be the acts of the Sikh community as a whole. Hindu-Muslim riots in recent times have been confined to medium sized towns and cities. These include areas like Meerut, Aligarh, Moradabad, Pune etc.

The people in a riot tend to be crowd oriented, and the conflict tends to be very violent. These people tend to be merciless. A "cause" is often espoused: for - example in 1969 the handbills have a call for dharmayudha by the Hindu militants. Thus in recent decades from the 60s onward the trend has been for collective orientation and in-group loyalties. Moreover, the functional independence of caste and community are disintegrating and replaced by competitive patterns. This makes for greater tension in interactions between people let alone communities.

### **3.4.5 Inter-Community Dynamics**

Medium sized towns/cities are being divided on communal lines. We find that the workers don't have class consciousness. The educated middle class professional acts

as a bridge between Hindus and Muslims. During pre-partition there were Muslim doctors; lawyers etc. who also attracted Hindu clients-Similarly Hindu professionals were patronized by Muslim clients-Thus,

- i) common bonds developed
- ii) there were common networks and patronization.

Again the existence of Muslim professionals, administrators etc. created a positive image for the Muslims. Post partition mass migrations saw these advantages vanishing. Many trade and economic activities are run by Hindus and there were no problems so long as the Muslims were not competitive. There was interdependence between Hindu employers and Muslim artisans. However, in recent time economic Competitiveness come from Muslims and has turned into a religious threat to Hindus. Again channelling of Arab money into mosque renovation and lavish festival celebrations has resulted in an admixture of economics and religion which creates intercommunity tensions and eruptions of violence.

What the factors are which can remedy the communal divide in India. Some suggestions have been given (Verma, 1990, 63-65). The suggestions include that religion should be separated from politics and communal bodies should be banned. Further the freedom of press should not extend to spreading communal ideas.

Communalism needs to be denounced by political leaders and all leading citizens. Measures should be taken for raising the economic lot of the minority community. About all overall ethos should be created which leads to peace between communities and an end to communal violence. Community leaders should explain the situation to the community and defuse tensions. Let us now turn to secularism.

Thus communalism has an ugly aspect and goes against national integration. Religion should not become the whipping boy of political ambitions.

**Check Your progress Exercise 3.1**

**Note:**

- I. Write your answer in the space given below.
- II. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

**Q.1** Give three reasons of communal riots.

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

**Q.2.** Hindu .....riots have in recent times been confined to.....towns.

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## 3.5 LINGUIISM

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India is most famous for its social mosaic of diverse religious, linguistic and ethnic heterogeneities. This means this diversity also becomes a base of multiple social, cultural and political identities and has its roots in gender politics, sexual politics, ethnic politics, and religious interpretations, and sometimes a combination of one another. The question we need to ask is how have we successfully as a nation- state been able to survive with such diversity? More so, this question holds much relevance because when in the past attempts to homogenise diverse cultural practices in the name of national integration or cultural assimilation have failed it has often led to revolutionary revolts and agitations. Language has also been an attention-grabbing source of identity for many in Indian society. Besides being a channel of communication, language has two major roles in society. It influences distribution of power and wealth, particularly in an under-literate society. It also acts as emotional and cultural cement for the social compact (Ahire, 2002). In the Indian context, language related issues have always remained under examined and has often been relegated to the margins especially in the process of nation building. For this reason, let us first briefly discuss the relationship between language and identity-politics in India.

Identity Politics is said to “signify a wide range of political activity and theorising founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups” (Cressida, 2014). It essentially means a demand for an identity based on differences rather than equality. As a political activity it is focused to signify a body of political underpinnings to attempt recovery of social groups striving for a sense of ‘selfhood’ which for long has been subjected to politics of exclusion and disintegration. Identity politics thus attempts to attain empowerment, representation and recognition of social groups by asserting the very same markers that distinguished and differentiated them from the others and utilised those markers as an assertion of selfhood and identity based on difference rather than equality. Language is one such essential source of attaining a distinguished sense of selfhood. Language can hardly be treated as a homogeneous entity. It means much more than simple a means of communication. It fundamentally contributes to the formation of social and political identities of similar people belonging to different communities. However we must also understand that it may not always necessarily unite people. Language successfully divides people as much as it unities. As a part of the macro dimension of the society, language plays a central role in defining peoples’ national, sub-national and group identity.

### 3.5.1 Linguistic Conflict and Language Movements in India

In the United States of America, one of the popular approaches to understand multiculturalism and diversity is through the salad bowl view which means- 1) Creating of a national identity by recognizing diversities as central pressure points that promote and celebrate national integration. 2) Reliance on democracy to resolve conflicts, which means upholding the interest of the masses in a true democratic manner by giving them their right to express, and accept their demands (Klob, 2009).

In the Indian context, the question of language conflict was handled with a similar approaches and strategies. Realistically, these strategies have failed miserably to tackle the problem of language policy in India. In principle, despite such policies for inclusion of linguistic minorities some groups remain discontented, either because their distinctiveness is not recognized, or if recognized, not given equal treatment. If multi-cultureless is a notable fact in India and linguistic diversity is boasted as a part of cultural heritage then why is it that in the past as well as today the state continues to deal with language as an obstacle in its successful functioning? What is the basis of emergence of language movements in India?

The Linguistic movement in India dates back to the 19th century of the pre-colonial era in Orissa (present day Odisha). It is one of the best examples to understand formation of states on linguistic basis in pre-independent India. Language provided the base for the growing nationalist movement in Orissa during this period. The common people particularly the intelligentsia resisted Oriya being replaced or dominated by other languages like Bengali, Telugu and Hindi. The Orissa intelligentsia strove for a regional, linguistic and cultural identity for themselves. Finally in the year 1936 the Orissa state came into being under the Orissa Province as the first Indian state formed on linguistic basis due to the efforts of Madhusudan Das. At this point, let us try and understand the social and political reasons that lead to linguistics conflicts and movements (Acharya, \_\_\_\_\_).

King (2008) raises a very prominent question-what are the components that lead to language conflicts and what makes language a dominating political concern? He offers us the following indexes that may lead to language based conflicts across the world –

- 1) The existence of more than one language or dialect competing for political, economic, and cultural “space” often leads to conflict. Thus, the more the number of languages the greater is the likelihood of language becoming a worrisome political issue for that nation-state. In fact, this is particularly true for countries which are grappling with the question of what the national language should be.
- 2) There must be social differences that correlate with language. These social differences include class in general and caste in particular and perhaps most generally “ethnicity”. In contemporary usage it’s the most conveniently used elastic cover term for anything that sets one segment of the society apart from the ‘other’.
- 3) There is a strong co-relation between language and economic prosperity. While well-to-do countries like Belgium can have major language problems normally the generalization holds that the better-off the country, the greater the likelihood that language will not be a major political problem.
- 4) History and awareness of history are peculiarly relevant to the augmentation of linguistic conflict. If a culture is inclined to “remember” slights from the past those slights easily grow into language grievances.

After Independence, the framers of the Indian Constitution had a back breaking task

to perform- the task of ensuring that linguistic diversity is withheld in the Constitutional Assembly. For this purpose, they had to put together a Constitution that not only preserved political unity, but also acknowledged and promoted cultural and linguistic diversity. Agnihotri (2015) argues that the Constitutional Assembly of independent India which held its first meeting in 1946 and last in 1950 poorly failed in understanding the complex issue of language right from its genesis, particularly when they tenaciously debated about the language question only in terms of language of the judiciary, national/official language, languages to be recognised in the eighth schedule linguistic, etc. They hardly appreciated multilingualism, as something which essentially constituted the essence of India and was characterised by fluidity of this linguistic and ethnic diversity, cannot be represented by forming linguistic states suggesting each area may have only one single medium of instruction. Much of the debates on linguistics issues in the assembly centered on the linguistic division of India which the Nehruvian government never fully rejected.

According to a baseline survey of Indian languages in 2013 by the People's Linguistic Survey of India, the country has lost nearly 250 languages in the last 50 years. The whipping of languages calls for serious attention of the state to ensure that the linguistic diversity of the country is retrieved. Language development as a part of the nationalization mission in India should be more inclusive and representative of all the sections of the society speaking languages and dialects exclusive to their little cultural traditions. Besides, there is a growing concern to understand in the age of globalisation how local cultures are being easily absorbed. This is true particularly in the case of English as being a compulsive ally of the new middle class in India. English continues to be a symbol of cultural capitalism in the global world and thereby brings a 'new linguistic order, combining both globalization and localization of languages globally (Sarangi 2009, 36). What is imperative is to resist this global hegemony and look for avenues to promote, spread and maintain linguistic heterogeneity especially in a country like India where language is more than a mere vehicle of communication for the masses. It is more about access over resources, interests and more importantly the right to choose from many. Some of the upcoming major challenges for the language debate in India include the relationship between language and caste, language and gender and newer forms of linguistic nationalism and conflict especially those unfolding in the North eastern part of India.

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### **3.6 REGIONALISM**

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The term regionalism has various connotations. At the international level, regionalism refers to transnational cooperation to achieve a common goal or to resolve a shared problem or it refers to a group of countries, such as Western Europe, the Western Balkans, or Southeast Asia, that are linked by geography, history or economic features. Used in this sense, regionalism refers to attempts to reinforce the links between these countries. Today, the foremost example of such an attempt is the European Union (EU) (Bevir, 2009). In the Indian context, the term regionalism refers to the 'ism' which evokes pride in the inhabitants for the region they belong to.



When the we-feeling and loyalty of the people of a region exceeds the feeling for the nation that is regionalism. Thus, it is a regional loyalty in place of national loyalty. At the core of regionalism is a profound sense of identity, which is real, and as dear, to a people than their feeling of identity with a state or a nation or a religious group, or a linguistic group. These are cultural realities, and one cannot just wish them away (Maheshwari, 1973, p.442). Regionalism is a process in which sub-state actors become increasingly powerful and independent of the state: power devolves from the central state to regional governments within it (Gochhayat, 2013). According to Bhattacharya (2005), regionalism has possibly remained the most compelling force in Indian politics after independence. Regionalism largely has two connotations. In the negative sense, it implies excessive attachment to one's region over the state. In the positive sense it is a political attribute associated with people's love for their region, culture, language, etc. In India, the term regionalism largely has a negative connotation. Such feelings develop among the people due to the feeling (real or created) of continuous neglect by the government which has led to uneven development among the regions. The existence of a region, does not per se give rise to regionalism. It is the nexus between people and their socio- economic and political environment which gives rise to regionalism. The degree of regionalism of particular areas can increase or decrease depending on regional dynamics, in which global as well as national/local forces of course have an impact (Majumdar, 1997). Regionalism in Indian politics is treated by nationalist leaders as a very serious threat to the progress, peace and unity of the country. It has generally been regarded as something that is anti-national, anti-system, anti-federal and against the basic interests of a well-integrated and well- developed polity (Reddy, 1979, p.3).

### **3.6.1 Regionalism in India: A Brief Background**

Contemporary India is witnessing various movements centered on identity issues. These movements are fought on the lines of region, religion, language, caste and community. These struggles have found expressions in the changed mode of electoral representation that has brought the local/regional into focus with the hitherto politically dormant groups and regions finding voices. A more genuinely representative democracy has led to the sharpening of the line of distinction between or among the identity groups and regions (Kumar, 2009:14).

The federal system in India confers more power to the Centre than to the States. As a result there are various tensions in various regions of India which are different from others parts of India in terms of culture, language, and many other factors. Regionalism in India is rooted in India's manifold diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, communities, religions and so on, and encouraged by the regional concentration of those identity markers, and fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation. However, the centre- state relations stand as the root cause of regionalism in India (Gochhayat, 2013).

Regionalism in India has remained a powerful force in the post-independence politics in India. It has its roots in the history and the geography of India. India is a land of diverse culture, language, tribes, communities and religions. These are concentrated

in certain parts of India i.e., the identity markers are concentrated in certain regions. The post-independence, linguistic reorganization of states could not contain all the sub-regions. In spite of carving states on the basis of language, there remained certain sub-regions which had different cultures or languages. This led to the demand of separate statehoods. These have often taken the form of countrywide agitations and campaigns. Secessionist movements rose in Punjab, Kashmir, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland and movements for autonomy rose in Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Uttaranchal, and Gorkhaland.

Thus keeping in mind India's rich linguistic and regional diversity, some of the marginalised groups have been ignored by the state in the past. They have remained outside the purview of the state's development paradigm. To overcome this inequality and to prevent political instability, past governments have granted special status and provisions to particular ethnic groups such as religious and cultural rights for minorities, protective discrimination for marginal groups and grant of autonomous administrative units. This has, however, led to the increased use of identity as the basis for making demands and obtaining entitlements from the state. As a result, the heightened competition between identity groups has further politicized the issue of identity. For instance, the movements for the creation of separate Gorkhaland in West Bengal – demanding a bifurcation of West Bengal into a Nepali-speaking Gorkhaland and Bengali-speaking West Bengal – and of a separate Bodoland in Assam are purely based on the issue of identity. The Gorkhas and the Bodos demanded autonomous states of their own based on their identities, which were treated as inferior to the dominant Bengali and Assamese identities in West Bengal and Assam, respectively. To take another instance of identity-based collective mobilizations in India, the movement for an independent Kashmir gained momentum in the 1990s in response to electoral malpractices, neglect of people's opinion, removal of special status granted to Jammu & Kashmir, low levels of socio-economic development, high levels of unemployment, and political interference by the central government and so on. The Naga insurgency came to an end after the central government accepted the demand of the Nagas for a separate state to be carved out of three districts of Assam, where the majority was the Naga-speaking community. So, in 1962, the new state of Nagaland was formed. Similarly, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura were created in the 1970s to meet the people's aspirations for self-rule, based on their distinct identity (Vinod 2014).

Thus, regionalism in India is manifested in 4 ways: demand of the people of certain areas for secession from the Indian Union, demand of the people of certain areas for separate statehood, demand of the people of certain union territories for full-fledged statehood, and the demand of certain people for favourable settlement in inter-state disputes (Perumal, cited in Narang, 1985:304).

### **3.6.2 Causes of the Rise of Regionalism in India**

Let us briefly see the causes of the rise of regionalism in India.

Firstly, regionalism develops if certain regions feel neglected (real or imagined) by

the ruling parties. Hechter (1975) refers to this phenomenon as internal colonialism. In this, the concentration of power in the hands of few in a state may also lead to a demand for a separate state. The demand for a separate state of Vidarbha in Maharashtra is an example of this. People in Vidarbha felt neglected as though there are many dams in Maharashtra, yet the region of Vidarbha faces drought almost every year. Most farmers commit suicides there every year. People from other parts of Maharashtra, who are politically more powerful, are successful in grabbing resources for their regions in Maharashtra. Many a times, regionalism is seen in the form of inter-state disputes largely over sharing of mineral resources and river-water. For instance, as is seen in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

India has a very large geographical area. As a result, many a times, the national government imposes certain types of culture, language and identity on the people. Certain regions do feel this as an imposition. Regionalism develops in these regions so that they themselves can develop their own culture and language. Uttaranchal and Jharkhand are cases in point.

For instance, the people from South India think that to have Hindi as the national language is an imposition on them from the people of the North. There is discontent among the South Indians regarding this matter. The various development programs carried out in certain regions of India, make regional disparities more acute. This leads to a sense of deprivation among the people of certain regions. This, coupled with increasing politicization in the community, is sure to impart sharper focus to regionalism which would emerge more prominently as a factor of significance in Indian polity (Gochhayat, 2013).

Some regions in India especially in northeast have been demanding autonomy from India, on the basis that the Indian government has been giving them step-motherly treatment. The problems of the North East region are particularly acute as they never felt as 'belonging' to India. This was because of various reasons like: they were poorly connected to the other parts of India, their history, their culture was not adequately represented, they are ethnically, linguistically and culturally very distinct from the other states, they are territorially organized in such a manner that ethnic and cultural specificities were ignored during the process of delineation of state boundaries in the 1950s and many other such reasons. As a result the North East region of India is simmering with various ethnic conflicts, and secessionist movements too have erupted in Nagaland.

Regionalism is an ideology that is manufactured by the elite belonging to the groups. To legitimize their power and domination by using an instrument of regional ideology, they emphasize the differences between the different groups. A distinction between 'we' and 'they', between regional 'outsiders' and 'sons of the soil' is brought to the surface by them, transforming the latent emotions lying behind such phenomena into a regional or sub-regional ideology to serve certain political ends. It is a conflict between regional elites and national elites (Mudholkar, 1984). Many a times, the regional elites desire to have more power in their region. Political parties like Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Telugu Desam Party (TDM), Akali Dal

and others have encouraged regionalism to gain more and more power in their region.

### 3.6.3 Effects of Regional Disparities in India

Existence and continuance of regional inequalities and imbalances create various types of tensions in a country which is multi-ethnic and multi-religious with various ethnic-religious groups concentrated in some states, these tensions became a serious challenge to example where because of regional disparities there emerged a sense of alienation leading to separatist tendencies. Similarly, the movements for creation of Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Telengana states are also to a great extent because of neglect of these regions. Though these movements by no definition are separatist or anti-national, they do pose challenges to social harmony.

On the other hand, the development efforts and benefits concentrated in certain states and regions have also given birth to vested interests. For instance, in areas where Green revolution was introduced and has been successful, the new rich farmer class has become economically and politically important. They are now interested in perpetuating the concessions and facilities which were given to them. Thus it is now becoming difficult to divert the resources to under-developed regions or states. Similarly, in the states with industrial growth, workers are opposing the arrival of labour from other states to protect high wages and better service conditions they have got because of rapid industrialisation.

Both in developed regions and backward regions, there is growing a strong feeling of regionalism. This is also stimulating parochial, communal and sectional organisations. In India today, a large number of inter-state, inter-community and to a great extent centre-state tensions are because of the persistence of regional imbalances. The need for a balanced development, therefore, is important in the interest of both national integration and people's welfare.

#### Check Your progress Exercise 3.2

**Note:**

- I. Write your answer in the space given below.
- II. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

**Q.3.** Write a note on how regional and linguistic identities can be brought into the national integration.

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### 3.7 LET US SUM UP

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We have learnt in this unit the main impediments for national integration in the country and identified the major ones as Communalism, linguism and Regionalism. The legacy of communalism, linguism and regionalism was inherited by the independent Indian state. This historical legacy had only got accentuated in recent years, because of the problems generated by economic development and the resultant social changes.

The social changes and tensions which are quite natural in the course of development of a society should not be allowed to aggravate and tear apart the very fabric of unity and integrity of the country. Foundations of secularism and integration are to be strengthened by the policies of the government. Resorting to communal politics should be discouraged, and instead, programmes involving cross-section of people in various development projects and schemes should be planned.

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### 3.8 GLOSSARY

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<b>Communalism:</b>	This is a situation wherein religion and religious communities view each other with hostility and antagonism. They may often come out in open conflict such as in communal riots.
<b>Linguism:</b>	Discrimination based on a person's language
<b>National Integration:</b>	In the process of national integration, people of a nation develop the sense of we feeling, and are unified.
<b>Regionalism:</b>	A process in which sub-state actors become increasingly powerful and independent of the state: power devolves from the central state to regional governments within it.

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### 3.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: THE ANSWER KEYS

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<b>Answer to Q.1:</b>	a) Economic reasons b) Political reasons c) Sociological reasons.
<b>Answer to Q.2:</b>	Muslim, Medium, Sized.
<b>Answer to Q.3:</b>	i) the role of secularism ii) removal of social, economic imbalances iii) the development of various languages and then a mutual understanding between persons speaking different languages iv) role of government in ensuring that separatist and divisive trends or cultural differences are not used for petty political ends, and

v) role of education.

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## **UNIT 4 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF INDIAN SOCIETY: STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL, MARXIAN AND SUBALTERN**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Objectives
- 4.3 Development of Sociology in India
- 4.4 Structural-functionalist Approach
- 4.5 Marxian Approach
- 4.6 Subaltern Approach
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Glossary
- 4.9 References

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### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

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This Unit presents the learners to the sociological approaches to understand Indian society. Sociology emerged in the West and therefore, the sociological approaches of the West expanded to other parts of the globe. However, many Indian scholars began to realise that there are various social aspects that are peculiar to Indian society which need to be studied through Indian perspectives as against the Western approaches that had been universally applied to. This led to the emergence of Indian sociology. This Unit is about approaches to the study of Indian Society such as structural-functionalist, Marxian and Subaltern approaches.

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### **4.2 LERNING OBJECTIVES**

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After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Explore the development of Sociology in India;
- Discuss M.N. Srinivas's structural-functionalist approach of Indian Sociology;
- Explain A.R. Desai's Marxist approach on Indian Sociology;
- State the subaltern perspective of Ranjit Guha.

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### **4.3 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA**

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Sociology as a distinct discipline was emerged in India during 1920s. It was started with the establishment of separate departments of sociology in Bombay and Lucknow Universities. Teaching of sociology started first in Bombay University in 1914. At the same time Sociology was also introduced by A.R.Wadia at Mysore University in Karnataka. The percentage of universities having sociology department had a slow

trend during 1920s to 50s. But after 1960, 23.8 per cent had sociology departments (Nagla, 2008). By 1965, the trend increased to 29.6 per cent. Some Western sociologists like Herbert Risley, B.S.Cohn, Sir Henry Maine, David Pocock, McKim Marriott contributed a lot for the development of Sociology in India. Besides them, some Indian scholars such as Radhakamal Mukherji, G.S. Ghurye, B.N. Seal, D.P.Mukherji, B.K. Sarkar, D.N. Majumdar, K.M. Kapadia, M.N. Srinivas, Iravati Karve, S.C. Dube, M.S.A. Rao, and A. R. Desai contributed for the foundation of Sociology in Indian universities. Prof. Nagla (2008, pp.25-26) discussed the major sociological discourses to develop sociology in India. They are:

- i) The development of sociology in India may be viewed in terms of the historicity of social conditions that have shaped the sociological perspectives from time to time. The theoretical and cognitive systems of sociology are socially conditioned (Singh, 1986). It is to be hoped that thinking in this direction will result in the concentration of contested themes and in the recovery of key Indian socio-cultural realities and textual traditions, traditions that have remained or continue to remain as an excluded part of hegemonic sociology or its margin (Nadarajah, 1996). Perhaps, this is the right time to resume the 'Indian Sociology' by recognizing context and culture of the society and to overcome from the identification of sociology as solely a western.
- ii) The production of sociological knowledge can be qualitatively changed with a sociological curriculum helping the multifaceted contestation of western sociological knowledge. There is a need to consider not only the content of social science education in our universities but also the methodology used in the production of such knowledge (Nadarajah, 1996).
- iii) Institutionalization of research requires a proper fit between the growing needs of theory and the increasing demands of society. Generally, public funds are made available in terms of the criteria set out for priorities. The question of priorities has to be answered in the context of the relevance of research.
- iv) While paying attention to research priorities, the needs of individual scholars pursuing a promising but out-of-the-way enquiry should not be neglected. Research efforts involving interdisciplinary approach or bold methodological innovation should, on principle, be encouraged.

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#### **4.4 STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH (M.N. SRINIVAS, 1916-1999)**

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Sociological functionalism is closely related to the structural functional approach in sociology, which tries to explain the various social forms found in tribal societies in terms of their contributions to social cohesion. To put it simply, the structural-functional approach is a perspective in sociology that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. It asserts that our lives are guided by social structures, which are relatively stable patterns of social behavior. Social structures give shape to our lives - in families, the community, and



through religious organizations. Certain rituals, such as a handshake or complex religious ceremonies, give structure to our everyday lives. Each social structure has social functions, or consequences, for the operation of society as a whole. Education, for example, has several important functions in a society, such as socialization, learning, and social placement.

The proponents of this perspective focus on the understanding of the 'ordering' and 'patterning' of the social world. Their theoretical and empirical analyses have generally been based on the assumption that societies can be seen as persistent, cohesive, stable, generally inherited wholes, differentiated by their cultural and social structural arrangements. This perspective of society stresses on the elements of harmony and consistency and not those of conflict and contradiction. Structural-functionalism has borrowed elements from biological sciences, where structure pertains to the structure of an organism that is made up of relationships and functions of its various cells. Srinivas once wrote that "In the recent British social anthropology, the two important concepts of- structure and function- imply that every society is a whole and that its various parts are interrelated. In other words, the various groups and categories which are a part of society are related to each other". This approach relies more on the field work tradition for understanding social reality so that it can be understood as a contextual perspective of the social phenomena. M.N. Srinivas is one of the pioneers of this approach.

#### **4.4.1 Dr. M.N. Srinivas (1916-1999)**

M.N. Srinivas was a disciple of Dr. G. S. Ghurye and also a student of A.R. Radcliffe Brown and Evans Pritchard at Cambridge. Srinivas' sociology resounds the values of his first mentor, G.S. Ghurye. His sociological visions asserted civilizational continuity, focused on the caste system and assessed this traditional structure through the site of village. The introduction of Functionalist social anthropology did allow Srinivas the space to initiate changes in the methods used by Ghurye. While Ghurye's definition of the caste system was a couched, Indological point of view that is made from textual interpretation, Srinivas relied on the field view to extend his definition of caste (Patel, 2010). Srinivas explained two basic concepts to understand Indian society:

- a) Book view- Knowledge about the elements which make up Indian society like religion, varna, caste, family, village, etc. come from sacred texts and books. This view is also known as the Indological approach.
- b) Field view- Srinivas believed that knowledge about different regions of the Indian society can be attained through field work. This he called field view. Srinivas used the field view and the empirical method of ethnography to study the caste system in village settings.

The paper will be divided into parts based on the two themes of Srinivas' contributions to the discipline and it will try to locate the underlying perspective of structural functionalism in two themes. The following are the categorized themes:

- Caste system, the study of village, and religion
- Social change

#### 4.4.2 Caste System and the Village

Srinivas viewed caste as a segmentary system. Every caste for him is divided into sub-castes which are:

- The unit of endogamy
- Whose members follow a common occupation
- The units of social and ritual life
- Whose members share a common culture;
- Whose members are governed by the same authoritative body, like the panchayat.

Besides these factors of the sub-caste, there are certain other attributes which are also important:

- *Hierarchy*: Hierarchy, for Srinivas, is the core or essence of the caste system. It refers to the arrangements of hereditary groups in a rank order. According to him, it is the status of the top-most or Brahmins and the bottom-most or untouchables, which is the clearest in terms of rank. The middle regions of the hierarchy are the most flexible.
- *Occupational difference*: According to Srinivas, there is a close relationship between a caste and its occupation. For him, caste is nothing more than the 'systemization of occupational differentiation'. Castes therefore can be known by their occupations, e.g. Lohar (ironsmiths), Sunar (goldsmiths), etc. These occupations are placed in a hierarchy of high and low.
- *Restriction*: on commensality, dress, speech and customs.
- *Pollution*: The distance between castes is maintained by the principles of pollution. Any contact with the polluted, whether an object or being, renders a caste impure and demands that the caste or its member undergo purification rituals.
- *Caste panchayats and assemblies*: Every caste is subject to the control of an order maintaining body or a panchayat. The panchayat may be formed by the elderly of eachcaste. Further every caste is also answerable to the authority of its caste assembly, which may extend beyond village boundaries.

These attributes of a caste determine the nature of inter-caste relations.

In his *Varna and Caste*, Srinivas initiates a discussion on the nature of the caste system in India. He argues for the substitution of Varna by jati (sub-castes) in order to assess the caste system. Srinivas got the idea of studying Indian villages from his mentor Radcliffe-Brown. His study of Rampur, a Mysore village is contained in his 'The Remembered Village (1976). As a sociologist, Srinivas's main aim was to better understand Indian society which for him was best exemplified by the caste system which prevailed and was best noticed in Indian villages. Thus when Srinivas

discusses the caste system, he does by evaluating it within the limits of the village. In this, Srinivas' approach is found to be similar to the colonial practice of identifying space as a site for examining traditions, the village (Patel, 2011).

Srinivas considered the village as the microcosm of Indian society and civilization. His search for the identity of Indian traditions leads him to infer that Indian traditions are found in caste, village and religion. His conceptualization of traditions is in no sense secular but rather at par with the Hindutva notion of Indian traditions. At this point he suggested that the caste system was resilient, adapting itself to new changes, those being inaugurated by the economy and the polity. Particularly when examining mobility in modern India, he highlighted the continuous adaptive character of the caste system and its ability to adjust to modern processes of change and presented two paths of mobility- **Sanskritization** for those within the Hindu fold and **Westernization** for those outside it (Srinivas, 2002).

Srinivas divides the population of the village by caste and by occupation and then examines the relationship of these castes with agriculture, and connects these to their occupation. The idea here is to show the organic interaction of each caste with each other, in a functional way. This system is shown to have flexibility because of the integration of the parts to the whole. He further states that caste is best understood by focusing not only on the middle ranks but also in the context of the internal ranking of each jati with the other. The ambiguity of rank and status allows for mobility of groups. It is in this context that he coins the concept of **Dominant Caste**. He first proposed it in his early papers on the village of Rampura. Since then, this concept has been widely applied to a great deal of work on social and political organization in India. He defined dominant caste in terms of six attributes placed in conjunction:

- Sizeable amount of arable land;
- Strength of numbers;
- High place in the local hierarchy;
- Western education;
- Jobs in the administration;
- Urban sources of income.

Of the above mentioned attributes, the following three are most important in determining the dominant caste: (i) numerical strength, (ii) economic power through ownership of land, (iii) political power. Accordingly, a dominant caste is any caste which has all the three mentioned attributes, in a village. The interesting aspect of this concept is that the ritual ranking of a caste no longer remains the major basis of its position in the social hierarchy. Even if a caste was considered low in the social hierarchy due to its ritual ranking, it could still become the dominant ruling caste or group in a village if it were numerically large, owned land and had political power over village matters. There is no doubt that a caste relatively higher in the ritual rank would find it easier to become the dominant caste but this is not always the case. For example, in the village Rampura in Mysore, as studied by Srinivas, the peasants were the dominant caste in the village even though they were ritually ranked below the Brahmins of the village. They were numerically more, owned lands and had political

influence on the affairs of the village.

#### 4.4.3 Social Change

Social change is a recurrent theme of interest among Indian sociologists and social anthropologists. Srinivas constructs a macro-level understanding of social change using a large number of micro level findings on the processes of 'brahmanization', 'sanskritization', 'westernization', and 'secularization'.

- **Brahmanization:** Srinivas' work *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1952) led him to formulate the concept of Brahmanization to represent the process of imitation of life-ways and ritual practices of Brahmins by low-caste Hindus. The concept was used as an explanatory device to interpret the changes he observed in the ritual practices and life-ways of the lower castes that he observed through intensive field study.
- **Sanskritization:** The notion of Brahmanization had implicit possibilities of further abstraction into a higher level concept of 'sanskritization', which Srinivas introduced because his own field data and that of many others indicated the limitations of using an only Brahmanical model as a frame of reference. Thus, sanskritization came to replace brahmanization. In *'Social Change in Modern India (1966)'*, he defined sanskritization as the process by which a 'low' caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and style of living of a high, and in particular, a twice-born caste. The sanskritization of groups usually has the effect of improving its position in the local caste hierarchy. The dominant caste of a village can be a local source of sanskritization or even a barrier to the process.
- **Westernization:** The term westernization was used by Srinivas to denote the changes that occurred due to contact with British socio-economic and cultural innovations.
- **Secularization:** This term has been used to explain the process of institutional innovations and ideological formulation after independence to deal with the question of religious groups and minorities.

In Srinivas, we do not have a two-stage model of structural transformation, that of transition from pre-modern to modern. Rather, Srinivas discusses only one structure, that of the caste system which seems to encompass both stages. Secondly, in his work we do not have a theory of modernity. Instead, we have a theory of social change based on mobility of groups in society, perceived in terms of the two processes of sanskritization and westernization. This conceptual scheme, though referring mainly to cultural imitation, has a built-in structural notion- that of hierarchy and inequality of power and privilege, since the imitation is always by the castes social and economic status. This suggests that the caste system of modern India differs from that of the earlier versions of this system, which respected different occupations and ways of living. These changes have made caste adaptive to new influences, modified and moderate its characteristics, but did not lead it to transform or completely vanish. In Srinivas' work, the structure of Indian society emerges as a kind of adjustment mechanism that expands and fits into macro-changes as these envelop castes in search

of new status positions.

His major contributions to Indian Society are:

1. Marriage and Family in Mysore (1942);
2. Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India (1952);
3. India's Villages (Ed.) (1955);
4. Caste in Modern India and Other Essays (1964);
5. Social Change in Modern India
6. The Remembered Village (1976).

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#### **4.5 THE MARXIAN APPROACH (A.R. DESAI, 1915-1994)**

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Akshay Ramanlal Desai (1915-1994) is considered as one of the pioneers in introducing the modern Marxist approach to empirical investigations in social sciences. In his early years he was influenced by his father Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai, a well-known litterateur who inspired the youth in Gujarat in the thirties to undertake developmental work for social transformation. A.R. Desai took part in student movements in Baroda, Surat and Bombay. He graduated from the University of Bombay, and also obtained a law degree and PhD in Sociology under G.S. Ghurye from the same university in 1946.

Desai's studies did not deter him from taking part in political activities. Even in Bombay, he got involved in the labour front and organized a trade union of Bombay Electricity supply and transport workers, dock workers and glass workers. It is during this period that he met with Neera desai, an eminent sociologist, herself having done pioneering work in the field of feminist studies. They married in 1947.

A.R Desai has advocated the use of dialectical-historical model in his sociological studies. Desai closely studied the works of Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels, and the writings of Leon Trotsky. Desai has been one of the only sociologists who has consistently applied Marxist methods in his treatment of Indian social structure and its processes. He rejected any interpretations of traditions with reference to religion, rituals, and festivities. His sociology is essentially a secular phenomenon where he relies on economics to understand and analyze social structures. He has studied topics like Nationalism and its social configuration (1966), examined community development programmes for economic development in villages, treatment of urban slums and their demographic problems (1972), and finally peasant movements (1979). All of these studies are based on a Marxist method of historical-dialectical materialism. For A.R. Desai, contradictions emerging in the Indian process of social transformation arise mainly from the growing nexus among the capitalist bourgeoisie, rural petty-bourgeoisie and the state apparatus. This nexus thwarts the ambitions and aspirations of the rural and industrial working class population. For Desai, this contradiction is not resolved but rather, takes on new cumulative forms and methods and re-emerges as social movements and protests. Social unrest for him is thus rooted in the capitalist path of development followed by India, following the legacy of the national movement.

Desai began his academic career as a lecturer in Sociology at Siddharth College in Bombay in 1946, and officially joined the Department of Sociology of Bombay University as a lecturer in 1951. He became Professor and Head of the Department in 1969, and retired from the same in 1976. Desai was also appointed as a senior fellow and a National Fellow at the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) from 1973-75 and 1981-85 respectively. He was also the President of the Indian Sociological Society (1980-81) and the Gujarat Sociological Society (1988-90).

Desai's major writings can be clubbed into four broad categories:

- Indian Nationalism
- Path of development
- Peasant movements and
- State and Society: Democratic rights

#### **4.5.1 Indian Nationalism**

Question of how and why nationalism developed in India led him towards his doctoral work, completed in the early forties. Social background of Indian Nationalism (1948) and its companion volume Recent Trends in Indian Nationalism (1960) realize the need for a comprehensive study of the structural transformation of Indian society during the British period. His concerns with understanding feudal production relations, their role and transformation, emergence of capitalist relationships and nationalist forces are presented in these volumes, out of which the first has been translated into various languages and run into more than ten editions (Shah, 1990).

According to Desai's understanding, Nationalism is a historical category. Its development has to be understood in the context of the social and cultural history of a country. Indian nationalism is an outcome of a number of objective and subjective forces which have evolved since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has emerged amongst the social and religious diversities of the country, territorial vastness and powerful traditions and institutions. The central thesis of both the above mentioned volumes is that British rule destroyed the pre-capitalist forms of production relations and introduced modern capitalist property relations, which paved the way for Indian Nationalism (Shah, 1990).

Desai puts forth that Indian nationalism emerged under the conditions of political subjugation of the Indian people under the British rule. The British Empire introduced modern capitalism for their own economic advancement, radically changing the existing economic structures of the Indian society, introducing a centralized state, modern education and modern means of communications and other institutions. This in turn led to the creation of new social classes who achieved their own political and social power. These social forces, because of their very nature came into conflict with British imperialism and thus became the basis of and provided the motive for the rise and development of Indian Nationalism (Desai, 1948).

Desai traces the growth of the national movement in five phases, each phase based on

particular social classes which supported and sustained it. Thus, in the first phase, 'Indian nationalism had a very narrow social basis'. It was pioneered by the intelligentsia who were the product of the modern system of education. Desai considers Raja Rammohan Roy and his followers as the 'pioneers of Indian nationalism'. This phase continued till 1885 when the Indian National Congress was founded. It heralded a new phase which extended till 1905. The national movement now represented 'the interests of the development of the new bourgeois society in India'. The development in the modern education had created an educated middle class and the development of the Indian and international trade had given rise to a merchant class. The modern industries had created a class of industrialists. In its new phase, according to Desai (1948), Indian national movement 'voiced the demands of the educated classes and the trading bourgeoisie such as the Indianization of Services, the association of the Indians with the administrative machinery of the state, the stoppage of economic drain, and others formulated in the resolutions of the Indian National Congress'. The third phase of the national movement covered the period from 1905 to 1918. During this phase 'the Indian national movement became militant and challenging and acquired a wider social basis by the inclusion of sections of the lower-middle class'. In the fourth phase, which began from 1918 and continued till the end of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1934, the social base of the national movement was enormously enlarged. The movement 'which was hitherto restricted mainly to upper and middle classes, further extended to sections of the Indian masses.' However, according to Desai, the leadership of the Congress remained in the hands of those who were under the strong influence of the Indian capitalist class: 'It was from 1918 that the Indian industrial bourgeoisie began to exert a powerful influence in determining the programme, policies, strategies, tactics and forms of struggle of the Indian national movement led by the Congress, of which Gandhi was the leader.' Two other significant developments during this period were the rise of the socialist and communist groups since the late 1920s, which tried to introduce pro-people agenda in the national movement, and the consolidation of communalist forces which sought to divide the society. The fifth phase (1934-39) was characterized by growing disenchantment with the Gandhi-an ideology within the Congress and further rise of the Socialists who represented the petty bourgeois elements. Outside the Congress various movements were taking place. The peasants, the workers, the depressed classes and various linguistic nationalities started agitations for their demands. Moreover, there was further growth of communalism. However, according to Desai, all these stirrings were not of much consequence and the mainstream was still solidly occupied by the Gandhi-an Congress which represented the interests of the dominant classes.

#### **4.5.2 Path of Development**

Desai's *State and Society in India* (1975) and *India's Path of Development: A Marxist Approach* (1984) is a conceptualization of India's capitalist development paradigm. He focuses his attention on the state and its role in social transformation of the society. His Marxist perspective leads him to observe that the state apparatus in the Third World take various economic and social measures to protect the interests of its propertied classes. Thus, the legal and administrative frameworks are evolved to

promote the path of capitalist development. He deems that the public sector, mixed economy, and social welfare programmes are nothing but strategies adopted by the ruling classes to cater to the interest of the capitalist classes and prevent the rising struggles of the exploited classes in the state. His conclusion, based on his gathered data is that the bourgeoisie class of the Indian state is incapacitated because it has not been able to foster enough of a capitalist growth rate to overcome the backwardness of the country (Desai, 1984). The central thrust of his volumes on rural sociology as well as agrarian struggles has been to show how the Indian state has planned and transformed the agrarian structure from pre-capitalist to capitalist relationships (Shah, 1990). Agrarian relationships have been transformed substantially, as a result of state intervention through various land legislations and 'development' programmes. Starting from the interventions of the British government, their introduction of the new economic reforms disrupted the old economic system by decaying the old land relations and artisans with the emergence of new land relations and modern industries. The old village commune was eroded by the appearance of new peasant proprietors or zamindars, as private owners of the land. The class of artisans disappeared with the introduction of modern industry, to be replaced by new classes like the capitalist, industrial workers, agricultural laborers, tenants, merchants, etc. Further, the land revenue system, commercialization of agriculture, fragmentation of land etc. also led to the transformation of the Indian village.

Therefore the British reforms impacted not only the economic outlook of the country but also altered the social physiology of the society. It brought in new classes and therefore created new and different types of social relations. At a higher level, this structural change brought about the polarization of classes in agrarian areas, poverty in rural areas and exploitation by those who owned land. It gave rise to a new class structure among agrarian society with categories like Zamindars, absentee landlords (who might own land somewhere but be settled elsewhere, like in cities), tenants, peasant proprietors, moneylenders, etc. Similarly, in urban society, there were capitalist industrial working class, petty traders, and professional classes like doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. The introduction of railways, postal services, centralized uniform laws, English education, modern industry, and so on, brought about qualitative changes and unintentionally led to the unification of the Indian society, in spite of being introduced as mechanisms of exploitation. For Desai, the role of the railways and the press was especially significant in this direction. It brought together the scattered population into the mainstream and the implication was social movements, collective representations, national sentiments and consciousness at a wider level. This social-infrastructure set-up gave rise to the nationalist freedom movement and the awakening of Indian nationalism.

### **4.5.3 Peasant Movements**

A.R. Desai's *Peasant Struggles in India* (1979) and *Agrarian Struggles in India after Independence* (1986) immediately became and continue to be a major source of reference on agrarian social movements in India and the sociology of agrarian society



in India. In Desai's view, agrarian relationships have been altered substantially as a result of state intervention through various land legislations and development programmes. According to him, "*the overall thrust of the agrarian policy of the ruler has been to eliminate parasitic, absentee intermediaries in the form of various categories of zamindars and absentee landlords and to create in their place classes of agricultural capitalists, rich farmers and viable middle peasant proprietors directly linked to the state*" (Desai, 1986). As a result of this, there have been created sharp differentiations among the peasants, and the condition of small and marginal farmers and agricultural laborers has deteriorated. Desai was extremely critical of the way land reforms that were being carried out, created a class of private entrepreneurs in the form of agricultural capitalists who had surplus resources to invest in agricultural improvements for profiteering. Likewise, he also critically analyzed the policy and practice of promoting cooperatives and The Green Revolution which created a further divide between the rich and poor and led to the enhancement of economic and socio-political power of the rich. He strongly argued for the adoption of alternative development models that involved social transformation through basic structural changes in agrarian relations and institutions like the control of cooperatives and industrial production. From the seventies onwards, Desai undertook projects to understand new movements and trends taking place across India like the growth of contradictions in rural India (growth of the Naxalite movement) and in urban areas as well (railway strikes, women's movements and protests against slum demolition). For him, the working class, the traditional revolutionary force, was in the midst of changes both in the context of its structure and its changing political consciousness (Patel, 2011). His study of the working class movement was especially noteworthy because he did not restrict himself to the industrial working class alone but encompassed the entire oppressed sections in society who were selling their labour power in the market. He also made visible the definition of worker and working class in his study and was the first to notice the 'informal sector' and the struggles of the unorganized sector workers, later to be theorized by economists and anthropologists (Patel, 2011).

Desai puts forth that post-independence agrarian struggles are waged by the newly emerged propertied classes as well as the agrarian poor, especially the agrarian proletariat, where the former fight for greater share of the fruits of development while the latter struggle for survival or subsistence requirements for a better life. Desai maintained that progress could be achieved only by radically transforming the exploitative capitalist system in India.

#### **4.5.4 State and Society: Democratic Rights**

In *State and Society in India* (1975), Desai puts forth a critique of the theories of modernization accepted by a large number of academicians. In all his works, he puts the state at the centre and throws light on its role as facilitator of social transformation and the role it could play in abridging the rights of the oppressed. He analyzed how the state, in its pursuit of modernization on a capitalist path, was playing a repressive role and the growing resistance to the same. Desai classified democratic rights into three categories (Shah, 1990):

- One, the rights of the bourgeoisie property relations; which include the right to hold property, right to employ wage labour etc.
- Second, the rights which are also termed civil liberties and are the product of the bourgeoisie revolution. They include freedom of speech, habeas corpus petition, freedom of press, public secular education, etc. Desai maintains that though these rights are manipulated by the ruling classes to serve their interests, the oppressed classes also use them to protect their class interests and accelerate their struggles.
- Third, like the bourgeoisie rights, there are the rights of the proletariat which include the right to picket strike and organize. These are important for developing the struggle of the proletariat against the ruling classes.

The second and third categories of rights are increasingly repudiated by the state to intensify the generation of surplus value and capital accumulation. Desai holds that the increased policing of the second and third rights are a result of the deteriorating socio-economic value of the capitalist framework which makes it open to the criticism of the sub-standard and exploited life and labour of people.

His major contributions to Indian Sociology are:

1. Social Background of Indian Nationalism (1948)
2. Recent Trends in Indian Nationalism (1961)
3. Rural India in Transition (1961)
4. Rural Sociology in India (1969)
5. Slums and Urbanisation (1970)
6. Urban Family and Family Planning in India
7. Peasant Struggles in India (1978)

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#### **4.6 THE SUBALTERN APPROACH (RANAJIT GUHA, 1923)**

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In critical theory and post-colonialism, subaltern is the social group who are socially, politically and geographically outside the hegemonic power structure of the colony or the colonial homeland. The subaltern identity is conceptually derived from the cultural-hegemony work of the Italian Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci. There has been a characteristic tendency for sociology, Social anthropology, history and ethnography to study the depths of micro-reality but not rising above it into the realm of conceptualizing or theorizing it. The realm of subaltern was not conceptualized properly till Ranajit Guha and his colleagues launched the subaltern approach in a big way. Ranajit Guha is credited with the conception of ‘subaltern historiography’, an important approach to the study of tribal/peasant movements in India and elsewhere. This approach seeks to look into the politics of the ‘people’ as against the politics of the elite played in the Indian history. Thus, it constructs the ‘people’ and the ‘elite’ as binaries (Dhanagare, 1988). In the following paper, we look at Ranajit Guha’s method of subaltern historiography, the historiography of the peasant and tribal insurgencies, the influence of Marxism and other theoretical frameworks on his methodology, and the impact his subaltern perspective has had on the trajectory of the discipline of Indian Sociology.

Proponents of the subaltern approach believe that the elitist historiography, whether that of the neo-colonists or neo-nationalists has failed to incorporate or acknowledge the contributions made by the people, independent of the elite. Rather, they have over-stated the role played by them in the interpretation building of Indian Nationalism. It maintains that parallel to the domain of elite politics, there has existed throughout the colonial period and later, another domain of politics which has subaltern groups and classes like the laboring population, and intermediate strata in towns and the country as the principal actors (Dhanagare, 1988). The subaltern historiography looks at people as an autonomous domain, i.e. it neither rises from nor depends on the national elite. Thus, it can be derived that unlike in elite politics, mobilization in subaltern politics is achieved horizontally and not vertically. Guha admits that due to differences in ideology, diversity of its social components, etc. the subaltern domain is not a homogenous uniformity. There are diversions and divisions amongst these groups and these tend to undermine the horizontal alliances.

The focus of subaltern historiography is to construct the 'other history', i.e. the history of people's politics and their attempts to forge their own histories. While analyzing tribal and peasant insurgencies in colonial India, Guha points out the objective of historiography as being that of interpreting the past in order to change the present which requires a radical transformation of consciousness. He therefore urges historians and social scientists to view tribal or peasant insurgencies not merely as objects of history but rather as makers of their own history with their own transformative consciousness (Dhanagare, 1988). According to Guha, conventional discourses on peasant/tribal insurgencies have served under the colonial historiography where they are looked upon as disturbances in the law and order system. In this sense, these studies were 'counterinsurgency' attempts to prevent such uprisings in the future. These studies for Guha, neglected to look at the consciousness ridden spontaneity and structure in these movements, leaving them in the sphere of 'pre-political' phenomena. Ranajit Guha was of the view that the term pre-political was value-laden and misleading and rather, peasant/tribal insurgencies during colonial times have to be viewed in the backdrop of the attempts of the colonial state to establish landlordism, and parasitic landlords. The peasantry and tribal groups rebelled against the oppression to which they were subjected in this existing structure of power relationships. In this sense, their rebellions were not pre-political but were as political as the politics under the Congress or left wing peasant struggles in the twentieth century. Guha however does acknowledge that the basic elements like ideology, leadership, and aims of these early movements were qualitatively different from the more advanced movements of the twentieth century (Dhanagare, 1988). Ranajit Guha's objective in studying insurgent movements has been to understand how patterns of subordination and insubordination have run parallel throughout the colonial period of India.

In order to better understand the subaltern historiography of the country, it is important to look into the colonial historiography offered by Guha:

- The historiography of Indian Nationalism has been dominated by elitism-colonialist and bourgeoisie-nationalist elitism. According to Guha, both originated as the ideological product of the British colonialism.
- Both these varieties of elitism share the thought that the making of the Indian nation and the development of the nationalist consciousness was a credit to their elite efforts.
- The colonialist historiography defines the Indian Nationalism as a response to stimuli, i.e. it is an aggregation of the ideas, institutions and resources brought about by the colonialism. This view looks at Indian nationalism as a sort of learning process through which the native elite associated themselves with the colonial elite in order to share in the rewards such as a share in wealth, power and prestige.
- The nationalist elite on the other hand painted the Indian nationalism as a phenomenal expression where the goodness of the native elite combined with their antagonistic relation with the colonial regime covers the reality of their cooperativeness and association with them. According to Guha, there is glorification on their part, of their role as champions of the people and the oppressed, leading them to their freedom rather than depicting their acceptance of a modicum of power and privilege granted to them by the colonial powers.
- For Guha, this elitist historiography is not without its uses since it helps to understand the ideological nature of the historiography itself.
- However, this kind of historical writing cannot be accepted since it presents an incomplete and hence faulty picture of Indian nationalism. It is not inclusive of the contribution made by the people themselves, independent of the national elites. It does not explain how mass movements like the Quit India movement of 1942 and the anti-Rowlatt upsurge of 1919 took place, amassing thousands of people. It does not situate such movements as real political processes by the people, but rather as an ideological appropriation by the influential elite.
- According to Guha, the inadequacy of the elitist historiography results from the fact that the parameters of Indian politics is assumed to be those of the institutions introduced and set-up by the British government and the corresponding set of laws, attitudes, etc. and thus it equates politics with the activities of those directly involved in operating these institutions.
- The elitist historiography leaves out the autonomous domain of politics of the people consisting of subaltern classes and groups. This domain is termed autonomous by Guha because it did not originate from the elite politics nor did it depend on it for its existence. Its roots can be traced back to pre-colonial times since which it has transformed to adjust itself to the conditions prevailing under the colonial rule. One of the important characteristics of this domain was the horizontal mobilization of people relying on traditional organization of kinship and territory, or, class associations depending upon the level of consciousness of the people. These subaltern mobilizations tended to be

relatively more violent as against the legalistic and constitutionalist mobilizations of the elite. They were also more spontaneous in nature, which for Guha was most comprehensively visible in peasant uprisings.

- In spite of the diversity of the subaltern domain, one of its features was a notion of resistance to elite domination. This followed from the common position of subjugation faced by all the social constituents of the domain.
- Another distinctive feature of the subalterns was the exploitation which these classes were subjected to in varying degrees- its relation to the productive labor of peasants and workers to the manual and intellectual labor of the non-industrial urban poor and the lower sections of the petty bourgeoisie. The collective experience of exploitation put these classes as separate from the elite.
- Guha asserts that though there have been modifications in the course of these subaltern mobilizations, these modifications have still maintained the demarcations between the elite and the subaltern. That is, they have co-existed. This for Guha is a result of the inability of the Indian bourgeoisie to speak for the entire nation. They failed to integrate vast areas in the lives and consciousness of the people into their hegemony. He terms this as a structural dichotomy.
- The existence of such a structural dichotomy does not mean that there has been no contact between the two domains, instead, Guha puts forth that from time to time, and there efforts have been made by the bourgeoisie to integrate them.
- Guha also maintains that the initiatives originated from the subaltern domain could not be realized to their full potential of achieving national liberation because the working class had not yet achieved the consciousness of being-a-class-for-itself and also could not firmly ally itself to the peasantry. The sectional nature of the subaltern domain did not get the revolutionary leadership that required rising above the localism and reaching a generalized nation-wide campaign. Guha contends that this failure due to the inadequacy of the bourgeoisie and the working class to achieve national liberation is the core subject matter to be studied in the historiography of colonial India.

#### **4.6.1 The Historiography of Peasant Insurgency**

As mentioned before, the historiography of peasant insurgency has been a record of the efforts of the colonial administration to deal with mass uprisings in the country. These insurgencies have always been looked at as uprisings which have disrupted law and order, a pathology which needs to be corrected or brought under control. The peasant historiography of the country does not locate such struggles as efforts to achieve social justice. In his study of 'Elementary aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India (1983)', Guha seeks to acknowledge this failure and instead understand the aims and motives of the insurgents themselves. He adopts the vantage point of the peasants and tries to evaluate the awareness the peasants have of their own world and their situation and their will to change it. The object of this study was

to depict the struggle not as encounters but in its general form, the elements of which come from the long history of the peasant's subaltern position and his efforts to end it. Ranajit Guha has abstracted certain elements and general ideas in the insurgent's consciousness which point to the structural similarity between various different movements from the period 1783- 1900 studied by anthropologists, historians and ethnographers. These forms are – 'negation', 'ambiguity', 'modality', 'solidarity', 'transmission', and 'territoriality' (Dhanagare, 1988).

- **Negation:** According to Guha, the first elementary form of peasant or insurgent tribal consciousness is negation (implying the formation of a negative identity). This suggests that the rebel's idea of his own identity is not formed of his own properties or characteristics but by the ideas and negations of those superior. For example, the insurgent's identity of himself is formulated on the basis of the colonial administrations identity of them as disrupters of law and order. This negativity for Guha does not form a class consciousness in itself but rather is the first step in forming a class consciousness. The formation of negativity, combined with the ability to differentiate between friends and foes, leads to selective violence against perceived enemies. In the Indian context, peasants and tribal insurgents negatively asserted their identity and consciousness by rejecting the homological relations in feudal society, which is rejecting and turning up-side down all the traditional forms of respect, dressing styles, writing, language, etc. Negation thus involved the turning down of all symbols which were the preserve of the feudal monarchies, from which the subaltern was always excluded.
- **Ambiguity:** As described by Guha, this element draws on the basic difference between 'crime' and 'insurgency'. According to Guha, crime tends to be individualistic, secretive or conspiratorial action, whereas insurgency has a mass character and is manifested publicly. These two actions derive from two codes of violence. The outward manifestation of this violence, however, may seem similar. Thus there is an ambiguity in the violence which is a part of the insurgency.
- **Modality:** Modality is the third elementary aspect of these insurgencies. It is the extension of the public nature of the peasant and tribal insurgencies. Guha draws on the example of the Pabna riots of 1873, the Santhal upsurge of 1855 and the Deccan riots of 1875 to bring out the concept of modality. In these examples, there is a stark search by the rebels to search for an alternative source of authority, which was validated and stated through a general body of insurgents by rituals like presenting tokens (nazraanas) to the elected representative. These ritualization were symbolic of not only their validation of a more representative authority figure but also marked their rebellion as a public service and a political act. Guha also states the secular nature of this modality. For him, mobilization in peasant and tribal insurgency rarely ever has taken on religious overtones but this has been falsified later on. It is possible for agrarian distress to take on religious overtones coupled with issues of ethnic identity as seen in the Birsa Munda movement. Guha also

does not give due importance to the economic modality of such uprisings. Guha has asserted that in the course of their rebellion, actions of destruction of property, looting and burning, does not have considerations of economic gain. According to D.N. Dhanagare (1988), economic rationality can be completely absent from such actions of the insurgents because certain examples like looting of cash by the Santhals in Chotanagpur might be an effort to aim for power motives but also be triggered by economic gains and opportunities. Guha's subaltern project might have glorified the actions of insurgents by denying them the practicality of economic rationality, which the colonial historiography does suggest. Another modality mentioned by Guha is that of plunder and destruction which is not to be confused with killing and bloodshed. The latter for Guha, is more a modality for the counter-insurgency projects. Guha attributes this lack of killing and bloodshed among tribal and peasant insurgencies not to their compassion and heroism but to their lack in ability to break away completely from their old semi-feudal culture.

- **Solidarity:** Solidarity is the next form through which the peasant consciousness presents itself, according to Guha. It signifies the stage of separation from of the insurgent's own identity from that of its enemies. Guha has made two important points here: firstly, the quality of 'class consciousness' changes from one phase of the insurgency to the other. Secondly, class solidarity and other types of solidarity like those rising from ethnic, religious, caste or filial ties do not have to be mutually exclusive. Rather, they can overlap with one another. He characterizes this as the duplex character of insurgency. This solidarity manifests itself as hostility towards and chastisement of traitors. Insurgency inspires active collaboration against traitors among the insurgents which for Guha is an articulation of the insurgent's own class consciousness.
- **Transmission:** Through the element of transmission, Guha looks at the important way in which an insurgency spreads itself. It does so through iconic and symbolic signs, even rumors. Transmissions of this sort- both verbal and visual- are usually mediated through religion. Politics of rebellion or tribal insurgencies really are expressed through sacred symbols because, for Guha, religion helps in arousing mass support.
- **Territoriality:** Lastly, territoriality is that aspect through which insurgents get bound together via a mutual feeling of belonging to a common lineage as well as to a shared habitat. It is an overlapping of the notion of common ethnic space and physical space. Guha has also stressed that this element of consciousness has sometimes transcended the limits of filial ties, or space or even both. Guha uses this to critique anthropologists who failed to see beyond the anti-colonial content of the tribal revolts and peasant movements in India and thereby helped in perpetuating the myth that such insurgencies have been nothing more than demonstrations of ethnic antagonism against the outsiders or mere 'disturbance' in the law and order of the colonial administration.

The main contributions of Ranajit Guha are as follows:

1. Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India (1983)
2. A Subaltern Studies Reader, 1986-1995(1997)
3. Dominance without hegemony (1997)
4. Subaltern Studies: Une anthologie (2018)

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#### 4.7 LET US SUM UP

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- M.N. Srinivas is considered as one of the first generation sociologists in the post-independence period of the country. His sociological perspective was therefore influenced by nation-building thoughts in order to promote the ideology of a unified nation.
- He derives his structural-functional perspective of sociology from Radcliffe-Brown's notion of structure, who was his teacher at Oxford.
- Structural-functionalism is a perspective which views different parts of society which contribute to the functioning of the whole. It is ken from the biological sciences where different parts or organs of an organism function inter-dependently in order to maintain the whole of the organism.
- Srinivas therefore studied continuities in the society rather than conflict resulting from social change.
- He relied on field-work and gathering empirical data rather than on the Indological (textual or book-view) approach to construct his way of doing sociology, unlike his guide, G.S. Ghurye.
- His work focused on the caste system and village studies, the latter in which case formed the microcosm of Indian society. This comes from the ethnography following Malinowskian tradition of studying primitive societies which are more compact and small-scale in nature, thereby making it possible to study society in totality.
- In his study of the caste system, he substituted the concept of caste with jati, which for him was how the population viewed caste. Jatis are sub-castes and differ from the four-fold Varna system of studying the caste system.
- He brought within the discipline, terms like westernization and sankritization to explain the processes of social change in the country.
- He coined the term 'dominant caste' to point out the flexibility or mobility within the caste system, whereby a caste of lower socio-ritual ranking could still wield political and economic control in an area.
- His structural-functional perspective allowed for the exclusion of religious minorities and groups who did not fall under the fold of Hinduism.
- For Srinivas, Indian traditions are those that are manifested within the caste system and the village. These traditions are then mostly Hinduized traditions and in no sense secular.
- His construction of sanskritization and dominant caste put his perspective closer to the Hindutva ideology of cultural nationalism.
- He maintained that social anthropology was not different from sociology in the Indian context.



- His sociology does not study India in context of the wider world, capitalism and market economy and its effects on the Indian society.
- He was prominent in institutionalizing his brand of sociology in the country through his interactions with the government through institutions like the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR).
- He believed that the role of a sociologist was that of mediator who had the duty to present his findings in a language which made it easily understandable to the public in order to prepare them for the transitions taking place in the society.
- Srinivas believed he was living in the times of a silent revolution which he later termed as a 'living revolution' brought on by the adult franchise.
- A.R. Desai was a Marxist and a Sociologist who did not see the difference between the two (Patel, 2011).
- Desai analyzed contemporary social change in order to assess how it benefitted the few, and thus his work was a critique of mainstream nationalism and its political projects. Its focus was on the nature of the ruling class, their control of the state institutions and their constant efforts to use developmental projects to aid their own reproduction.
- Desai's area of sociological investigation was extremely wide which began with a discussion of nation and class in the colonial period and moved to assess the state in the post independent era. This analysis led him to assess planning and development in India together with the rise of new classes in agriculture and within urban-industrial structure and consecutively the contradictions and struggles that occurred because of this.
- The growth of social movements and the increasing communalization of the state led him to analyze the nature of state-society crisis in contemporary India which in turn led him to discuss the contemporary rights movements by new social actors.
- His perspective was a revolutionary departure from the earlier understandings of mainstream nationalism and earlier conceptualizations of politics in India.
- Desai argued that colonial capitalism destroyed the institutions that could have generated capitalism in India indigenously, and at the same time also mentions that colonialism had the positive effect of making possible the growth of new social classes which helped to create the conditions for the emergence of the nationalist movement.
- Ranajit Guha's subaltern approach to the study of Indian society draws heavily from the theoretical stream of Marxism. Marxism provides a logical and neat theoretical framework for an alternative society. It has both cognitive and emotive appeal because of its revolutionary notion. Even though Guha's subaltern perspective borrows from Marxism its revolutionary stance, it differs from it in the sense that it offers a view from an Indian historiography and cultural window.
- According to Dhanagare, Guha's subaltern approach combines four streams of contemporary Marxism:

- The first of these is Gramscian Marxism which emphasizes the role of spontaneity of the action of the subaltern population especially under a hegemonic state.
- It also follows from the Trotskyite-Marxism in terms of how it treats consciousness. It believes that objective theoretical positions are supreme and have to be viewed objectively rather than shifting them according to interest. It means that the subaltern approach to history views the role of the party, its actions and strategies as important but not prior to necessary consciousness.
- The third stream is followed from the works of Eric Hobsbawn, George Rude and E.P. Thompson, who showed the indispensability of material forces and actors of history.
- Guha and his associates have tried to model the trajectory of the subaltern approach in the same lines as the Paris Uprising in 1968, the Latin American movements- particularly the experience of Che Guevara in Bolivia and other similar movements.

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#### 4.8 GLOSSARY

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<b>Structural-functionalist perspective:</b>	the perspective sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of the individuals in that society.
<b>Marxian perspective:</b>	a method of socioeconomic analysis that views class relations and social conflict using a materialist interpretation of historical development and takes a dialectical view of social transformation.
<b>Subaltern perspective:</b>	stands for understanding the society through conditions of subordination of people belonging to the different caste, class, age, gender, race etc.

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