

**PGSO S2 04**  
**Exam. Code: RUS**

# **Rural And Urban Sociology**

**SEMESTER II**  
**SOCIOLOGY**  
**BLOCK : 1**



**KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY**

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## COURSE INTRODUCTION

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The course '**Rural and Urban Sociology**' introduces two specialised fields of Sociology, namely, Rural Sociology and Urban Sociology. It intends to familiarize the learners with some of the basic concepts in Rural and Urban Sociology. Its objective is to make the learners understand about the life and human interaction in Rural and Urban Areas.

The course comprises of 15 units and are divided into two blocks. The first block consists of the first 7 units and the second block consists of the remaining 8 units. **Unit 1- Unit 8** discusses the different facets of Rural Sociology while **Unit 9-15** discusses about Urban sociology. **Unit 1** describes the origin of Rural sociology and also explains its nature, scope, characteristics and importance. **Unit 2** discusses about Rural and Urban Society in India. **Unit 3** discusses the Rural Social Structure in India **Unit 4** deliberates on the nature of Rural Power Structure **Unit 5** explains the nature of Rural Economy **Unit 6** discusses about the continuity and change in Caste, Class and Power in Rural India, **Unit 7** deliberates on issues and concerns of Peasant Movements in India . **Unit 8** discusses the plans and programmes for Rural development. **Unit 9** gives an introduction to urban sociology **Unit 10** tries to discuss the important theories of Urban Sociology **Unit 11** explains about the growth of cities **Unit 12** critically discusses the different issues and problems of Urban society **Unit 13** explains the objective and importance of Town Planning **Unit 14** discusses about Urban Governance and Collective action where role of various stakeholders are deliberated upon **Unit 15** discusses urbanization in the context of Northeast India.

After going through the entire course, the learner shall get a detailed overview of rural and urban society in India, the different social institutions in these societies and their changing trends, concepts and theoretical frameworks to understand these societies and also about the contemporary issues in these societies.

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## BLOCK INTRODUCTION

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This is the first block of the paper titled 'Rural and Urban Sociology' of M.A Sociology 2nd Semester programme of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University. This block intends to provide the learners a basic understanding regarding one of the specialised fields of Sociology i.e Rural Sociology. After reading this block the learners will be able to understand the different aspects of Rural society in India. Unit 1 will explain the learners about the origin and development of Rural Sociology in India. The learners will also get to know about nature, scope, characteristics and also the importance of Rural Sociology. Unit 2 shall discuss the different concepts like Little Community, Peasant Society, Folk-Urban Continuum etc. Unit 3 shall discuss the rural social structure in which the major social institutions like caste and family shall be discussed in the context of Rural society. Unit 4 shall deal with the various aspects of Rural power and Rural leadership. Unit 5 shall discuss the nature of Rural economy; its occupational structure, land ownership pattern, as well as the systems of zamindari and feudalism in Indian society. Unit 6 not only explains the changes that have occurred in caste, class and power in Rural India but also the aspects of caste, class and power that have continued. Unit 7 discusses the different peasant movements in colonial and post-colonial India and the role of state in Rural Transformation.

While going through the units of the block, you will find that a unit is further divided into certain sections and sub-sections, wherever necessary, for your better understanding. Again, the units carry certain *activities* after a particular section where needed. These "ACTIVITIES" will provide you the opportunity to practically apply your own thoughts based on the knowledge gained from reading the text in a particular section. Besides, in order to give you additional information on certain relevant topics, you will find a category called "LET US KNOW" after the sections in each unit. Another category that has been included at the end of each section of a particular unit is "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS". The purpose of this category is to help you to assess for yourself as to how thoroughly you have understood a particular section. You may then match your answers with "ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" given at the end of each unit. The section "FURTHER READING" in each unit contains the names of a few books which you might want to consult if you are interested in learning more elaborately about the concepts discussed in a particular unit. Furthermore, the category called "POSSIBLE QUESTIONS" is intended to give you a hint of the type of questions you are likely to get in the examination.



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# UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO RURAL SOCIOLOGY

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## UNIT STRUCTURE

- 1.1 Learning Objectives
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Origin and Development of Rural Sociology
- 1.4 Nature and Scope of Rural Sociology
- 1.5 Characteristics and Importance of Rural Sociology
- 1.6 Let Us Sum up
- 1.7 Further Reading
- 1.8 Answers to Check your Progress
- 1.9 Model Questions

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## 1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- I know about the origin and development of Rural Sociology in the West and in India,
- I understand the nature of Rural Sociology,
- I describe the scope of Rural Sociology,
- I explain the characteristics of Rural Sociology
- I discuss the importance of Rural Sociology.

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## 1.2 INTRODUCTION

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Rural Sociology is a sub-discipline of Sociology studying the ways of life in villages. From its inception Rural Sociology, as House says, "...consisted largely of ethical evaluation and practical proposals for the improvement of rural life" (Desai 1969). According to A.R. Desai (1969), 'Rural Sociology is the science of laws of development of rural society'. The discipline embedded in social sciences is aimed at scientific and systematic study of rural population, rural social organization, rural institutions, rural structure, social changes that take place in rural society and rural social processes for the development of rural life. Rural Sociology is a systematic study of rural society and interaction of people in villages.

In this unit, we shall learn about the origin and development of Rural Sociology. Further we shall be able to understand its nature and scope and also about its characteristics and importance. This unit shall therefore give us a detailed overview of what Rural Sociology is. Let us first begin with the birth of Rural sociology, which is elaborated in the next section.

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### **1.3 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY**

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Rural Sociology is a relatively new branch of Sociology, which originated in the United States of America around the 1820s. In the nineteenth century, American societies underwent immense transformation due to industrialization and urbanization, which had an impact on the rural society and had led to its decay. This had led scholars to systematically study the rural society, the problems of rural people, migration of people from rural to urban areas and suggest strategies for rural development. But a deep scientific study about Rural Sociology began in the middle of nineteenth century. However, the targets were not achieved until the beginning of twentieth century.

By the twentieth century, Rural Sociology had developed as a sub-discipline of Sociology in the USA. Interests in Rural Sociology were promoted with the efforts of 26th President of USA, Theodore Roosevelt who had appointed the Country Life Commission in 1907. The American rural society was undergoing economic crisis and poverty where tillers of soil had no land rights and the landowning class enjoyed all privileges. The deplorable condition of the tillers led them to migrate to cities in large numbers to find work in industries. President Roosevelt felt that if no steps are taken to improve the condition of rural people it would result in deterioration of ways of life in the rural as well as urban areas. Thus, he had appointed the Country Life Commission which was influenced by the works of Sir Horace Plunkett, who had observed deterioration of rural life in Ireland. In order to achieve the aim of the study i.e. to understand rural social problems and make recommendation for the development of rural



social and economic transformations, 5 lakhs questionnaire were sent to peasants out of which 1 lakh replied, and based on it an attempt was made to understand the problems of rural society, the reasons of rural-urban migration and why tillers of the soil had no land rights.

The Country Life Commission gave impetus to research studies on rural community in the form of research documents and monographs like 'An American Town' by James Michel Williams, 'Quaker Hill' by Warren H. Wilson and 'A Hoosier Village' by Newell L. Sims. All these research studies consisted of historical and statistical data collected through using the techniques of interview and submitted to Columbia University between 1902 and 1912. The charter set for Rural Sociology by the Country Life Commission was carried forward in the form of doctoral dissertations submitted at Columbia University under the guidance of Professor Franklin Henry Giddings. The findings of these studies were discussed in the annual meetings of American Sociological Society held in 1912. John Morris Gillette who was associated with American Sociological Society published a textbook in rural sociology in 1913 which is considered as the first textbook in the field. These findings of American Sociological Society had facilitated in laying the foundation of Department of Rural Sociology in American Sociological Institute in 1917 to carry forward the study of rural societies in America. Two years later in 1919 Department of Rural Sociology was established under the Bureau of Agricultural Economics under the guidance of Charles J. Galpin who was appointed as its head. In 1930s, America was grappling with economic depression, which impacted the world economy. Attention was geared towards rural society which contributed significantly to America's economy. Several books on Rural Sociology were published during this period. One of the important books is "A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology", which came out in three volumes authored by Pitirim A. Sorokin, Carle C. Zimmerman and Charles J. Galpin, published in 1930 by University of Minnesota Press. The volumes contributed in the growth of the discipline of Rural Sociology as a science of society and provided an in-depth survey of knowledge into the field of Rural Sociology

as discussed in Europe, Asia and America. The growth of the discipline at this stage was also boosted by the official establishment of Rural Sociological Society in America in 1937 which came out with publication of a quarterly magazine, Rural Sociology. The magazine brought out the concerns of scholars, policy makers and professionals related to rural people, their problems and their places. A.R. Desai (1969) said the new discipline, which originated in United States of America is still in a state of immaturity yet it is developing wider interests among social thinkers.

It was only after World War II that Rural Sociology extended beyond the boundaries of United States of America and entered into Europe (especially in France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and United Kingdom) and Asia. In India, the discipline developed through the studies and reports brought out by administrators, economists, sociologists and anthropologists since the colonial period. Mahatma Gandhi said India lived in its villages recounted again by Census of 2011 which estimates 833 million people continue to live in rural India. He believed that if villages prosper the country will prosper. For a village to prosper one needs to understand the village life, how people in villages live, the reasons of their poverty and backwardness, their problems and after getting a holistic understanding of rural people, their problems and their places one can chalk out the plan for its development. This project for development of villages took the shape of village studies carried out by administrators, economists, sociologists and anthropologists in India, which is briefly discussed below.

**I Studies and Report brought out by administrators:** The first influential account on Indian Villages was brought out by British administrator Sir Thomas Munro in the 'Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company' (1812). In his report Munro depicted the self-sufficient character of Indian Villages where people lived from time immemorial having nearly everything they wanted and that the boundaries of the villages seldom altered. He viewed villages as little republics almost independent of connections with wider society and

village community as primarily a political society. This view was shared by various colonial administrators like Sir Henry Maine who with his publication of 'Ancient Law' (1861) and 'Ancient Society' (1877) set the tone for studies and reports that were brought out by British administrators to understand the people they were ruling and for efficient administration. But Maine's work had a European bias in his analysis of Indian rural society seeing it as an infancy of society from where society evolved to a matured state as the society was in Europe. However, Maine was the first to provide a systematic study of rural society in India and he advanced the theory that kinship is the foundation of Indian rural society. British administrators like Holt Mackenzie, Sir Charles Metcalfe, Elphinstone endorsed and promoted the idea that Indian villages are little republics which were economically self-sufficient and can survive on its own. Holt Mackenzie believed in it through the existence of village communities in North India and his belief was supported by the Elphinstone who noted presence of village communities in Deccan. Sir Charles Metcalfe in the 'Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons' (1932) also shared similar belief and saw Indian village communities as autonomous sociological isolates which was possible due to the pattern of land tenure, customary laws and the division of labour that existed. The studies done by British administrators found Indian villages as economically and politically self-sufficient and regarded them as "Little Republics". The studies and reports brought out by administrators formed the basis for further research carried out by economists, social anthropologists and sociologists.

- I **Studies conducted by economists:** After World War I, there was marked deterioration in India's rural economy due to recurrent famines which reflected in the poverty, squalor and disorganisation of village societies. The British government's interest in understanding the economic status of rural society was to assess the revenue potential of the villagers to further their trade with the wider economy and to maintain

their hold over the economy of the country. Prior to World War I, the Asian countries were conscious about Asiatic Mode of Production popularised by the writings of Karl Marx who is credited with bringing Indian Village Community into the circle of world history. Marx believed that Indian Village Community can be liberated through economic autarky and political autonomy. The writings of Marx made intellectuals of the country aware about the apathy of the Indian peasants. Mass movement led by Mahatma Gandhi was essentially based on the rural question to get over poverty and misery of rural poor by boycotting purchase and sell of foreign goods. Gandhi's programmes of rural reconstruction involved revival of small-scale village industries and handloom, panchayati raj at the village level and removal of untouchability. Gandhi's effort to address the rural question was attuned with several studies carried out to understand the plight of the peasants and come out with practical solutions. Pioneering work was done by Gilbert Slater in 1916 under University of Madras to understand villages in South India. He put forth that villages came before towns and the economic life of a town or city cannot be understood without reference to the lands, which sends its food and raw materials and the villages from which it attracts young men and women. The villages were again resurveyed in 1936 and 1961. The Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry was set up which carried studies on villages affected by famine since 1920s. In 1935, the Bengal Board of Economic Enquiry was set up and it undertook survey of villages in Bengal primarily to understand how the famine in rural areas of Bengal had affected the rural/national economy. Tagore's ViswaBharati had organized village surveys around Shantiniketan and set up a Rural Reconstruction Board to understand the adversity of the peasants. Similar studies were carried out by Scottish Church College in Calcutta under the guidance of T.K. Sankara Menon, by Gujarat Vidyapeeth under the guidance of J.C. Kumarappa and by Ghokale Institute of Politics and Economics in Pune, which published accounts of villages in Maharashtra. Most of these studies focussed on

the social and economic life of the rural people in isolated villages. By 1940s a new trend was introduced to survey villages which focussed on specific aspects of rural problem in certain rural areaa. In 1946, Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta undertook a series of sample surveys of villages in West Bengal to study the effects of famine on rural society. The studies focussed on the economic status of the village people, the poor status of agriculture due to recurrent famines, drought and indebtedness.

**I Studies conducted by social anthropologists and sociologists:** The colonial anthropologists and sociologists initially studied the tribal communities for the consolidation of British Raj. But there was a shift in interest from studying tribal communities to village communities with the village development programmes coming into operation and a renewed interest to build a nation from its grassroots. Since the end of World War II first hand and intensive studies on villages were carried out by social anthropologists and sociologists. These studies debunked the myth of self sufficiency of Indian villages and critically appraised earlier views and conceptions of not only the British anthropologists and sociologists but also work of their Indian colleagues who viewed Indian villages as isolated little republics. These studies proved that Indian Villages were politically, economically, socially and culturally inter dependent on each other. However, the studies conducted by British anthropologists and sociologists laid the foundation of further research. Ramkrishna Mukherjee is considered as the first sociologist who studied the social organisms of village communities based on the official records of East India Company. His work on 'Six Villages of Bengal: A Socio-Economic Survey' (1957) has scrutinized the source material on the nature of the village community from 'British Administrative Report of Punjab' (1952). The 1950s marked a spurt of studies on rural society in India akin with the independent nation's focus on the development through rural reconstruction. Some of the notable works include M.N. Srinivas's 'India's Villages' (1955), McKim Marriot's 'Village India' (1955),

D.N. Majumdar's 'Rural Profile' (1957), F.G. Bailey's 'Caste and the Economic Frontier' (1957), S.C. Dube's 'India's Changing Village' (1958), Andre Beteille's 'Caste, Class and Power' (1966), A.R. Desai's 'Rural Sociology in India' (1969) and K.L. Sharma's 'The Changing Rural Stratification System' (1974). In 1955, a conference was also held in Madras under the leadership of Irawati Karve which was attended by Robert Redfield, who is regarded as one of the pioneers of Rural Sociology in America. In the same conference M.N. Srinivas brought out discussions on Sanskritization which he had described in his book 'Religion and Society among the Coorgs in South India' (1952). The proceedings of the conference were published in the form of a book 'Society in India'. By 1970s the research funded by ICSSR to study rural society which was carried out for a period of 10 years was influential in development of Rural Sociology in its modern form. The research was presented in the form of 'A Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology', volume 1, in 1970 where the discipline of Rural Sociology was discussed under 'Rural Studies'.

Rural Sociology in India has attained new significance after independence with first three 5 year plans focussing attention on development of agrarian sector. Village Studies became a requisite step for nation-building. Planning Commission of India realized that unless the social problems are efficiently addressed the economic problems of the country could not be solved. Thus, the Planning Commission laid significant emphasis in understanding rural social problems as the development of the country rested in the development of rural India. This vision was furthered through Community Development Programmes, Land Reforms, Co-operatives and Panchayati Raj which were the four pillars on which democratic rural social system rested. Many developmental programmes were started across the nation focussing on rural reconstruction and rural institutes were set up for development of co-operatives and to further the growth of the discipline. Funding from international organizations like UNO, UNESCO, ILO, FAO and the League of Nations contributed to the flood of

researches in rural societies and the development of Rural Sociology. Separate Rural Studies departments were established in most of the universities in India. Agricultural Universities were also set up which focussed on rural development. In the past few decades, Rural Sociology has been incorporated in the undergraduate syllabus of not only Sociology and Anthropology but Agricultural Engineering, Home Science, Economics and Agriculture. Conferences were organized to promote rural research. Thus, Rural Sociology has developed from village studies to a discipline in India.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q1:** Define Rural Sociology.

.....

**Q2:** When was the Country Life Commission appointed and by whom?

.....

**Q3:** Who authored the book "A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology"?

.....

**Q4:** When was Rural Sociological Society officially established in America?

.....

## 1.4 NATURE AND SCOPE OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY

In the previous section, we have learnt about the origin and development of Rural Sociology. In this section, let us try to understand its nature and scope.

**I Nature of Rural Sociology:** Rural Sociology is a sub-discipline of Sociology. If we consider Sociology as a whole then Rural Sociology is a part of it. Thus the nature of Sociology is also the nature of Rural Sociology as it is the part of the whole. Rural Sociology is a science as

it provides objective and rational knowledge of rural social reality. Rural Sociology employs scientific method in selecting a topic, defining a research problem, in reviewing already existing literature, formulating hypothesis, choosing research method, collecting data, analyzing data and presenting the empirical data to wider audience. Rural Sociology is a science as sociologists can make-

- Ø Generalizations- the universal laws of Rural Sociology will remain same across cultures.
- Ø Predictions- based on previous sociological studies, sociologists can make predictions.
- Ø It is verifiable as under similar condition the results will remain same.
- Ø It is reliable as it can be re-tested which will yield same results.
- Ø It is factual as it studies and analyzes facts.
- Ø It is empirical as the field data collected helps in formulation of theories.
- Ø It is cumulative as sociological theories are founded on already existing theories and refining older theories or constructing new theories.

But unlike natural sciences, problem arises with objectivity as researchers cannot have an impersonal and unbiased interaction with the participants. Another problem arises with accuracy and reliability of empirical data as responses differ from people to people, place to place and time to time. Unlike natural sciences, problem arises with predictability as human behaviour is complex to predict. Moreover, there is lack of laboratory research as the laboratory of Rural Sociology is the rural society where it is impossible to control conditions, repeat experiment and objectively observe the subjects. Further there is the problem of terminology as one cannot develop scientific terminology that could be applied to all society as the same word can have different meanings according to the context in which it is used. Finally, there is problem of accuracy as findings are limited in



time and space. In spite of the above mentioned problems, Rural Sociology can be called a social science as it comprises certain elements of natural science as well as humanities.

## **I Scope of Rural Sociology**

The scope of Rural Sociology has been changing according to the interests of the administrators, economists, sociologists and social anthropologists from time to time. The initial subject matter of sociologists and anthropologists was to study the society of aboriginals, primitive tribes and forest dwellers. Then the interest of administrators turned sociologists and anthropologists towards studying indigenous institutions of the village, caste and culture due to village development programmes and interest to understand the people of India. Soon after Independence, there was a sudden shift in the study and subject matter of Rural Sociology. It was realized that unless rural social problems were efficiently solved, economic problems could not be solved. The new nation experimenting with democracy focussed on planned development with focus on developing the rural economy and on development of Panchayati Raj. Subsequently the Five Year Plans were formulated which emphasized on development of villages through Community Development Programmes. As a result of various developmental programmes, industrialization, urbanization and host of other factors in the middle of 1950s and the end of 1960s led to spurt of studies on villages which was sponsored by national and international organizations. The introduction of Five Year Plans, Green Revolution, Panchayati Raj led to the formation of new classes and transformation of power in rural leadership which became the new subject matter of Rural Sociology. Thus, the scope of Rural Sociology consists of study of tribes, castes, village community, rural social organizations, rural institutions, rural social processes, stratification pattern, similarity and difference between rural and urban societies, land reforms, peasant movements and struggles, agrarian relations, rural reconstruction and planning. The scope of Rural Sociology will continue to widen its horizon with the changes in rural society.

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## 1.5 CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPORTANCE OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY

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By now, we have been able to get an idea about what is Rural sociology, how it emerged as a separate sub-discipline of sociology, what does it study, what is its scope so on and so forth. Let us now try to understand its characteristics and importance.

**I Characteristics of Rural Sociology:** Following are the basic characteristics of Rural Sociology

- Ø Rural Sociology is multi-dimensional as it focuses on different domains of rural society.
- Ø Rural Sociology over the years has become inter-disciplinary, not only in its design but also in its functioning.
- Ø Rural Sociology focuses on micro studies and in-depth study of specific aspects of rural society.

**I Importance of Rural Sociology**

The importance of Rural Sociology has been increasing due to following reasons:

- Ø Census of 2011 again recounted that India lives in its villages.
- Ø For the nation to develop it is essential to focus attention on the development of its villages as India is still an agricultural economy.
- Ø Policies and Programmes of rural development has failed in its implementation as the rural problems were not scientifically and systematically studied.
- Ø A scientific and holistic understanding of problems of rural society is provided through Rural Sociology as it studies rural population, its problems and recommends solutions.

- Ø Rural Sociology analyzes the impact of industrialization, urbanization and globalization on rural society.
- Ø Rural Sociology provides empirical guidelines for rural reconstruction.

So long as rural society has importance, Rural Sociology will continue to have importance as a discipline.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q5:** Give one of the characteristics of Rural Sociology

.....



## 1.6 LET US SUM UP

- I Rural Sociology is of recent origin and a sub-discipline of Sociology.
- I The discipline embedded in social sciences is aimed to scientifically and systematically study rural population, rural social organization, rural institutions, social changes that take place in rural society and rural social processes for the development of rural life.
- I Rural Sociology originated in the United States of America around the 1820s.
- I Interest in Rural Sociology was promoted with the efforts of 26th President of USA, Theodore Roosevelt, who had appointed the Country Life Commission in 1907.
- I The Country Life Commission gave impetus to research studies on rural community in the form of research documents like 'An American Town' by James Michel Williams, 'Quaker Hill' by Warren H. Wilson and 'A Hoosier Village' by Newell L. Sims submitted to Columbia University between 1902 and 1912.

- I Further, Columbia University carried forward the charter for Rural Sociology outlined by Country Life Commission in the form of doctoral dissertations carried under the supervision of Professor Franklin Giddings.
- I The findings of these research studies were discussed in the annual meetings of American Sociological Society held in 1912. John Morris Gillette who was associated with American Sociological Society published a textbook in rural sociology in 1913 which is considered as the first textbook in the field.
- I These findings of American Sociological Society had facilitated in laying the foundation of Department of Rural Sociology in American Sociological Institute in 1917.
- I Two years later in 1919 Department of Rural Sociology was established under the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.
- I Several books were published which contributed to the growth of the discipline.
- I One of the notable books is "A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology", which came out in three volumes authored by Pitirim A. Sorokin, Carle C. Zimmerman and Charles J. Galpin, published in 1930 by University of Minnesota Press.
- I Rural Sociological Society in America was officially established in 1937 which came out with publication of a quarterly magazine, Rural Sociology which helped scholars to understand rural people, their places and their problems.
- I It was only after World War II that Rural Sociology extended beyond the boundaries of United States of America and entered into Europe (especially in France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and United Kingdom) and Asia.

- I In India, the discipline developed through the studies and reports brought out by administrators, economists, sociologists and anthropologists since the colonial period.
- I Rural Sociology being a sub-discipline of Sociology is a social science by nature.
- I The scope of Rural Sociology keeps on expanding with the expansion of the boundaries of rural society.
- I So long as rural society has importance, Rural Sociology shall continue to occupy an important place.



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## 1.7 FURTHER READING

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- 1) Desai, A.R. (1969). Rural Sociology in India. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.



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## 1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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**Ans to Q No 1:** A.R. Desai defines Rural Sociology as 'the science of laws of development of rural society'.

**Ans to Q No 2:** The Country Life Commission was appointed in 1907 by 26th President of USA, Theodore Roosevelt.

**Ans to Q No 3:** "A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology" was authored by Pitirim A. Sorokin, Carle C. Zimmerman and Charles J. Galpin.

**Ans to Q No 4:** Rural Sociological Society was officially established in America in 1937.

**Ans to Q No 5:** Rural Sociology is multi-dimensional.



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## 1.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

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**Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

**Q1:** Explain the scope of Rural Sociology.

**Q2:** Discuss the importance of Rural Sociology.

**Long Questions** (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

**Q1:** Discuss the origin and development of Rural Sociology in India?

**Q2:** Is Rural Sociology a science or art? Discuss.

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## UNIT 2: RURAL AND URBAN SOCIETY

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### UNIT STRUCTURE

- 2.1 Learning Objectives
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Little Community
- 2.4 Peasant Society
- 2.5 Urban Society
- 2.6 Folk-Urban Continuum
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Further Reading
- 2.9 Answers to Check your Progress
- 2.10 Model Questions

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### 2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- I know the meaning and characteristics of Little Community
- I understand the concept of Peasant Society
- I explain what is Urban Society
- I discuss the concept of folk-urban Continuum.

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### 2.2 INTRODUCTION

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The village studies done in post-independent India contributed immensely to the understanding of changes in rural society. As discussed in Unit 1, the colonial administrators turned sociologists and social anthropologists viewed rural society in colonial India as an isolated and a self-sufficient community having nearly everything they required in their day-to-day lives. This view of understanding communities in colonial India as little republics echoes with Robert Redfield's concept of 'Little Community', who developed the concept on the basis of his study of communities in Mexico. Redfield's interest in folk society and its problem developed during his doctoral research experience of traditional Mexican villages, which is discussed in his work *Tepoztlán: A Mexican Village* (1930). This work had

become a basis for further studies on folk societies and typology of communities. Redfield's interest in folk societies as small self-contained isolates and understanding of their culture as a whole developed from his training in cultural anthropology in University of Chicago, which was geared towards understanding of primitive and isolated communities as a social laboratory to explain the laws of structure, functions and historical development of societies and civilization. Redfield believed that an understanding of folk/primitive societies as 'self-contained integral entities' (being in the infancy of societies) as a part which will help us to understand wholes like modern urban societies, nation and civilization. In this unit we shall try to understand the meaning not only of Little Community, but also of Peasant Society and Urban Society. While grasping its meaning, we shall also be able to identify the differences among them. Further, we shall be able to know about some of the important works done on these societies. Finally we shall get an about the concept of folk-urban continuum.

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## 2.3 LITTLE COMMUNITY

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Little community is small unstratified community or group of individuals that resides together sharing we-feeling and are a part of unified world in itself away from wider community. This way of viewing small communities as whole was first put forth by Robert Redfield in his lecture on 'The Little Community' delivered in Uppsala University in 1954. Little Communities can be identified on the basis of the following characteristics:

- I **Small:** As the name suggests 'Little Community' is relatively a small group of individuals having face to face contact with each other over a long period of time.
- I **Isolated:** Little Communities are isolated residing in a small territory having nearly everything they require. It is a self-contained human settlement, a world in itself with no connections or communications with other societies.



- I **Non-Literate:** The members of little community are non-literate. There way of communication and passing their knowledge from one generation to another is through oral tradition.
- I **Homogeneous:** Little Community is a group of like-minded individuals sharing similar ways of life, cultural outlook, attitude, sentiments, beliefs, practices, language/dialect with a strong sense of group solidarity living together for a long period of time. Thus any individual can represent the little community as they are similar persons.

Apart from the above mentioned characteristics, the members of little community are traditional, patterned, impulsive, uncritical and personal in their behaviour. Little Community is distinctive as the members can mark the boundaries of the community and easily identify an outsider as they have face to face contact with each other. Kinship is the mainstay of little community and familial group is the basic unit of action. In little community the sacred prevails over secular having a symbolic view of nature and sanctions decide their actions. The moral order demarcates what is good and what is bad and determines their notion of leading a good life. There is rudimentary gendered division of labour with no specialization of tasks and an economy that is guided by status where goods are exchanged on the basis of goodwill rather than for their market value. Little Community is self-sufficient as it consists of every need and wants of its members and is economically independent of any other communities. The ways of life are streamlined into coherent, autonomous, self-sustaining system called 'culture' which provides conventionalized understandings of problems and needs of the members from birth to death. Robert Redfield notes that only few tribal communities, Neolithic fisherman and farmers residing in Swiss Lake, nomadic group of hunters in Bolivian rainforests, the medieval English or Swiss villages, villages of Sudanese cattle people in Upper Nile could be considered as little communities. But due to contact with great community or wider community, the little communities are losing its homogeneity and self-sufficiency although retaining their characteristic of smallness and

distinctiveness. Robert Redfield believed that little communities are part of great communities and thus by studying the part one can get an understanding of the whole (Redfield 1960).

Redfield says that when a little community comes in cultural contact with urban society it transforms to peasant society, which is an intermediate between the two polar opposites, i.e. the folk and the urban societies. The next section provides a brief discussion on peasant society.

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## **2.4 PEASANT SOCIETY**

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Robert Redfield is credited with having provided the first full-length study on peasant societies with the publication of his *Tepoztlán: A Mexican Village* (1930), which provided an account of Morelos, a village not far from Mexico City inhabited by 4000 people. Peasant societies are agricultural communities residing in rural area with shared history, tradition, values and worldviews and having connections with wider society. Redfield's conceptualization of peasants may comprise, in parts or in totality, of tenants or even unlawful tenant on the land who have control over the land to carry out common and traditional ways of life and who produce for consumption and not for the market. The ways of life and livelihood of peasant society are connected with land. They produce for consumption or have a subsistence economy and do not produce for business or profit making. Redfield identified those agriculturalists who produce for business and view their land as capital and commodity as farmers and not peasants. Peasants are attached with their land(s) which they control through tradition and develop sentiments over a period of time. Farming is submerged with religious fervour and they work hard on their lands as their status and livelihood depend on it and their gods expect it from them to work on their lands. Their customs comprise their beliefs in the ancestral notions of good and evil. They have reverence for ancestral ways of life and their habitat. They have attachment to their integrated village or peasant community and share a sense of belonging with their community. Peasant society is characterized by importance of family where an individual is not greater

than family and community. Peasants marry for work and zeal of life. Women are respected as they produce children who could contribute to labour in the fields. The form of residence in a peasant society is basically patrilineal and the descent is along male line. Unlike Little Communities, Peasant Societies are not isolated or self-sufficient and have developed economic, political, social and cultural relations with larger societal and cultural wholes of which it is a part. Peasants are distinct from primitive people as they have come in contact with wider society. Peasant Societies are interdependent on each other through trade, pilgrimage to shrines, performance of governmental duties (like paying taxes or respecting the political leader/priest), education, medical facilities, lineage ties, kinship and exogamous form of marriages, which continue from generation to generation. These inter-connections between peasant societies are what Oscar Lewis refers to as 'Rural Cosmopolitanism'. However, the social behaviour resembles more the folk societies than the urban societies. Yet it has certain features of urban societies like the emergence of elite class (the literati, the carriers of classical written tradition) who exploit and exercise control over large number of subservient people due to their monopoly of power and authority.

A. L. Kroeber viewed peasant society as an intermediate between part society and part cultures, which are rural yet having connections with towns/cities for trade and commerce. Redfield agreed with Kroeber and viewed peasant society as an intermediate between the primitive isolated folk society and the contemporary urban society. Since it is an intermediate between the societies it possesses certain qualities of both folk and urban societies. For example, a peasant society retains the identity with the soil, the moral order and the ritual kinship (in the form of blood brotherhood, god-parental relationships and other ceremonial/fictive relationships) of the folk societies but it possesses the technological order (in the form of developed tools, trade and commerce, political institutions, connectivity with wider society) closer to urban societies.

Redfield believed that as peasant society is a part, an intermediate or half society, its culture is also a part or half of larger civilization; i.e. peasant society is a rural dimension of old indigenous civilizations of which it is a part. The formal literate tradition/culture of civilization, which is regulated by the literati/elites of society, is what Redfield termed as 'Great Tradition' and the informal tradition/culture of peasant/rural society as 'Little Tradition'. Great Tradition is consciously cultivated by priests and teachers through sacred books and texts/tales in schools or temples and handed down in written documented form whereas Little Tradition is reflected in the lives of peasant societies through oral history. For example, the great tradition of India consists of Vedic philosophy developed by both ancient and modern scholars/philosophers; however, when such philosophy is diffracted, diffused and reflected in the lives of the Indian peasants it comprises of the little tradition. Like Ramayana, written by Valmiki, is a sacred book of great (Hindu) tradition, but the philosophy of Ramayana is difficult for peasants to understand. If the philosophy of Ramayana is diffracted and diffused as Ram Leela it is easily understood by Indian peasants, which comprises the little tradition. The two traditions are interdependent and continuously affect each other. Great and Little Traditions are facets of one another i.e. the teaching and learning of great tradition are an outgrowth of little tradition and is now an example for people who carry the little tradition like folk artists, folk dancers, folk singers, medicine men and so on. The continuous interaction between great and little tradition can be seen as an element of the social structure of the peasant society in its enlarged context.

Redfield's conceptualization of peasant society was an undifferentiated homogeneous community across time and space sharing similar value-orientations and ways of life. Redfield's work is criticized on the grounds that he misses out the variations and compositions of peasant societies. However, his work on peasant society has helped scholars trying to understand peasant society as a part of Indian civilization.

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## **2.5 URBAN SOCIETY**

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Urban Society stands in polar opposition to Little Community/Folk Society. Urban Society is large in size, more populous and denser in comparison to little community/folk society. Heterogeneous in its origin and development, its members are literate and they are mostly engaged in non-agricultural occupations. Predominance of secondary or indirect/impersonal contact with its members and are often regarded as superior to little community/folk society in terms of authority. In urban society the secular prevails over the sacred. Technical order takes over moral order and relationships are based on mutual usefulness and necessity. Familial institutions are weak with less functions and increased development of individual independence especially with regards to choice of livelihood. Urban Marriages rapture with legal aid. The economic and political relationships/institutions are developed in comparison to little community/folk society. The presence of secondary and tertiary sector with machine production and specialization of tasks leads to a complex division of labour in urban society. Market oriented economy develops in an urban society. The landless peasants are pulled to the cities to work in factories, aspire to be members of urban middle class or, as Karl Marx would say, the proletariat. The institutions of folk culture become a business enterprise in urban society with secular ends. For example commercialization of devotional hindisongs for Goddess Kamakhya which are made available for purchase. Earlier the devotional songs for Goddess Kamakhya were sung in Assamese or Sanskrit language not packaged as audio/video cassettes to be sold in market. Thus, Redfield's thesis that in urban society there is disorganization of culture and secularization. Many of the features of folk society like isolation, homogeneity, kinship system and self-sufficiency fade away in urban society.

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## **2.6 FOLK-URBAN CONTINUUM**

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Robert Redfield's study of Mexican communities introduced him to a community which was neither isolated/primitive nor a part of contemporary

modern urban society but something in between. This led him to develop the concept of Folk-Urban Continuum as a lens to understand how cultural change gradually takes place due to cultural contact leading to the process of change from folk society to urban society or from societies of the past to societies of contemporary era. Folk-Urban Continuum is used as a heuristic concept to compare communities, which can be placed on a scale representing a range of traits with folk society and urban society being placed on two extreme ends of the scale. Folk-Urban Continuum would facilitate in building an ideal typology of societies, which ranged from folk society to urban society. Redfield believed that rather than viewing folk society as having a dichotomous relation with urban society, it should be viewed to be in a continuum where gradual changes in folk society lead to transition to urban society. Today, as there is a blurring of lines to understand where the city ends and where the rural begins, it is very useful to employ Folk-Urban Continuum as an ideal type to build a typology of communities or societies on the basis of their contact with urban society and folk society and as the polar opposites on the continuum. Generally, the villages more in contact with urban society are more urbanized than those villages with minimal contacts.

Indian villages, prior to foreign influence, as McKim Marriott says can be conceived of as little communities as they were marked by clear territorial boundaries, were economically self-sufficient to manage their own affairs, and political solidarity prevailed in the form of strong defence from the outside world. Isolated from connections with wider world, the village people had a commonsense of ritual integrity. This picture of Indian villages as a self-sufficient whole was shared by colonial administrators studying Indian villages. McKim Marriott says that such a picture is only partially true. Scholars studying villages in South India can view villages as isolates as they practice endogamous forms of marriage i.e. marriages within the village and kinship ties are not formed beyond the boundaries of the village. But, for villages in North India, the kinship ties spread across several villages and they are tied to each other through marriage, descent, trade, pilgrimage and political

alliance. Thus, it is difficult to conceive Indian villages as 'Little Communities' as envisioned by Robert Redfield as they are interrelated and interdependent on the wider society. McKim Marriott's study of Kishan Garhi in Uttar Pradesh shows this ambiguity of defining the village of Kishan Garhi as little community. He shows how the little community and little tradition or local tradition of Kishan Garhi contribute to the development of Indian civilization - a great community and great tradition or epic tradition (comprises common cultural consciousness shared across India originating for sacred books like Mahabharata, Ramayana and other religious scriptures and sacred objects). Kishan Garhi is connected with wider society through the intrusive top-bottom political structure, economy as there is exchange of goods and services, religion as there is allegiance to different pilgrimage outside the village and celebration of festivals widely observed in India, kinship ties and marriage as it ties people from different villages through the practice of village exogamy. Yet Kishan Garhi can be considered as a whole and an isolate as economic dependence is on the yields of the land within the village, social ties connect non-kinsmen within the village for various social ceremonies and politically even though they might be divided by factionalism. Yet it is factionalism which unites people along caste lines. McKim Marriott's study of Kishan Garhi shows that it is difficult to define Kishan Garhi as a little community but Kishan Garhi could be understood as intermediate society somewhere in between folk-urban continuum. The continuous interaction between little and great tradition could be understood through two concepts developed by McKim Marriott which is Universalization and Parochialization.

**I Universalization:** The upward movement and transformation of cultural awareness and cultural contents from little tradition to great tradition is known as Universalization. In other words, the cultural change or absorption of cultural traits from little tradition to great tradition is known as Universalization. For example, the local goddess of Kishan Garhi Sauri, worshipped during diwali the festival of lights, is apotheosized to Lakshmi the goddess of great tradition.

**I Parochialization:** The downward movement and transformation of cultural awareness and cultural contents from great tradition to little tradition is known as

Parochialization. In other words, when the elements of great tradition are learned and reformed at local or village level and the great tradition loses much of its original form in the process and becomes a part of local or village culture it is known as Parochialization. For example, in the pantheon of great Indian tradition goddess Durga is worshipped in nine forms during Navaratra or nine nights but in Kishan Garhi Naurath is considered as one of the many aspects of goddess Durga or a dialectic variant of Navaratra is worshipped during Navaratra or nine nights. This illustrates how through loss of contact and confusion between great and little tradition a new parochial goddess Naurath is created and seen as manifestation of goddess Durga of great tradition.

McKim Marriott's take on great and little tradition has been criticized by Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah as a historical remnant of anthropological investigation as the Great Hindu Tradition consists of several texts written in different periods yet they were presented as if they were one synchronic whole. But Tambiah's views cannot be applicable to the Great Tradition of European Christianity as the principal sacred texts are common across all denominations. Louis Dumont and David Pocock had criticized Marriott's differences between the two traditions saying that the two traditions are not separated but lived as one by rural people. Analytically it may be useful to view the two traditions as an integrated whole. However, in reality rural people themselves recognise the existence of another more exalted tradition. Thus, McKim Marriott's study did contribute to the understanding that Indian villages cannot be considered as isolates and villages are interconnected with towns and cities leading to inter-exchange of culture, tradition and ways of life which could be understood through Folk-Urban Continuum.

Robert Redfield's Folk-Urban Continuum helps to understand different types of societies on the basis of its contact with urban societies, it tells us



very little about the actual nature of social organizations and relationships. Moreover, it does not reveal about the continuous changes that are taking place in urban societies or the processes that are involved in these changes. As seen from McKim Marriott's discussion of Kishan Garhi, continuities and discontinuities are seen side by side when understanding Indian village communities. Continuities can be seen in religious practices, lineage, kinship and affinal ties. Discontinuities can be viewed in changing occupational structure, caste mobility, rural power structure, emergence of rural classes and rural elites. The continuities and changes in rural society in India will be discussed in detail in Unit 6. In spite of above mentioned criticisms, Redfield's theoretical and methodological understanding of folk-urban continuum has been employed in several village studies and it has helped to understand how folk and peasant societies in India are dimensions of Indian civilizations. Robert Redfield's work on Little Community, Peasant Society, Urban Society and Folk-Urban Continuum reflects the changing subject matter in anthropology and sociology and the quest for understanding different types of societies so as to unravel the laws of its development, structure, function and change/continuity.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q1:** Mention four characteristics of Little Communities.

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**Q2:** Who wrote the book 'Tepoztlán: A Mexican Village'?

.....

**Q3:** Mention four features that make Urban Society distinct from Little Community.

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**Q4:** Define Universalization.

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**Q5:** Name the social anthropologist who studied Kishan Garhi in Uttar Pradesh.

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## 2.7 LET US SUM UP

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- I Robert Redfield developed the concept 'Little Community' on the basis of his study of communities in Mexico.
- I Little community is small unstratified community or group of individuals that resides together sharing we-feeling and are a part of unified world in itself away from wider community.
- I Little community is characterized being small, isolated, non-literate and homogeneous community.
- I Due to contact with great community or wider community, the little community are losing its homogeneity and self-sufficiency although retaining its characteristic of smallness and distinctiveness.
- I Redfield says that when a little community comes in cultural contact with urban society it transforms to peasant society, which is an intermediate between the two polar opposites, i.e. the folk and the urban societies.
- I Peasant societies are agricultural communities residing in rural area with shared history, tradition, values and worldviews and having connections with wider society. The ways of life and livelihood of peasant societies are connected with land.
- I A. L. Kroeber viewed peasant society as an intermediate between part society and part cultures, which are rural yet having connections with towns/cities for trade and commerce. Since it is an intermediate between the societies it possesses certain qualities of both folk and urban societies.
- I Redfield believed that as peasant society is part society and part culture, the culture of peasant society is a dimension of civilization of which it is a part. The informal, illiterate tradition/culture of peasant society is what

Redfield termed as 'Little Tradition' and the formal, written tradition/culture of civilization, urban society as 'Great Tradition'.

- I Urban Society stands in polar opposition to Little Community/Folk Society. Urban societies are large, populous, dense, heterogeneous, where members are literate and they are mostly engaged in non-agricultural occupations, and where predominance of secondary or indirect/impersonal contact with its members are often regarded as superior to little community/folk society in terms of authority.
- I Robert Redfield developed the concept of Folk-Urban Continuum as a lens to understand how cultural change gradually takes place due to cultural contact leading to the process of change from folk society to urban society.
- I McKim Marriott's study of Kishan Garhi shows how Kishan Garhi could be understood as an intermediate society in folk-urban continuum. The continuous interaction between little and great tradition could be understood through two concepts developed by McKim Marriott which are Universalization and Parochialization.
- I The cultural change from little tradition to great tradition is known as Universalization
- I When the great tradition undergoes change at local or village level and the great tradition loses much of its original form in the process it is known as Parochialization.
- I Redfield's theoretical and methodological understanding of folk-urban continuum has been employed in several village studies and helped scholars to understand how folk and peasant societies in India are dimensions of Indian civilization.



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## 2.8 FURTHER READING

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- 1) Marriott, McKim (ed.). (1955). Village India: Studies in the Little Community. Jaipur: Rawat.
- 2) Redfield, Robert. (1956). Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological approach to Civilization. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- 3) Redfield, Robert. (1960). The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.



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## 2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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**Ans to Q No 1:** Little Communities can be identified by following characteristics: They are small, isolated, non-literate and homogeneous.

**Ans to Q No 2:** Robert Redfield wrote 'Tepoztlán: A Mexican Village'.

**Ans to Q No 3:** Urban Society is large in size, heterogeneous, more populous and denser in comparison to Little Community.

**Ans to Q No 4:** The cultural change from little tradition to great tradition is known as Universalization.

**Ans to Q No 5:** McKim Marriott studied Kishan Garhi in Uttar Pradesh.



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## 2.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

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**Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

**Q1:** Discuss Peasant society as an intermediate between folk and urban societies.

**Q2:** State the differences between Universalization and Parochialization?

**Long Questions** (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

- Q1:** Define Little Community. Discuss the characteristics of Little Community.
- Q2:** Can Indian villages be considered as 'Little Community'? Support your answer with example.

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## **UNIT 3: INDIAN RURAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 3.1 Learning Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Approaches to study Rural Society
  - 3.3.1. Historical Approach
  - 3.3.2. Ecological Approach
- 3.4 Caste in Rural India
- 3.5 Rural Family and its Changing pattern
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Further Reading
- 3.8 Answers to Check your Progress
- 3.9 Model Questions

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### **3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- I understand the approaches to study Rural Society
- I identify different typologies of villages in India
- I describe the Caste system in Rural India
- I explain the nature of Rural Family and its changing pattern

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### **3.2 INTRODUCTION**

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Rural Society is interchangeably used with terms like village, countryside or folk society. In sociological literature, rural society is interchangeably used with the term village. Mahatma Gandhi aptly said India lives in its villages and is overwhelmingly an agrarian country. It becomes essential to understand the rural society in India as majority of its population resides in its villages and agriculture contributes a large proportion of the country's economic growth. Rural society in India comprises of less than 400 populations per square kilometre, where majority of the population are engaged in primary occupation like agriculture and horticulture, having a Panchayat, a definite boundary and name. Rural Society has been changing

rapidly in the past seven decades and since acquiring new significance after the birth of a new nation. Policy makers have realized that if the nation needs to develop it needs to focus attention on rural development. By understanding rural society in India one can understand as Robert Redfield would say a true classic Indian civilization and rapidly changing rural society. Rural society in India varies in terms of size of population, composition of the village whether single caste or multi-caste villages, economic status whether affluent villages or poor backward villages, types of farming whether subsistence farming or commercial farming, contact with urban areas whether close connection with urban areas or situated in remote areas and so on. In spite of the variations in Indian rural society there are certain features which are common to each village like:

- I Villages have well defined social, political, religious and economic ties with other villages.
- I Villages generally have stable population with shared history and values.
- I Villages are the repository of tradition, culture, folkways and mores of Indian civilization.
- I Villages have a direct relationship with nature/environment.
- I They are united in times of need and crisis. They share a strong 'we-feeling' and sense of belonging to their community.
- I Economy is primarily agrarian. However, people are also engaged in other allied occupations like handicraft, weaving, basket making and pottery.
- I Land is revered and valued in rural society. They produce primarily for consumption and the surplus are sold in markets to purchase goods they do not produce.

- I Caste is an important organizing principle in Indian villages and integrates people even beyond one's native village. Different categories and composition of castes and sub-castes are found in Indian villages.
- I There is an established patron-client system known as Jajmani system in the rural society.
- I Every village has its own organizational body, which has authority to give sanctions to the guilty/law breakers. Panchayats are the political and administrative unit of the villages resolving disputes within the village.
- I Physical proximity to towns and villages results in the changes and development in the villages.

These are some of the common features cutting across villages in India. In the previous unit, you were introduced to the concept of Folk-Urban Continuum. But there are certain differences which demarcates rural society from urban society. One can distinguish rural society from urban society on the basis of classification adopted by the Census like size of population, density and primary occupation. In this unit, we shall try to understand the approaches to study rural society, and discuss about two important social institutions i.e caste and family in the context of Indian Rural Society.

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### **3.3 APPROACHES TO STUDY RURAL SOCIETY**

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Rural Society has been studied using varied approaches and techniques to understand various dimensions of rural ways of life. Following are two of the approaches applied by scholars to understand rural society in India.

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#### **3.3.1 Historical Approach**

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Historical Approach helps scholars to study rural society by tracing its growth through different periods in history, and by studying events, customs and institutions. India has records of continuous history from the Neolithic period to the contemporary period. These historical records and artefacts



could be used to understand rural society in India. Village is the unit of rural society and a historical category as it has emerged at a certain point in history. Further one can trace its growth and development over subsequent periods of history, the structural changes it has undergone due to orthogenetic or heterogenetic changes or the rapid transformation which has occurred due to industrial revolution. Data on rural society is collected from written, oral and documented historical archival records and artefacts.

Data collected from historical records have shown the emergence of villages showcasing the evolution of humans from nomadic life to a settled agriculturalist life with improved tools and techniques for production, relatively stable food supply, development of arts, science and philosophies and organization into kinship, clan, caste and territorial ties. Village is the first settled collective human habitation, which gives impetus for the growth of agricultural economy. Thus, historically rural society from its surplus food production and labour resources gave birth to and nourished the town, which subsequently came into existence.

Different types of villages have existed from the transition of humans from nomadic stage to a settled agriculturalist stage. On the basis of these transitions three types of villages come into existence:

- Ø **Migratory Agricultural Villages:** In this type of villages, the people reside for a stipulated period of time in fixed abodes. This type of villages are found where slash and burn cultivation is practised.
- Ø **Semi-Permanent Agricultural Villages:** In this type of villages, people reside for few years and then migrate to a different area due to depletion of soil or erosion caused by flood. This kind of villages could be further sub-divided into nucleated and dispersed villages. In Nucleated villages the houses are clustered in a form of nucleus around its cultivated area whereas in dispersed villages the houses are distributed around large area and each cluster is separated by cultivated area.

Ø **Permanent Agricultural Villages:** In this type of villages, people are settled agriculturalists residing from generation to generation.

Villages could also be categorised on the basis of historical written records of different periods. For Example, in Mahabharata and Ramayana there were two types of villages- Ghosh and Gram. Ghosh or Vraja or Brij was relatively a small village situated near the forest inhabited by Gops who were involved in cattle rearing. Gram were larger villages with Gramani, a village official or administrator appointed by the king working along with the village elders or Gram Vridhastaking care of the village defence, dispensing judicial functions and looking after the village people as one's children. Both Ghosh and Gram had village officials known as mahattar. Manu has categorized different types of gramani on the basis of the villages one administers like Dashī for gramani who administers 10 villages, Vishanti for gramani who administers 20 villages, Shatī or Shat Gramadhipati for gramani who administers 100 villages and Sahasra Gramadhipati for gramani who administers 1000 villages. In the Buddhist texts there are four categories of villages- Gama, Nigama, Kula and Nagarika. The villages had communal land ownership of grasslands and forests. In the Jain scriptures there are nine types of villages- Ghosa (cattle farm), Kheta, Kharvata, Gram (villages around forts), Palli (small hutments), Pattana, Samvaha, Ugara and Matamba (comprised of families upto 1000). The village was a close set up with a village gate or gram dwara and cultivated area of the village or gram kshetra. Kautilya's Artha Shastra provides an understanding of villages in the Mauryan period. The villages were demarcated by natural boundaries of forests, rivers, ditches and tanks. The villages were organised and clubbed together for administrative purposes. For example, a composition of 10 villages were known as Samgrahana, 200 villages consisted of Karnatika, 400 villages consisted of Dronamukha and 800 villages consisted of Mahagrama and administratively termed as Sthaniya, a centre for trade-fair. The villages comprised of Adhyaksha (headman), Samkhayaka (accountant), Stanikas (village officials), Anikasta (veterinary doctors), Jamgha Karika (village courier) among other village officials. During

Chandragupta Maurya's reign, villages were categorised into three types depending on the size of the population- Jyeshtha (villages with largest population), Madhyama (villages with medium population) and Kanistha (villages with smallest population). These were further divided into four types on the basis of revenue collected- Gramagra or ordinary villages which paid taxes in cash, Pariharak Villages which were given to priests and teachers who did not pay taxes and given for free as salary to spread education and pursue a religious life, Ayudhuja Villages were soldiers resided who were ready to be part of army in times of war and Anya villages which paid taxes in kind through resources, produce and labour.

Using historical approach to understand rural societies in India, one can reveal the laws of rise and development of villages in India which in turn would reveal the laws of rise and development of Indian society and which would further assist in chalking out the scientific and pragmatic plans and programmes for rural reconstruction.

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### 3.3.2. Ecological Approach

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Ecological Approach provides an understanding of rural society in India on the basis of structural/ spatial organization of the villages, pattern of settlement adopted by rural people, composition and density of the villages, the natural environment (like soil, water, climate, natural resources and terrain), proximity to urban area, the stage of agrarian economy ranging from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture and the nature of social conditions like kinds of landownership, property and need for defence. Ecological Approach delineates the relationship between human beings and its surrounding natural environment. Taking into account the ecological factors Irawati Karve's divided villages in Maharashtra into three types:

- Ø **Tightly Nucleated Villages:** In these villages, the village boundaries along with agricultural fields are difficult to perceive as the fields merge with one another except when it is separated by hillocks, streams or

highways. The habitation area is clearly demarcated from the cultivated area as the houses are clustered forming a kind of nucleus around its cultivated area. Such kinds of village are situated on high plateau of Deccan region. In these villages there are two types of roads one which connects other villages used for inter-village communication and internal roads or alleys which connect the houses within the village which is further divided into Ali, Galli and Bol. Ali are streets which comprises of houses belonging to one caste or profession like Brahmin Ali. Galli are narrow streets full of congested and dense housing area like Galli Kucchi.

Ø **Coastal Villages:** These villages are demarcated from other villages by natural obstacles like salt marshes, streams and spurs of mountain. The villages are organized lengthwise along two sides of the road and houses are fenced on all sides marking boundary of one house from the other. The dwellings are close to each other and each house has their orchard/garden in their compound. Land is used for horticulture and agriculture. In these villages there is no clear distinction between cultivation and habitation area. In such villages there is strong sense of 'we-feeling', greater cohesion, face-to-face contact with each member of the village and greater ability for co-operation. In such villages there is one main arterial road joining villages of coastal areas in a linear fashion for miles. Such kind of villages can be found in west coast of the Konkan area from Mumbai to Kanyakumari.

Ø **Dispersed or Clustered Villages:** In dispersed or clustered villages, the boundary of the villages is not clearly defined. The houses are situated in their own field in clusters of two or three huts. The huts belong to people from same lineage or are affinal kins. There is no boundary to distinguish the habitation area from cultivation area. Houses are scattered in such a manner that sometimes one house may be nearer to a neighbour's village than to their own village. People may change one's residence due to mishap like depletion of soil or natural calamity or personal reasons like residing close to a relative or friend or just for a change. In

such villages there are no streets as houses are not aligned alongside the streets. There are only narrow alleys which connects one hut to another and to the huts in neighbouring village. Such kind of villages can be found in Satpura ranges in Maharashtra.

Shantibhushan Nandi and D.S.Tyagi have also categorized village settlement patterns on the basis of its shape like:

- Ø **Shapeless Cluster:** The villages have irregular roads which are formed according to requirement and convenience of the village people. The clusters have marked boundaries enclosed within stone walls or wooden palisade for the purpose of defence. As population increases it may grow to form a linear cluster with parallel roads set at right angle with the existing roads and eventually may even turn into a square cluster. Such kinds of villages are found in Gangetic plains, Rajasthan, Malwa Plateau and parts of Maharashtra.
- Ø **Linear Cluster:** These types of villages are formed along linear roads with open spaces and houses are formed alongside the road in a parallel fashion. Such kinds of villages can be found in coastal districts of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and South of Rajasthan.
- Ø **Square or Rectangular Cluster:** These villages are formed along linear roads or running at right angle to one another often sharing common wall. Such kinds of villages are found in Rayalaseema, coastal parts of Andhra Pradesh and Chennai.
- Ø **Dispersed Cluster:** These villages comprises isolated homesteads found in high mountainous terrain often clubbed together as mauza for the convenience of collecting taxes. Such kind of villages are found in Himalayan or Sub-Himalayan area, high plateaus, Western Ghats from Satara to Kerala highlands.

However, ecological approach cannot be applied to study larger rural society as it is difficult to understand changes in economic, political, social,

cultural and technological sphere. In spite of its limitation, Ecological Approach helps to understand the social and cultural layout of the village, understand the meanings attached to social institutions and the laws governing the everyday life in rural society.

Thus, we have tried to understand rural society in India through two approaches- Historical and Ecological Approach. One of the aspects that have gained tremendous attention from sociologists and social anthropologists studying rural society in India is caste, which is discussed in the next section.

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### **3.4 CASTE IN RURAL INDIA**

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Caste is a basis of stratification and an important organizing principle of rural society in India. Caste is derived from the Portuguese word 'casta', meaning race or breed. Caste divisions, which are viewed as divinely ordained and graded hierarchically, are an imposition of the foreign scholars to understand Indian society which is divided into various jati and sub-jati. Jati is derived from Sanskrit, meaning 'to be born'. Jati is an endogamous, hereditary social group that has a name and a combination of attributes, which are to be followed by its members sharing the jati's status in the social hierarchy of one's village.

Caste is often used interchangeably with varna which literally means colour. Varna referred to the distinction between Arya and Dasa, referring to fair and dark colours respectively. The Satapatha Brahmana, a part of Yajur Veda, describes the four classes as four varnas. The origin of the varna model is in the Rig Veda where along with the distinction between Arya and Dasa, there is a division of society into three orders, viz. Brahma, Kshatriya and Vish. It was later in Purushasukta hymn, that reference was made to four orders of society as emanating from the creator-Brahmins (traditionally priests and scholars) from the mouth, Rajanya or Kshatriya (ruler and soldier) from the arms, Vaishya (merchant) from the thighs and Shudra (peasant, labourer and servant) from the feet of the creator. The

particular parts of the body associated with these divisions and the order in which they are mentioned determine their status in society. The first three castes are 'twice-born' (dwija) on the account of the donning of the sacred thread in the ritual ceremony of upanayana. In this varna model there is no place for untouchables. However there are references in Vedic literature to groups such as the Ayogava, Chandala, Nishada and Paulkasawho were despised.

Caste has a strong hold in rural society than in urban society. Caste determines the functions, occupation, status, available opportunities and sometimes even handicaps the individual. As caste largely ascertains the ideals and ways of life of rural social groups, it also shapes the value system and worldviews prevailing in the rural society. Some of the characteristics of castes are as follows:

- I **Ascribed Category:** Caste is ascribed at the time of one's birth and remains unchanged for the rest of the life. However, one can elevate one's position in the caste hierarchy through Sanskritization.
- I **Hierarchy:** Caste is based on a hierarchical relationship which is ascertained at the time of birth. However, there are regional variations in the hierarchal relationship between the castes. Sometimes the same jatiwas ranked higher in one region than in another.
- I **Traditional Occupation:** Caste fixes one's traditional occupation at the time of birth. The division of labour ascertained by traditional occupation, helps in the functioning of the Jajmani System, which is based on the symbiotic relationship between jajman or patron and kamin or client. The services provided by the kamin to jajman can be remunerated in cash or kind on daily, monthly, quarterly or yearly basis. The Jajmani System regulates economic and socio-religious interdependence of the castes. However, the traditional occupations on the basis of one's caste are no longer strictly followed.

- I **Endogamous Group:** Castes are endogamous group. Matrimonial alliances have to be formed within one's caste group but outside one's gotra. Inter-caste marriages are forbidden but it is relaxed now-a-days.
- I **Social Restrictions:** Caste decides from which particular caste one can accept what kind of food (cooked or uncooked). It also determines the choice of utensils to offer food. Caste governs one's physical contact, social distance and social interaction. Caste determines the location and type of house in the village. These restrictions are now removed through legislations.

Castes are not weakening in the contemporary rural society in India. Instead it has got a new lease of life and changes have been taking place in caste system which will be discussed in Unit 6.

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### 3.5 RURAL FAMILY AND ITS CHANGING PATTERN

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Impact of urbanization, industrialization, liberalization and globalization has led to changes in rural family. Member from the rural family or the family have migrated to urban areas in search of livelihood due to land pressure, fission of land and increase of people in comparison to available land for cultivation, unemployment, indebtedness among other reasons like better lifestyle, opportunities, the pull factor of the cities and so on. Let us try to understand some of the changes in rural family in India which are discussed below.

- I **Definition of Rural Family:** Defining what constitutes rural family has become problematic. Definition of rural family can only be context specific as it changes from place to place and from time to time. To have a universal definition of family is problematic as there are different types of families- joint family, extended family, nuclear family, single parent family, blended family and so on. An understanding of rural area in India will provide a contrasting picture. Rural areas in Assam are different from rural areas in Punjab or Leh. An understanding of rural family as members living under same roof, eating from same hearth,



male headed family is only a variant of different types of rural family that exists in India.

- I **Disintegration of joint families:** The family studies in India have looked into whether the joint family system is disintegrating and new nuclear type of family is emerging. Rural India typically has joint family and these families often exposed to forces that influence the family system in rural India. The various factors such as land reform, education, new technology, urbanization, industrialization, modernization and globalization have contributed in changing the configuration of rural family system. This has led to disintegration of joint families in rural India.
- I **Formation of nuclear families:** Due to various factors like land reform, land pressure, fission of land, increase of people in comparison to available land for cultivation, unemployment, indebtedness, education, new technology, urbanization, industrialization, modernization, globalization, better opportunities in cities/towns people have been migrating from rural areas to urban areas. Once the migrant gets a foothold in the city brings along the spouse and children from the village to settle in the cities and towns leading to formation of nuclear family.
- I **The size of the rural family:** Due to the forces of globalization, liberalization, privatization, urbanization and other factors the size of the rural family has been decreasing, leading to changes in the composition of the rural family.
- I **Emergence of female-headed families:** Migration of male members of rural family in search of livelihood and better opportunities has led to the emergence of female-headed families in rural India.
- I **Visibility of female labour:** The contribution of female labour to rural family remained invisible earlier, which is now visible through the efforts of feminists work on rural women and the changes in gender relations in the rural family. Women in rural family were involved in domestic

work and farm activities but their contribution to family labour was often neglected. Due to feminist work on rural women, education, spread of awareness regarding women empowerment their contribution to family labour is visible and they are recognized as homemakers rather than housewives.

- I Changes in authority structure:** All these factors had not only changed the composition of the rural family but also changed the authority structure of the rural family. Earlier the male head of the family enjoyed absolute authority over the members of the family and the family affairs. Today due to the changes in the composition and authority structure of the rural family the importance of head of the family has declined.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q1:** Why is it important to study rural society in India?

.....

**Q 2:** What is Orthogenetic Change?

.....

**Q 3:** Name the primary types of division of villages that existed during Chandragupta Maurya's reign.

.....

**Q 4:** Where could one locate linear cluster of villages in India?

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### 3.6 LET US SUM UP

- I** It is essential to understand the rural society in India as majority of India's population resides in its villages and agriculture contributes a large proportion of the country's economic growth.

- I By understanding rural society in India one can understand as Robert Redfield would say a true classic Indian civilization as well as get acquainted with the rapidly changing rural society.
- I Rural Society is distinguished from Urban Society on the basis of size of population, density, occupation, relationship with nature/environment, homogeneity, mobility, and number of contacts per individuals.
- I Rural Society in India has been studied using historical and ecological approaches.
- I Historical Approach helps scholars to study rural society by tracing its growth through different periods in history, studying events, customs and institutions. Data on rural society is collected from written, oral and documented historical archival records and artefacts.
- I Ecological Approach delineates the relationship between human beings and its surrounding natural environment.
- I Taking into account the ecological factors Irawati Karve's divided villages in Maharashtra into three types: tightly nucleated villages, coastal villages and dispersed or clustered villages.
- I Similarly, Shantibhushan Nandi and D.S. Tyagi has also categorized village settlement patterns on the basis of its shape into four types: shapeless cluster, linear cluster, square or rectangular cluster and dispersed cluster.
- I Caste is a basis of stratification and an important organizing principle in Indian rural society. Caste is ascribed at the time of birth. Caste determines the functions, occupation, status, available opportunities and sometimes even handicaps the individual.



### 3.7 FURTHER READING

- 1) Desai, A.R. (1969). Rural Sociology in India. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- 2) Srinivas, M.N. (1962). Caste in Modern India and Other Essays. New York: Asia Publishing House.



### 3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** It is important to study the rural society in India as majority of its population resides in its villages and agriculture contributes a large proportion of the country's economy.

**Ans to Q No 2:** Orthogenetic Change is cultural/structural changes brought in society from within or due to internal force or indigenous evolution.

**Ans to Q No 3:** During Chandragupta Maurya's reign, villages were categorised into three types depending on the size of the population- Jyeshtha (villages with largest population), Madhyama (villages with medium population) and Kanistha (villages with smallest population).

**Ans to Q No 4:** Linear cluster of villages can be found in coastal districts of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and South of Rajasthan



### 3.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

**Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

- Q 1:** Discuss the salient features of rural society in India.
- Q 2:** What is Caste? Explain the characteristics of caste in India.

**Long Questions** (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

- Q 1:** Elucidate the various approaches to understand rural society in India.

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## UNIT 4: RURAL POWER STRUCTURE

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### UNIT STRUCTURE

- 4.1 Learning Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Caste as a source of Rural Power
- 4.4 Landownership in Rural Society
- 4.5 Panchayati Raj System in India
- 4.6 Rural Leadership
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Further Reading
- 4.9 Answers to Check your Progress
- 4.10 Model Questions

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### 4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- I understand how caste becomes a source of rural power
- I explain the nature of Landownership in rural society
- I discuss how land ownership becomes a source of power in rural society in India
- I discuss about the Panchayati Raj System in India
- I discuss the significance of Rural Leadership in Rural Power Structure.

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### 4.2 INTRODUCTION

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Power has been an important area of research for political scientists and sociologists. Various scholars have tried to explore, describe and explain meaning, characteristics, nature and dispersion of power. Max Weber said that every society is based on power. Weber defined power as ability to exercise one's will over others. He said that power could be legitimate or illegitimate. Antonio Gramsci viewed power as hegemonic whereby state or popular majority dominated the citizens who have alternative views about state action. Michel Foucault rejects the binary understanding of power as

domination and resistance instead views power as operating at all levels of social interactions, all social institutions, by all people. For Foucault power and knowledge are intertwined and reinforce each other. Foucault concept of power has been further elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu in his explanation of symbolic power. The various approaches are applied to understand power structure in a particular context.

Rural power structure is an important aspect in understanding operation/ distribution of power and how it affects the lives of people in rural society. In the previous unit, we have discussed about Rural Social Structure. In this unit, we shall focus on Rural Political Structure. We shall try to understand how rural power structure in India could be understood through caste dominance, dominance through landownership, Panchayati Raj and through rural leadership.

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### **4.3 CASTE AS A SOURCE OF RURAL POWER**

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Power in traditional Indian rural society was centred on caste. Louis Dumont views power within the caste system as a legitimate force within a given territory. According to Dumont, the king wields political and economic power but is subordinate to the ritual power of the Brahmins. The political and economic power of the king percolates to the village headman or Sarpanch. The Panchayat members, panch or five village elderly men (generally belonging to upper caste and owning majority of the village lands), were also bestowed with ritual power of the Brahmins. The Panch were seen as 'Panch Parmeshwar', as if god spoke through them. The power of the panch further percolated to their caste members who exerted dominance over other castes. Castes are used to mobilize support and act as vote banks for elections. Castes are extensively used to mobilize support in rural areas than in urban areas. M.N. Srinivas states that caste dominance could be determined through numerical strength of the caste, economic power primarily exercised through landownership, political power exercised through Panchayati Raj, ritual status of caste, Western education and modern occupations. Caste system decides one's position in society through

its hierarchical principles which is ascertained at birth. The hierarchy of the castes was congruent with social, ritual, economic and political power. The dominators not only had social, political, economic and ritual power but also exercised their power in such a way that it perpetuated the subordination of the low castes who could not own land. The rich upper castes were expected to look after the poor and the low castes would in turn oblige through support and services provided to the upper caste. The dominators also exert their dominance through the idiom of purity and impurity. The low untouchable castes have to maintain physical distance and settle their habitation far away from the upper castes. For example, M.N. Srinivas observes that in Rampura the Brahmins generally reside in the centre of the village as seen while the Shudras or untouchables reside near the boundary of the village. In Maharashtra, the untouchables are known as Ante Vasiar Vesakar, living in the end or near/outside the boundary of the village.

The dominance of caste groups are exerted through caste associations which wields and exercises power over the poor and low castes. Caste associations act as a political, social and administrative unit in deciding on matters regarding maintenance of purity of one's caste and in representing one's caste group in the village platform. One of the forms of Caste Associations is Caste Panchayat comprising leading members of a particular caste of village(s). Caste Panchayat solves cases in matters relating to their own caste and offenders of caste norms are punished by a fine, by being forced to arrange a feast for other caste members, ostracism or excommunication and even murder in the name of honour killing to protect the purity and integrity of caste groups.

To exemplify caste dominance in rural society M.N. Srinivas developed the concept of Dominant Caste in his study of Rampura village, which is a short distance from Mysore city in Karnataka. Dominant Castes are a potent source of power and leadership in rural areas. Dominant caste exerts their dominance through numerical preponderance, usually has a high place in

caste hierarchy, ownership of majority of land and through making of important decisions in a specified locality and/or a region. Traditionally even numerically small castes owning lands or wielding political power, and inheriting literary tradition were the dominant castes. But with the introduction of adult suffrage and reservation of seats in rural power structure to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, numerical strength has become an important criterion to become dominant as they act as vote banks for adult suffrage. Some of the examples of dominant castes in India are: Lingayat and Vokkaliga in Mysore; Reddy and Kamma in Andhra Pradesh; Gounder, Padayachi and Mudaliar in Tamil Nadu; Nayar in Kerala; Maratha in Maharashtra; Patidar in Gujarat; Rajput, Jat, Giar and Ahir in North India. The dominant castes exert their dominance and power either through coercive or non-coercive ways. The coercive ways of power are visible and transparent whereas non-coercive is difficult to ascertain directly. For example, Srinivas says that the dominant caste uses muscle power, physical force and boycott as a means to dominate and subordinate the other castes. Dumont says dominance is exerted through abuses, physical punishment, sexual exploitation, low wages and poor working conditions. The non-coercive ways of dominance includes persuasion, gifts, rewards, temporary status elevation and fulfilment of certain demands to be in the good books of the low castes. In spite of land ceiling, the dominant castes still remain dominant by owning majority of lands in the village community. For example: Yogendra Singh states that Vokkaligas are dominant in Rampura, Wangala and Delana in Mysore; Havik Brahmins in Toltagadde village in Mysore; Smarth Brahmins in Kumbapettai village in Tanjore; Rajputs in Senapur; Vaghela Rajputs in Cassandra village in Gujarat as they own majority of all the lands in their respective villages. Through ownership of majority of the land in the village castes can wield power and also provide job to the landless and marginal farmers.



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## 4.4 LANDOWNERSHIP IN RURAL SOCIETY

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Landownership is an important source of power and dominance in rural society. Landownership bestows prestige and status to the owner and also places the owner in a network of relationships where he/she can dominate. Studies conducted by scholars like K.L.Sharma, Jan Breman, T.K.Oommen and Andre Beteille show that most of these landowners belong to upper caste like Brahmin or Rajput castes and tenants and agricultural labourers belong to lower castes. Daniel Thorner has categorized the relationship of production viz. ownership of land into three agrarian classes- Malikis, Kisans and Mazdoors. Malikis comprise absentee landlords or landlords who reside in the village owning large tracts of land and cultivating it through tenants, sub-tenants and sharecroppers who pay rent in turn. The Malikis may manage the land by themselves or hire manager(s) to do the job on his behalf. Though the Malikis have other forms of property their primary income is collected from share in agriculture. Kisans have certain land rights, legal or customary, but these land rights are inferior to that of Malikis. Kisans cultivate the land by themselves or with the help of hired labour. Mazdoors are small peasants or landless labourers who may have subsistence land not sufficient to support a family or who do not have any land rights and work on wage basis on others lands.

Prior to British Rule in India, land was communally owned. During the British rule, land was converted to private property through Permanent Land Settlement which superseded traditional right of village community over land. The Permanent Land Settlement was a form of land revenue system that created two forms of ownership over land-landlordism and individual proprietors. There were various kinds of land revenue systems created during the British rule in India which are discussed below-

- I **Jagirdari System:** This system was prevalent in the princely state of Rajasthan. Under Jagirdari System, jagirs were given to jagirdars (military commanders, courtiers and ministers), an intermediary between the tenant and the government, to collect tax to maintain their feudal set

up, to support themselves, to maintain military force, to maintain the individual expenses of the royal family and cultural, religious and other activities. Jagirdari System was a link between tenants and the government to collect taxes to be paid to the British government. Jagirdari System was abolished in Rajasthan after independence through Rajasthan Jagir Abolition Act which was passed in February 1952 and implemented in 1954. The Jagirdari System was abolished in other parts of India through land reform measures.

- I **Zamindari System:** This system was introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 in Bengal, Bihar, Central Provinces (except Avadh and Agra) and parts of Orissa and Rajasthan (except Jaipur and Jodpur) which created the first group of landlords out of tax farmers to collect revenue. These landlords had to pay a fixed amount of money as revenue to the government according to the terms set forth by Permanent Land Settlement. The zamindars cultivated the land through landless peasants and collected taxes to be paid to the British government. The peasants who were unable to pay taxes were evicted from the lands and replaced by those who could pay higher rents. Zamindari System led to the creation of intermediaries like absentee landlords (who neither resided in village nor cultivated the lands by themselves), taluqdars (had inferior land rights than the zamindars), Jotedars (had directly held land from zamindars and cultivated land by subletting to tenants on 50:50 basis), Pattidars (had permanently leased land from zamindars at fixed rent) and Ijardars (had revenue of an area hired out on contract basis). Zamindari System exploited the peasants who cultivated the lands and they had to pay excessive rents. Zamindari System was abolished through land reform measures.
- I **Ryotwari System:** Under this system the peasants who were landowners or individual proprietors directly paid taxes to the British government. Ryotwari System was introduced by Sir Thomas Munro in 1820 in Madras. Later on Ryotwari System was extended to Bombay

presidency, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and parts of Assam and Coorg provinces. Ryotwari System was also extended to princely states of Jodhpur and Jaipur. Under the Ryotwari System, the individual proprietors had right to sublet their lands, transfer their lands as gift, mortgage or sale their lands. Over a period of time, Ryotwari System led to the creation of landless labourers who were subordinate to the proprietor. Ryotwari System was abolished through land reform measures.

**I Mahalwari System:** This system was first introduced during the period of William Bentick in 1833 in Agra and Avadh. Later on it was extended to North-West Frontier, Punjab and parts of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Under the Mahalwari system, land was divided into mahals which comprised of one or more villages and ownership of land was vested on peasants from whom revenue was collected. The peasants would contribute to the total revenue demands for the mahal in proportion to the size of their land holdings. Mahalwari System was abolished after independence through land reform measures.

Abolition of Jagirdari, Zamindari, Ryotwari and Mahalwari Systems through land reforms including land ceiling, surplus land redistribution and land consolidation was believed to lead to formation of an egalitarian society as the surplus land would be given to landless people. The absentee landlords had to give away their lands to the actual tillers of the soil as they never cultivated the land by themselves. But the ex-zamindars and jagirdars to avoid land ceiling and to avoid their landed property from being passed to landless people formed fake agricultural co-operative societies and legally divided thousands of acres of lands among their kins, relatives and friends. Even servants, acquaintances and hired members were either made members of such societies or were given landholding rights for namesake. In reality, the land was still controlled and owned by ex-zamindars and jagirdars. Even after independence a section of ex-zamindars and jagirdars continued to be dominant as they quickly responded to the changing power

scenario through Panchayati Raj and accepted the new situation. After abolition of zamindari and jagirdari system, a new system that evolved was Khatedari System, which gave ownership of and right to land. The Khatedari System led to their economic prosperity as they mobilised their caste members (which were numerically preponderant in their villages) during the time of election to cast vote in favour of their caste member(s). The ex-zamindars and jagirdars' economic prosperity and their numerical preponderance in the villages aroused their political consciousness to aspire for positions of power and prestige. Studies conducted by K.L.Sharma, T.K.Oommen show that a section of landowners held formal positions of power in the Panchayati Raj and manipulated the benefits in their own interests, and in the interests of their kins, relatives and friends. The exercise of political power through Panchayat has become a decisive factor in becoming dominant in the rural society.

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## **4.5 PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN INDIA**

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The traditional panchayats were patrimonial revenue come administrative systems strengthened by castes and landownership. People who belonged to high castes and had landownership also got hold of the formal positions of power in Panchayat. This scenario of power structure in Panchayati Raj changed after independence due to adult franchise, education, development of transportation and communication, political consciousness and introduction of mass media which includes people from lower-middle and backward castes holding formal positions of power. This change was also possible as Panchayats created through the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution of India in independent India could function as unit of local self governance. Panchayats led to decentralization of democratic power at the grassroot level and empowered the discriminated and subaltern groups in rural society. But the Panchayats were unable to function as institution for rural development as development was planned from above by the government rather than development planned from below by the masses. To overcome the roadblocks of Panchayati Raj a committee

was set up headed by Balwant Rai Mehta in 1957, popularly known as Balwant Rai Mehta Committee which gave certain guidelines for the efficient functioning of the Panchayat Institutes at the grassroot level. The primary guidelines included three tier system of local governance, consisting of GramPanchyat at village level, Panchayat Samiti at block level and ZilaParishad at district level, linking the village to the district and bestowing power and resources for smooth functioning and implementation of development plans and programmes. The members of Gram Panchayats are elected for a period of five years. PanchyatSamitiis headed by an elected representative, the Chairman. All the sarpanches of the villages under a block are its members. ZilaParishad is headed by the District Collector and magistrate, including members of legislative assembly, the presidents of Panchayat Samitis and one district official who is the Secretary of the ZilaParishad. The pattern of Panchayati Raj was based on the co-ordination between non-officials and officials. The non-officials implemented the plans and programmes of development under the supervision of the officials. The guidelines of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee were implemented in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. But the Panchayati Raj constituted under the guidelines of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee started to languish due to various reasons. The non-officials were not given sufficient power and finances and the officials became the primary decision makers. The non-officials who were illiterate could not wield sufficient power against the decisions of the officials. The Panchayat Samiti which distributed resources for the development at block level worked in favour of the upper castes and big landowners. The poor peasants and low castes were discriminated against and neglected. The ZillaParishad also failed to work as an apex tier as it did not have power to implement plans and programmes and failed to coordinate between all the tiers. Thus, the three-tier Panchayati Raj suggested by Balwant Rai Mehta Committee started to crumble down. A new committee was set up headed by renowned economist Ashok Mehta in 1977, popularly known as Ashok Mehta Committee which suggested certain changes to overcome the problems of three-tier Panchayati Raj

and improve the Panchayati Raj. The loopholes in earlier three-tier Panchayati Raj were that it was not a political institution but an implementation body. Elections were held on individual basis and there was no role of political parties at grassroot level politics. The primary guidelines made by Ashok Mehta Committee included introduction of a two-tier system, which led to the creation of Mandal Panchayats instead of Panchayat Samitis that made administration easy as Mandal Panchayats were smaller in comparison to Panchayat Samitis. Panchayats were now a decision making body which also looked after the governance of the villages. Some of the guidelines of Ashok Mehta Committee were introduced through 73rd and 74th amendments, which reserved seats for women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes and empowered the weaker sections of rural society to participate in the Panchayati Raj. Reservation of seats in Panchayati Raj improved the weaker sections power to make decisions and work for the development of the rural society. The need to empower women became an international agenda after the UN designated 1975-1985 as decade for women. 'Towards Equality Report' (1974), a report to understand the status of women in India, brought out that even though women constituted nearly half of the population in India they were discriminated against and subordinated. Efforts were made to empower women through education, improving healthcare, better working conditions, access to legal mechanisms and changes in laws, by granting political power through 33 per cent of reservation for women in Panchayati Raj and so on. Seats were also reserved for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes to improve their conditions and empower them to participate in the decision making process even at the lowest rung of the democratic set-up viz. Panchayati Raj. The 73rd Amendment also introduced changes in the election of the members of Panchayati Raj. Elections are now contested on political party basis.

But studies conducted by T.K. Oommen show that the power remained in the hands of the traditional rural elites. He gave the concept of power reservoirs and power exercisers to explain the camouflaging of power in

the hands of traditional rural elites. He said that in most of the cases the power reservoirs control the resources of the rural society; have contacts with influential political leaders and administrators to whom they extend their support and co-operation and expect the same from them, have accumulated wealth and property; and oblige their kins, relatives and friends to form a support structure in the rural society. The power exercisers who are pseudo power elites, to retain their official position oblige to the power reservoirs by granting loans, benefits and resources.

Studies conducted by F.G. Bailey in Orissa show that some of the ex-tenants belonging to peasant classes after independence have become politically influential. But this is not true for majority of the peasant classes as they continue to languish in poverty and strive to make their ends meet. Thus from the above discussion it could be inferred that political power as in the past is not tied to ownership of majority of lands and property. New bases of power have emerged which are not essentially based on caste or class. Rural power is not primarily based on ascription like caste, hereditary ownership of land and property but could now be achieved through individual potentialities, networking, traits, personality and qualities. It has been observed that rural leaders came from different castes, classes, may or may not have ownership of land and property but had access to rural power.

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## **4.6 RURAL LEADERSHIP**

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Rural Leaders in the colonial period and even in post-colonial period came from high caste and lineage, exerting economic dominance through landownership and ownership of property, and exercising political power through the Panchayat. Rural leadership is splintered and caste and faction oriented. However, scholars like Yogendra Singh, Andre Beteille, A.R. Hiranman have noted a transition in rural leadership as they do not come from the same caste, economic position and share similar social and cultural attributes. Scholars like S.C. Dube, Oommen believed that group dominance through castes were unreal due to the group character and distribution of power and dominance. Dube believed that dominance is exercised by

individuals (families) and not the castes. He stated that there are dominant individuals and not dominant castes in a rural society. Dominant individuals exercise dominance within or without caste or within and outside caste simultaneously due to one's personality, skills, qualities and affiliation with political party to attain specified goals. The status of the dominant individual is secular, relative and based on his/her progress and wellbeing (including his/her family) and not based on the caste or group he/she belongs to. T.K.Oommen states that the context of dominance and the resources available to an individual are important factors of rural leadership. The rural leaders are product of developments of post-colonial India like adult-franchise, Panchayati Raj, education, abolition of Zamindari and Jagirdari systems, affiliation with political party, means of communication and transportation.

Thus, from the above discussion, it can be seen that the traditional rural power structure based on caste, numerical strength and landownership is changing. It has led to the emergence of new democratic open power structures where the traditional factors of power like caste, numerical strength and landownership interplays with other factors like education, access to political parties, means of transportation and communication. Thus it can be seen that rural power structure varies according to time and place combining a number of factors which leads to the creation of a new rural power structure.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q 1:** Define power.

.....

**Q 2:** Who gave the concept of Dominant Caste?

.....

**Q 3:** Who introduced the Ryotwari System in colonial India?

.....



**Q 4:** Name the committee, which suggested three local self-governance at the grass root level.

.....

**Q 5:** What do you understand by the term Vesakar?

.....



## 4.7 LET US SUM UP

- I Rural power structure is important to understand operation/distribution of power and how it affects the lives of people in rural society.
- I Rural power structure in India could be understood through caste dominance, dominance through landownership, Panchayati Raj and through rural leadership.
- I Power in traditional Indian rural society was centred on caste. Caste system decides one's position in society through its hierarchical principles which is ascertained since birth.
- I The hierarchy of the castes was congruent with social, ritual, economic and political power. The dominators not only had social, political, economic and ritual power but also exercised their power in such a way that it perpetuated the subordination of the low castes who could not own land.
- I The dominance of caste groups is exerted through caste associations which wields and exercises power over the poor and low castes. Caste Associations act as a political, social and administrative unit in deciding on matters regarding to maintenance of the purity of one's caste and representing one's caste group in the village platform.
- I To exemplify caste dominance in rural society M.N. Srinivas developed the concept of Dominant Caste in his study of Rampuravillage which is a short distance from Mysore city, Karnataka.

- I Dominant caste exerts their dominance through numerical preponderance, usually has a high place in caste hierarchy, has ownership of majority of land and makes important decisions in a specified locality and/or a region. The dominant caste exerts its dominance and power either through coercive or non-coercive ways.
- I Landownership is an important source of power and dominance in rural society. Landownership bestows prestige and status to the owner and also places the owner in a network of relationships where he/she can dominate.
- I Studies conducted by K.L.Sharma show that a section of landowners held formal positions of power in the Panchayati Raj and manipulated the benefits in their own interests, and in the interests of their kins, relatives and friends.
- I The traditional panchayats were patrimonial revenue collection administrative system strengthened by castes and landownership. This scenario of power structure in Panchayati Raj changed after independence due to adult franchise, education, development of transportation and communication, political consciousness and introduction to mass media which includes people from lower-middle and backward castes holding formal positions of power.
- I Rural power is not primarily based on ascription like caste, hereditary ownership of land and property but could now be achieved through individual potentialities, networking, traits, personality and qualities.
- I Rural power structure varies according to time and place combining a number of factors which leads to the creation of a new rural power structure.



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## 4.8 FURTHER READING

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- 1) Doshi, S.L.& Jain, P.C. (1999). Rural Sociology. New Delhi: Rawat Publications.
- 2) Sharma, K.L.(2014). Sociological Probing in Rural Society. New Delhi: Sage.



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## 4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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**Ans to Q No 1:**Power is defined as the ability to exert one's will over others.

**Ans to Q No 2:**The concept of Dominant Caste was developed by M.N.Srinivas.

**Ans to Q No 3:**Sir Thomas Munro introduced Ryotwari System in colonial India.

**Ans to Q No 4:**Balwant Rai Mehta Committee suggested three-tier local self-governance at the grass root level.

**Ans to Q No 5:**Vesakar comprises of low castes of Maharashtra who lives in the end or near/outside the boundary of the village.



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## 4.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

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**Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

- Q 1:** Explain the concept of Dominant Caste?
- Q 2:** Elucidate the types of land revenue system of colonial India.

**Long Questions** (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

- Q 1:** Write a note on rural power structure in India.
- Q 2:** 'Rural Power structure is changing in independent India'. Comment.

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## UNIT 5: RURAL ECONOMY

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### UNIT STRUCTURE

- 5.1 Learning Objectives
- 5.2 Introduction
- 5.3 Occupational Structure in Rural Societies
- 5.4 Land Ownership Patterns in Indian Village Societies
  - 5.4.1 Land Relations in Different Periods in History
  - 5.4.2 Agrarian Reforms in Post-Independence Period
- 5.6 System of Zamindari and Feudalism
  - 2.6.1 Changes During the Post-Independent Period
  - 2.6.2 The Green Revolution
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 Further Reading
- 5.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 5.10 Model Questions

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### 5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- I define rural people and the importance of agriculture in their lives
- I identify various cultural practices that are closely intertwined with agricultural practices
- I discuss various developmental measures that transform the rural societies after independence
- I analyse the significance of Zamindari system prevalent mainly during Colonial India and its impact on the society.

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### 5.2 INTRODUCTION

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The previous units have set the stage for a broader understanding of the rural societies in India by providing a discussion on the significance of studying these societies, their major features as well as some of the changes that these societies are experiencing with the development of urban centers. Rural Sociology as a specialised branch of Sociology concentrates on

understanding various aspects of rural societies from sociological point of view. The study of the Indian agrarian context occupies special status, both in the social science literature on India and in the literature on agrarian societies in general. In this unit, we will proceed further for a comprehensive understanding of the Occupational Structures, Patterns of land ownership as well as the systems of Zamindari and Feudalism in Indian society. In addition, changes and development that have taken place in the present village societies will also be discussed.

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### **5.3 OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE IN RURAL SOCIETIES**

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Since economic production is the basic activity of a human society, the mode of production plays a determining role in shaping the social structure. Rural society is based predominantly on agriculture. As discussed in unit I India is a land of villages and majority of India's people live in rural areas (67%, according to the 2001 Census). Agriculture is the major occupation of rural population and thus they make their living from agriculture or related occupations. For the rural people, land is the most important form of property. Agriculture is not only the source of livelihoods and survival for them. It is also a way of life. That is, agriculture is tied up with their rhythm of life, which gets reflected in various cultural practices. There is a close connection between agriculture and culture. However, the nature and practices of agriculture varies greatly across different regions of the country. It may be said that culture and social structure in rural India are closely intertwined with agricultural and agrarian way of life. For instance, most of the New Year festivals in different parts of the country are associated with agriculture. Bihu in Assam, Baisahki in Punjab, Pongal in Tamil Nadu and Ugadi in Karnataka, etc. are some of the festivals are celebrated during the main harvest month and herald the beginning of a new agricultural season.

In rural areas, agriculture is the single most important source of livelihood for the majority of the people. However, rural people are also engaged in a variety of other activities, apart from agriculture. A large numbers of weavers,

potters, ironsmiths, goldsmiths, carpenters are also found to play an important role in the village economy. This kind of diversity in occupations in rural India was reflected in the caste system, which in most regions includes specialist 'service' castes such as washerman, potters and goldsmiths. We have already discussed the caste system in detail in unit I. Castes were traditionally linked to different specialised occupations. A person born into a caste could only practice occupation associated with caste, so that occupations were hereditary, that is passed on from generation to generation. A particular occupation could only be pursued by the caste associated with it – members of other castes could not enter the occupation. Some occupations were considered inferior while some as superior. For instance, barbering, washing clothes, pottery, shoe making, weaving, etc. were considered inferior. Learning, priesthood and teaching were prestigious professions mostly pursued by the Brahmins. Individual talents and achievements were neglected. But agriculture was open to all the castes.

Nevertheless, the rigidity of the caste system began to show signs of changes during the British rule in India. With the advent of industrialisation in Indian society, the caste-based occupations started to decline largely. New industries, occupations, employment opportunities, etc came to establish. The growth of industries destroyed the old crafts and household industries and provided numerous ways of earning livelihood. Introduction of railways, telegraphs and laying of roads helped trade and commerce. People from all castes started making use of the new economics opportunities. These changes in the society has also resulted in occupational and geographical mobility. Movement of people from compact ancestral villages to the towns and cities started breaking down many of the rigid caste norms. Crowded trains and buses could bring together lakhs of people of all castes. Taboos and social restrictions of intermingling of different castes also started weakening. Therefore, these industrial and their concomitant developments made caste-members to come out of the hold of caste-based occupations and to resort to the new occupational avenues based purely on personal preferences and choices.

Today, we see increasing interconnections between the rural and urban societies. Many people living in the rural areas own agricultural lands, at the same time their income is also supplemented by other sources. Many of them are employed in government services, petty businesses, factory workers, army, and so on outside their villages. Some of them stay in the urban towns and cities where they work. Whereas some villagers commute daily to their place of work. The development of transport and communication has helped these rural people to come in contact with the urban societies. Also, we see that the towns and cities have grown and mainly encompassed surrounding villages. The direct contacts with the urban societies have brought about significant changes in the rural occupational structure. It is true that caste system has not done away with from the society. But the strict caste rules dictating the traditional occupational hierarchy have become subtle. Most of the unemployed youths in the villages have chosen petty businesses to make their livelihoods. Many own small shops in the village to earn livelihoods. While some daily commute to the nearby towns and cities to sell vegetables. So, the developments of urban centers surrounding the villages have helped the villagers to earn their livelihood from diverse occupations, irrespective of castes.

Thus, the urban areas began to be characterised by new occupational relationships. This changed the character of urban areas of the old feudal society and created new problems characteristics of the new capitalist society, for example, anonymity, employer-employee relationship, housing, health, etc. This growth and spread of urban areas was made possible by the physical movement of human beings, which was facilitated by the developments in transport and communication. That established the links between the urban and rural areas with all its implications. The migration was helped by the real and believed opportunities in the urban areas, by the expectations of better monetary rewards of labour than in rural areas and by the idea of better living conditions. The new outlook penetrated the rural areas. The old concepts that India is rural India and the urban is dependent on the rural areas are becoming out of date. The combined

effect of all the occupational change was the creation of differentiations within the social groups of the old society both in urban and rural areas. That changed the old relations between those groups. That change in the old relationship also struck at the division of labour based on sex and at the old stratificatory system by striking at the occupational relationship based on caste, family and village community. All these structural changes threw up individuals who would utilise the opportunity to move in wider social and geographical space. That gave rise to the phenomenon of social mobility to industrial settings which characterises the capitalist society as distinguished from moribund feudal society of the past.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

#### Q 1: Fill in the blanks

- (a) .....is the dominant activity in any human society.
- (b) In .....agriculture is the main source of livelihood.

**Q 2:** In what ways the caste system and occupations are interconnected?

## 5.4 LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS IN INDIAN VILLAGE SOCIETIES

Whenever we talk of rural sociology, we are concerned with the agrarian social system. The importance of land, landholdings and land relations, including its control and management, assumes significant meaning in rural life as we have already mentioned. It is because of the fact that a large number of people depend on land directly or indirectly. Land is the most basic source of sustenance for the rural population.

Anthropologists, sociologists and economists have stressed the aspects of rural agrarian structure with a focus on land tenure system, land ceiling, land reforms, land control and management. These studies have also included the problems of peasantry and peasant struggles. In this unit, we



intend to deal with several of these aspects which are related to land, land tenure, agrarian stratification, green revolution, etc. We are convinced that without studying the agrarian social structure, it is almost very difficult for us to develop any insight in India's rural society. There is yet another reason for laying emphasis on land studies. A general observation in the realm of land reforms would immediately show that all over the country the agitations related to land demand for reforms pertaining to land, water and forests. It amply shows that the village people can hardly afford to wait any further for the solution of land tenure and land relations. The study of agrarian systems will centre round the problem of land and its utilisation for productive purposes. According to Andre Beteille, the land problems in India and the study of agrarian social structure revolve round two major issues such as:

- I technological arrangements, and
- I social arrangements

The technological arrangement means the management of land. It includes land ownership, control and use of land. Technological arrangement is discussed in relation to variations in ecological conditions. In other words, land is looked in terms of the geography which surrounds the land.

The technological arrangements thus include ecological conditions along with the new agriculture technology, such as water, pumps, thresher, chemical manure, improved seeds, etc.

Another aspect of agrarian system is that of social management. It includes land control and landownership. It is found that the Indian agricultural communities have recently been highly stratified. It shows that there is close relationship between the system of stratification and the division of work.

Sociologists and anthropologists, who have recently studied agrarian system, have very strongly argued that changes in land relations have affected the stratification patterns of villages. The crucial aspect of agrarian

structure is the control over land. It is the basis of agrarian stratification. When agrarian social structure is discussed invariably we refer to land ownership, land control and use of land. Such an approach to land helps us to find out agrarian hierarchy.

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### 5.4.1 Land Relations in Different Periods in History

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Agriculture in India holds a place of pride in terms of both income and employment. It is the way of life that penetrates its organisational structure and moulds its value system. In India unequal distribution of property and income forms the basis of agrarian hierarchy. Indian agriculture comprises of multiple social systems each displaying a different process of change. Before discussing the inherent complexities of the Indian agrarian sector, we shall trace the evolution which contributed to this complex structure. Hence, the discussion will be classified into three periods: ancient, medieval and British. Later, we shall examine the post-Independence agrarian policy and reform efforts. This would help us to understand the present scenario in a better way.

Ø **Ancient Period:** Ancient India depicts a complex set of land relations involving private ownership, royal administration and communal rule of village. This multiple structure is a complete whole which comprises of three different layers. Land tenure as one layer or level would be completely different from the other. A brief discussion about three formations will clarify this issue. Private ownership finds justification in the writings of Manu. According to him, land belongs to the person who clears it. This refers to the age of abundance and free possession. Later, geographical constraint of demographic factors made good quality land comparatively scarce. At this stage private ownership was acquired through land grants or assignments. Reference to land grants is found in Vedic literature where grants to Brahmins were revenue free with rights of alienation. The notion of private property acquired a strong hold in the social structure. The ruler, though having an overlordship was unable to abolish private purchase, sale or donation. All these show

that private owners possess the right to alienate land owned by them. But this kind of absolute ownership was exercised by religious grantees only. The case was different with others. These landlords were closely watched by the village officers of the king. This land was liable to confiscation for improper use or partial use. Though land transfer was theoretically possible, the following constraints were present on the right to transfer:

- I sale was made within the same group or sect only,
- I any proposal of alienation needed sanctions from the elders of the group.

Such a constrained relationship cannot be termed 'private' in modern sense of the term. The overlordship of these private lands belonged to the king or the supreme power.

From the Vedic times, India has a stratified social structure. The village evolved as a self-sufficient unit of the society based on the caste system. It developed its own support system. The complementary relationship between the groups of dominant peasant castes on one hand and artisans and peasant classes on the other was the special characteristic of the Indian rural economy. In essence, this often quoted relationship centered round the production and distribution by the hereditary occupational castes. The non-agricultural castes were compensated by traditionally fixed shares of village produce and in some cases by small plots of land. But these castes always retain some measures of freedom to sell their goods and services to earn extra income. The payment made by the villagers was meant to assure them of their minimal subsistence.

The village structure was quite organised. All lands belonged to the village community. The king exercised minimal influence. At times, since the village was inhabited by tribes, village authority was akin to tribal authority. The land distribution was not completely static. Migrations and demographic changes brought about alterations in the distribution pattern

of the village land. Village organisation became the centre of power after the Gupta period when central authority was comparatively weak and emerged as 'nuclear areas of cooperative institutions'. Thus, the decentralisation of authority and emerging role of the village organisations started during the Gupta period. These village organisations were considered as the embryo form of future feudal structure. The king or his intermediary claimed a part of the produce of the land. The revenue was collected from village individuals and deposited in a common pool. Some common expenses of the village were made out of the pool. The share of the overlord was given by the village committee (consisted of the representatives of the villagers). Thus, land as a thing of value was regarded as being part of an aggregate wealth of the community rather than belonging to a single person. But the system was not free from exploitation and class differentiation. The contribution to the pool differed among different people. The headman enjoyed some revenue free allotments. The person controlling the pool and the class favoured by the dominant group paid lower rates of revenue. To compensate, the lower strata of peasants had to pay more. Growth and hierarchical structure and evolution of the positions of the intermediaries landed estates were considered as feudalistic features by some. While some others have refuted them. But whether the trend indicates feudalisation or not, it created considerable change of land relations, politics and culture and the major characteristics of that change was decentralisation.

Ø **Medieval Period:** The medieval period exercised considerable influence on the evolution of intermediaries. The Muslim rulers engaged the military personnel and paid them with a plot of land for their services. Over a period of time, by a process of commendation these free proprietors lost their independence and there with their allodial tenure became feudal. Early jagirs could not be inherited or transferred. But they could be confiscated by sovereign if the intermediary left his service. In the following centuries, these rulers were thus, modified as intermediaries (zamindars and jagirdars) established local power

enabling them to retain their status and pass on to their sons. When zamindari rights became alienable, the land belonging to the zamindar was divided among his sons, on his death. This way, during this period, zamindari rights were established and with the passage of time the zamindari rights were scattered through inheritance. As a result, two types of landowners emerged.

Each lineage was divided into the more powerful branch which held the fort and other less powerful branch who held lesser village privileges. The former were termed as intermediary or secondary zamindars who might collect revenue from their less affluent kinsmen (who were known as the village or primary zamindars). These primary zamindars were also sometimes known as 'pattidars'. The intermediary zamindar's rights solely extended to the land revenue collection at a superior level. The primary zamindars were the landholders having intermediary proprietary dominion over the soil including a restricted power of mortgage and alienation as well as the rights to locate cultivators, control the waste, sinks, wells and plant groves. They were generally found to be settled as dominant lineages in a number of contiguous villages. The important aspect was not only the territorial extent but also the depth of penetration of the lineage groups over the agricultural community. The small landowners ceded their rights to the large landowners and became their dependents, on condition that they retain the hereditary use of the land. The continuous extension of land made it impossible for the large landowners to collect revenue without the help of others. Thus, sub-infeudation evolved creating differentiation in land control rights over land under direct or indirect supervision. The land cultivated directly by the zamindars was termed as 'Shiror Khas' land to distinguish it from land which was allotted to sub-intermediaries for cultivation. From this allotted land, zamindars used to take a portion of the produce as a due for his overlordship.

Thus, the identification of different levels of land rights in India has been long ridden by the use of the confused terms. The term zamindar

became predominant in the 17th century replacing or altering with a large numbers of local terms signifying the similar land owning rights as 'khoti' and 'maquaddam' in Doab Satarabi and 'biswi' in Awadh, 'bhoomi' in Rajasthan, 'bhant' or 'vant' in Gujarat. The zamindar in Persian language means keeper or holder of land. The suffix 'dar' implies a degree of control or attachment, but not necessarily ownership. The ownership right actually originated during the Mughal period when the term implied hereditary claim to a direct share in the produce in the produce of land under his possession. The peasant group was called 'muzari', 'asami' or 'raya'. Application of similar terms to denote different land rights added to this confusion. The term 'talukdar' in north India meant a big zamindar engaged on behalf of few small zamindars to pay revenue to the government. In Bengal, the same term was used to address or donate person of a lower status than a zamindar.

The supreme overlordship of land rested upon the ruler. Variety in land relations originated from the revenue extraction. Land close to capital was kept under the direct control of the ruler. Hence these Khas lands had wage tenancy. But land extending to the furthest corner of the kingdom was difficult to control directly and representatives were appointed, thus giving rise to three-tier relationships in land. Revenue rates were also not uniform. Of course varying revenue rates accounted for various types of land. Mughal tax was not proper rent or even land tax on the crops. Though the system reduced expenses of collection and vexation of revenue collecting authorities, it kept the peasants ignorant about the tax that they had to pay. To reduce the chance of exploitation of the peasantry, annual assessment was made on the basis of area statistics. Measures were adopted to curb the power of the intermediaries by keeping their possession of land as temporary by transferring them yearly, or every two or three years. Also, there was a provision of award of promotion or demotion by changing the size of their territory on the basis of their performance. To prevent the intermediary from charging more than the authorised taxes- a copy of the revenue paper was kept with the permanent local official. But the short term arrangement only enhanced the desire for maximum

unauthorised extractions. In its cumulative effort, such pressure not only not inhibited extension of cultivation, but also involved the Mughal ruling class in a deepening conflict with the major agrarian classes (zamindars and peasants). By 1850, land was steadily passed on into the hands of the non-agricultural classes. The transfer of land became far more complex in this process. Thus, the villagers and the peasants remained passive in the face of agricultural conflict involving change in the ownership.

Ø **British Period:** In the country, before the beginning of Colonial rule, village land was owned by the community as a whole. In the pre-British India, village agriculture mainly produced for meeting the needs of the village population. Their subsistence village agricultural economy was transformed into a market economy during the British period. The British regime introduced new revenue system by superseding the traditional rights of the village community over the village land. The British rule, thus, created two forms of property in land, that is, landlordism in some parts of the country and the individual peasant proprietorship in others. Hence, the British transformed the community land into private property for revenue accumulation. Land was the most important source of revenue extraction.



#### LET US KNOW

Commenting on the introduction of private property in land A.R. Desai observes: 'It was Lord Cornwallis who, during his term of office, created the first group of landlords in India by introducing the Permanent Land Settlement for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1793. These landlords were created out of the tax farmers to collect revenue from these provinces on a commission basis. The Permanent Land Settlement converted these revenue collectors into too many landlords. Under the terms of the Permanent Settlement, they had, henceforth to make a fixed payment to the government of the East India Company.'

The Agrarian structure has changed enormously over time, from the Colonial to the Post-Colonial Periods. When the British colonised India, they saw land as a major source of revenue extraction. They even encouraged more clearance of jungles to facilitate agrarian expansion and for that matter more revenue earnings. The British Government created private property in India in the form of ryotwari and zamindari. In the ryotwari area, it introduced the system under which the peasant producer had to pay to the state increasing land tax in cash instead of in kind. The land tax grew progressively heavy resulting into the increasing indebtedness of the agriculturists. In the zamindari area, the burden of increasing rent imposed on the tenant producer by the zamindar impoverished the tenant and saddled him also with the ever-increasing burden of debt. Thus, the British introduced different land tenure systems in the Indian society in order to procure maximum revenue. It is the land which constitutes the major source of livelihood for the village people. But all the peasants who live in villages do not own their individual land. Many of them purchase rights of cultivation and occupancy from others. In return, from hired rights in land, these people pay the landlords or their intermediaries a fixed share of the produce. They are called peasants. In fact, the emergence of peasants goes back to the British Period when in 1793 the Permanent Land Settlement was made. The zamindari system which emerged from land settlement was an intermediary system. The system created the class of tenants who suffered from operation at the hands of the zamindars. It was a historical emergence found for the first time in Indian agrarian history. In the princely states, the jagirdar worked as an intermediary between the tenant and the central princely rule. In these states, jagirdar was the counterpart of zamindar. The status of the tenant in pre-independent India was highly deplorable. Many districts of Colonial India were administered through the zamindari system. The British also granted property rights to the zamindars. They were given more control over land than they had before. Since, the British also imposed heavy land revenue (taxes) on agriculture, the zamindars extracted as much produce or money as they could out of the cultivators. One result of this zamindari system was that agricultural production stagnated or declined during much of the period of British rule.



It must be observed that different types of tenants emerged during the Colonial period. Historically, variations in tenancy could be explained by the fact that the Colonial and feudal forces in India determined the form and extent of tenancy. However, according to K.L. Sharma, at a broader plane, it could be said that there are four kinds of tenancies in different part of the country:

- Ø Paying cash rent tenants: They pay part of their rent in cash.
- Ø Crop-sharing tenants: They pay a share of the crops only.
- Ø Paying fixed product tenants: They pay a fixed share of the crops or kind to the landlords.
- Ø Unspecified tenants other than the above three.

The British period realised that land was the key factor in the process of Indian economic development and they must control land in order to stabilise their rule over the continent. But they found the prevailing system quite perplexing. They changed the entire system of ownership. Their first step was to fix the legal owner of the land. In 1769, the company divided parganas into 15 lots each and auctioned them with revenue to be paid to the company. The auctioned sales placed the ownership of land beyond the reach of the poor persons attached to the soil and created a new aristocracy who were originally moneylenders or traders. The new owners squeezed the peasants to pay the speculative land revenue. Famines, land abandon and decline in revenue made the government understand the failure of the scheme, but they attributed the failure of the scheme to the short period of the land settlement. The government expected that lengthening of the period of the lease would create an incentive to invest and make the landlords innovative. But the extension of the period did not bring the desired change. Land revenue increased four-fold. The zamindars were so heavily taxed that they kept themselves busy in shifting the burden to the ryots. The dispossession of zamindars due to non-payment continued.

The British East India Company, superimposing the 18th century concept of private property on a very different indigenous land system, assumed that the 'revenue farmers' in fact owned the land even though they neither worked in it nor invested in it. Ignoring any rights of the actual tillers, the permanent settlement of Bengal 1793 gave the zamindars the rights to fix their terms with the cultivators in return for fixed land revenue from the zamindars to the state. By this single piece of legislation, the actual tillers of the soil became the tenants, while a class of revenue farmers became de facto owners of the land but they did not cultivate. An exorbitant increase in revenue demand weakened the position of the zamindars. As a result the whole agrarian sector was in a decaying condition.

After 1870 constructive efforts were made to improve agrarian conditions. In the estates under the direct control of the government, new crops and new methods of cultivation were introduced. To encourage dissemination of new technologies, the government monetary assistance to those landowners who had initiatives. Thus, commercial process was initiated in several pockets but could not penetrate the traditional sector. As a result dualism involved in agrarian sector. The modernised parts worked on commercial lines with fully developed modern technology and know-how. A new type of commodity production was taking place. It was marked by fundamentally a new structure of production process in which modernised labour played important role on the basis of expanding inter-sectoral commodity exchange. The traditional sector with low income and consequent low rural demand for producer's goods, extensive arrear in debt and subsistency continued to hold back the revolutionary influence created by modernised sector. Hence, re-structuring of the agrarian economy was an essential pre-condition for the accelerated development of the economy. A built-in depressor characterised by the exploitation of the peasantry, low capital intensity and traditional methods of production were operating all over the country which resulted in virtual stagnation of the economy as a whole.

After Independence, the primary task was to remove stagnation and provide initiative to the mass of poor cultivators. The need for agrarian reform to change the prevailing structure and built an egalitarian distribution pattern was earnestly felt. From the modest approach of abolition of the intermediaries and provision of security of tenure, the programmes included numerous issues, which reduce disparities and contradictions in the social and economic spheres and thus facilitate economic development.

### **5.4.2 Agrarian Reforms in the Post-Independence Period**

After Independence, a high power committee was set up in 1948 under the chairmanship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The Committee recommended:

- Ø the elimination of all intermediaries and to introduce non-profit making organizations (such as co-operatives) to perform the functions of intermediaries
- Ø land should be held as source of employment. Land belonging to the non-cultivating owners must be taken back by the government
- Ø maximum and minimum size of landholdings must be fixed.

As a follow up, the Congress Agrarian Reform Committee under J C Kumarappa suggested the following course of action for reforming land structure and relations:

- Ø abolition of the intermediaries and land must be given to the actual tillers of the soil
- Ø encouragement of self-cultivation. Leasing to be prohibited (permitted under exceptions)
- Ø tenants of six years should be granted occupancy rights. In case of sale, right to purchase should be given to these tenants at price fixed by the land tribunal

After Independence in the early 1950's India went for a planned economic development. In framing planned development strategies, the above aspects of land re-structuring and changing production relationships remained very prominent in the minds of planners and policy-makers. During the four decades of planned development, what happened to these considerations should be appropriately examined before deciding future strategic issues in this vital area. In what follows the progress of land reforms and related aspects during the period of each plan starting from the First Five Year Plan will be briefly reviewed.

Ø **Land Reforms Under Plans:** The land reform policy was concretised for the first time under the First Five Year Plan (1951-56). Agrarian classes were classified into: intermediaries, large owners, small and medium owners, tenants at will and landless workers (Government of India 1951). Special emphasis was given on abolition of intermediaries, enactment of radical tenancy law and resumption of cultivation based on peasant proprietorship. The need for providing a ceiling and lower limit to agricultural land was recommended. Confirmation of ownership rights and starting a redistributive process by imposition of ceiling were two broad areas of reform effects undertaken under the second plan. The First Plan while introducing ceiling provided for the rights of resumption up to the limit for personal cultivation. But experiences showed that provisions of resumption actually resulted in ejection of tenancy. Hence conditions of resumptions were properly specified under the second plan to plug loopholes. Special attention was given to the ownership issue of the small farmers. To enable the small farmers to resume personal cultivation the time constraint was removed in their case. Considering the fact that the medium sized owners could transfer a part of their land in another name to enlist themselves as small holders- all land transferees were debarred from being considered as small farmers.

The Third Plan reiterated the policy accepted by the previous two plans and emphasised the necessity of quick completion of land reforms programmes as the foundation for agricultural growth. The Fourth Five Year Plan reviewed the existing land reform measures and acknowledged the gaps between the set objectives and actual legislation. Implementation of prescribed laws was considered ineffective and inadequate.

Fifth Plan again re-emphasised the need for speedy implementation. The implementation work to be successful must be preceded by knowledge and training. High priority was given to preparation and maintenance of land records and cadastral survey. Civil courts along with land reform tribunal were given power to handle implementation problems. Sixth Plan critically evaluated the progress of implementation. In spite of vigorous efforts to plug the loopholes and ensure proper implementation, problems related to ceiling limit and security of tenure, gaps in achievement persisted. Hence, further strengthening of efforts in these areas of reforms was advocated in the sixth plan. But by the end of the Sixth Plan period, the emerging picture was not at all impressive. Even after abolition of intermediaries such relations were still prevailing in some states.

Seventh Plan decided to remove the inefficiencies of prevailing tenancy laws. It insisted on recording of informal tenants. The involvement of local personnel and people's institutions in this sphere was advocated for permanent solution to this problem. Emphasis was also stress on formulation of long-term measures on recording land rights. Eight Plan also focuses on agrarian relations. Re-structuring of agrarian relationship was considered crucial to rural transformation. It proposes to initiate steps to review and reformulate land legislations and ensure effective implementation. The inclusion of land reform laws in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution was a step in this direction. Land reforms should encompass various aspects of land relationships such as tenancy, homesteads, consolidation of holdings and distribution of surplus land at the disposal of the government. The land so provided to the poor must be developed to fit for cultivation on a group

basis. So far as tribal lands are concerned, there should be prohibition on its sale or transfer to non-tribals. In the context of land reforms, proper maintenance and improvement of land records should be given priority.

The overall aim was to bring about an egalitarian agrarian structure. From the above discussion, we have tried to understand how land relations changed over a period of time. In the ancient period, multiple structure of land relations consisted of three different levels. Absolute ownership was exercised only by religious grantees. In all cases there was no private ownership (or the concept of land as private property) till the advent of the British. Land as a thing of values was regarded as being part of the aggregate (belonging to the community as a whole) rather than belonging to a single person. In spite of the absence of private property in the ancient and medieval times, the land system was not free from exploitation and class differentiation.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

#### Q 3: Fill in the blanks

- (a) .....is the central theme of rural sociology.
- (b) A.R. Desai's study of the agrarian social structure is based on .....and..... methodologies.
- (c) The Congress Agrarian Reform Committee was set up by.....

Q 4: When and who introduced the 'Permanent Land Settlement'?

.....

Thus, the study of the rural sociology, in fact, is the study of agrarian social system. The social and cultural life of a village is largely determined by the relations of people to the land. It is in this context, we have discussed the agrarian system prevalent in our country. In doing so we have examined the system of land ownership patterns in different epochs in history. In a

rural society, land is the prime productive asset which determines the income, employment, status and authority of a person. In any discussion of rural sociology land tenure system and land reforms constitute an important part of the study. In the next section we shall discuss the system of zamindari and feudalism in detail.

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## 5.6 SYSTEM OF ZAMINDARI AND FEUDALISM

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The land ownership pattern developed during the colonial period brought about a significant shift in the indigenous system of land ownership and control. The Asiatic mode of production that prevailed in India before the advent of colonial conquest was destroyed by the British rule. They reconstructed Indian society in such a way that it serves the colonial subjugation and plunder. With the introduction of railways, the British sowed the seeds of capitalist expansion in India. At the same time in agrarian sector, which had no right of property in land, they imposed zamindari and ryotwari land tenure systems as already discussed in the previous section. In both the systems land was considered as private property and commodity and was placed in the hands of landlords. Land became a major source of revenue for the colonial administration. These intermediaries were introduced to extract maximum tax on land. This had resulted in exploitation of the indigenous cultivators and thus added extreme poverty to their conditions of living. Thus the Indian feudal system was created and nurtured by the colonial power and acted as a means to drain off wealth.

When we look into the feudalism in India, we are aware that it differs from European feudalism in many respects. Landlord-peasant relationship is the core of the matter and the exploitation of the estate by its owner, controller, enjoyer or beneficiary as its essential ingredient. With these minimum universals, feudalism may have several variations. The peculiarities of the system in some western European countries do not apply to the various types of feudalism found in other areas. Therefore, it is pertinent to understand the difference between feudalism in Indian society and the one which developed in Europe.

Feudalism appears in a predominantly agrarian economy which is characterised by a class of landlords and a class of servile peasantry. Again the degree of the servility of the peasants to the landlords might differ from region to region, so also the composition of the cultivating class. The development of agriculture, handicrafts, commodity production, trade and commerce and of urbanisation could create conditions for differentiation in the ranks of the peasantry. Those peasants who produce a little over and above their needs of subsistence might buy their freedom by payment of money in lieu of labour service provided such a practice was favoured by the state and provided a reasonable extent of market economy was available. Several peasants might reduce to a state of further penury and rich peasants might grow at their cost. But where such developments do not appear, a more or less homogeneous peasantry might continue. However, differences in the techniques of farming and the nature of the soil might affect the agricultural yields and create variations.

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### **5.6.1 Changes During the Post-Independence Period**

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After India's Independence, the Indian government adopted certain anti-feudal measures under the pressure of anti-feudal heroic struggles waged by the Indian Peasantry. Nehru and his policy advisors embarked on a programme of planned development that focused on agrarian reform as well as industrialisation. Mouthings the progressive slogans, the Nehru regime enacted Zamindari abolition act, tenancy protection act and later land ceiling act. Indian agriculture was facing a dismal situation at that time. This was marked by low productivity, dependence on imported food grains, and the intense poverty of a large section of the rural population. Therefore, a major reform in the agrarian structure was an urgent necessity, and especially in the landholding system and the distribution of land, was necessary if agriculture was to progress. From the 1950s to 1970s, a series of land reform laws were passed – at the national level as well as in the states – that were intended to bring about these changes.



In Independent India, three important categories of land reforms were introduced as follows:

- Ø The first legislation was the abolition of the zamindari system (that is, the abolition of different intermediaries). The major motive behind this legislation was to wipe out exploitation of the cultivators at the hand of these intermediaries. However, zamindari abolition did not wipe out landlordism or the tenancy or sharecropping systems, which continued in many areas.
- Ø Secondly, another major land reform laws that were introduced were the tenancy abolition and regulation acts. These attempted to prohibit tenancy or to regulate rents in order to give security to the tenants.
- Ø The third major category of land reforms was the Land Ceiling Act. These laws imposed an upper limit on the amount of land that can be owned by a particular family. Accordingly, the state is supposed to identify and take possession of surplus land (above the ceiling limit) held by each family and redistribute it to landless families.

These measures of the government not only aim to boost agricultural productivity but also to eradicate poverty among the rural masses. But these measures remained quite marginal in their efforts to change in the agrarian structure. The intention to bring about revolutionary land reforms that destroy the feudalism and redistribute the land to the tillers did not succeed. Therefore, these gave sufficient scope for landlord sections to retain their hold on the vast tracts of land. We shall discuss in detail, the success and failure of land reform measures in India in unit III.

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### 5.6.2 The Green Revolution

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The Indian government adopted the green revolution strategy to reform the agrarian structure. Of all developmental programmes introduced in the Independent India, green revolution is considered to have been the most successful. In 1960s and 1970s, the green revolution brought significant

changes where it took place. It had been first used during the late 1960s to refer to the effects of the introduction of high yielding varieties (HYV) seeds of wheat and rice in developing countries. However, the green revolution was not just about the use of HYV seed. It was a package. The new varieties of seeds required a fertility-enhancing inputs, that is chemical fertilizers, controlled irrigation conditions, and plant-protecting chemicals (pesticides). The other components of the package consisted of providing cheap institutional credit, price incentives, and marketing facilities. In order to back up the application of new technology on local farms, a large number of agricultural universities were also opened in the regions selected for the new programme. It was under the direct supervision of the Ford Foundation that the Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) was started in 1961.

The green revolution led to a substantial increase in agricultural output, to the extent that it solved India's food problem. Agricultural productivity increased sharply because of the new technology. Nonetheless, there were some negative social effects that were pointed out by the sociologists who studied the impacts of green revolution. It is true that, by participating in the green revolution did not mean the same thing to smaller farmers as it did to bigger farmers. While bigger farmers had enough surplus of their own to invest in the new capital intensive farming, for the smaller farmers it meant additional burden of borrowing money for such investment. Hence, green revolution could benefit primarily the medium and large farmers from the use of the new technology, but not the small farmers or peasants. The new technology introduced by green revolution also compelled widespread involvement with the market. Unlike traditional agriculture, cultivators in post-green revolution agriculture had to buy all farm inputs from the market for which they often had to take credit from traders or other institutional sources. Although the small farmers took to the new technologies, the fact that their resources are limited meant that these technologies ushered in a new set of dependencies. Whereas it has definitely strengthened the economic and political position of rich farmers.

The ultimate outcome of the green revolution was a process of 'differentiation' in which the rich grew richer and many of the poor stagnated or grew poorer. The green revolution made many of the traditional occupations redundant and the 'jajmani relations' disintegrated rapidly.

It should also be noted that rising prices and a shift in the mode of payment of agricultural workers from payment in kind (grains) to cash, actually worsened the economic conditions of most rural workers. A comparison of the wage rates of a pre-green revolution year with those of a year after the new technology had been adopted showed that while cash wages of agricultural labourers had gone up after the introduction of the new technology, their purchasing power had in fact come down due to overall increase in prices.

Secondly, it has increased 'regional inequalities'. The areas that underwent this technological transformation became more developed while other areas stagnated. For instance, the Green Revolution was promoted more in the western and southern parts of the country, and in Punjab, Haryana, and western U.P., than in other parts of the country. As a result, we find agriculture in states such as Bihar and in eastern U.P., and in dry regions such as Telengana, to be relatively undeveloped. These are also regions that continue to have an entrenched 'feudal' agrarian structure, in which landed castes and landlords maintain power over the lower castes, landless workers and small cultivators.

The changes produced by the green revolution also generated an interesting debate among Marxist scholars on the question of defining the prevailing 'mode of production' in Indian agriculture. Though the debate raised a large number of questions, the most number of contentions or issues revolved around whether capitalism had become dominant in Indian agriculture or was still characterised by the semi-feudal mode of production. Some argued that the capitalist tendency had started in India with the disintegration of the old system during colonial rule, and that after Independence the process of accumulation had gathered momentum. On

the other hand, another set of scholars, on the basis of their own empirical studies mostly from eastern India, asserted that Indian agriculture was still dominated by a semi-feudal mode of production. In some of these areas, landlords-cum-moneylenders continued to dominate the process of agricultural production. Peasants and labourers were tied to them through mechanism of debt that led to 'forced commercialisation' of labour and agricultural yields. As a result, this produced a self-perpetuating stagnant and exploitative agrarian structure that could be at best described as 'semi-feudal'.

Despite a considerable degree of continuity and significant regional variations as we have discussed, the agrarian relations have definitely experience many changes over approximately the last fifty years. Independence from colonial rule and launching of development programmes started a new phase in the history of Indian agriculture. A substantial volume of literature shows that the agrarian structure has transformed the direction of a capitalist mode of organisation at least in areas that experienced the green revolution.

Further, the policy of liberalisation that India has been following since the late 1980s had a very significant impact on agriculture and rural society. The policy entails participation in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which aims to bring about a more free international trading system and requires the opening up of Indian markets to import. The Government has embarked on the New Economic Policies (NEPs). The new economic policies being implemented as part of globalisation strategy of imperialism have brought vast changes in the agricultural and industrial sectors. These policies have turned the agriculture into economically unviable activity for the poor and middle farmers. Some of these measures are hiking the rates of electricity, fertilizers and irrigation water. The effect of these set of policies was immediately felt by the vast farmer masses. The deep rooted malaise got expressed in the form of suicides by the farmers. The aim of this strategy is to implement a set policy that turns the Indian agriculture into an

appendage to the imperialist economy. These are indicators of the process of globalisation of agriculture, or the incorporation of agriculture into the larger global market – a process that has had direct effects on farmers and rural society.

The Indian agriculture shall produce to meet the commercial needs of the agribusiness MNCs and not to meet the needs of the Indian people. For instance, in some regions of Punjab and Karnataka, farmers enter into contracts with the MNCs (such as PepsiCo) to grow certain crops (mainly tomatoes and potatoes), which the companies then buy from them for processing exports. In such, contract farming systems, the company identifies the crops to be grown, provides the seeds and other inputs, as well as the know-how and often the working capital. In return, the farmers are assured of a market because the company guarantees that it will purchase the produce at a predetermined fixed price. But unfortunately, the prices are fixed at a much lower level compared to the market price which these companies receive. Contract farming has become very common now-a-days in the production of specialised luxury items such as cut flowers, fruits (grapes, figs, pomegranates), cotton, oilseed, etc. While this system of farming provides financial security to farmers, it is at the same time lead to greater insecurity as farmers become increasingly dependent on these companies for their livelihoods. All these have far-reaching affects on the socio-economic conditions of the Indian farmers for contract farming has resulted in:

- Ø the diversion of agricultural lands from food grain production to the production of luxury items mostly of export varieties
- Ø indigenous knowledge of agriculture has become almost redundant
- Ø removal of food subsidies for the small farmers has led to decrease in the amount of food purchase from the public distribution system

- Ø productivity and sustainability of small family farms are being replaced with inefficient and unhealthy industrialised food systems under corporate control

Liberalisation and globalisation of agriculture are supposed to increase production of food, increase efficiency of food production, economic situation of farmers and patterns of food consumption. But in reality, these forces are leading to declining food production, productivity, conditions of farmers and food security. The meaning of food security has been changed from being a fundamental human right to participation in global markets, which excludes the large number of poor without adequate purchasing power. Food-growing land is being diverted to non-food crops as mentioned above. Farmers are being displaced on a massive scale and natural resources are being over exploited. Corporatisation of agriculture which is being pushed under trade liberalisation as a successor of the green revolution is leading to new poverty for small farmers as unequal and unfair contracts, locking them into new forms of bondage.

Thus, India continues as semi-feudal and semi-colonial society. The forms of feudal exploitation had changed; but not the content. The vast masses of peasantry (which includes landless laborers, poor and middle peasants) were forced to submit to the exploitation being deprived of means of production that is land. Unless and until the Revolutionary Redistribution of Land based on the 'Land to the tillers' is implemented, the feudal relations and their existence will not disappear.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

#### Q.5: Fill in the blanks

- (a) .....became a major source of revenue for the Colonial Administration.
- (b) After Independence priority was given to .....and .....

(c) In India, a series of land reform laws were passed from

.....

Q 6: What do you understand by Green Revolution?

.....



### ACTIVITY

1. Collect information from your state and write an essay on the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture and their impacts on the environment.

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

2. Look around your society and try to write a note on how the processes of globalisation and liberalisation have penetrated into the society.

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



## 5.7 LET US SUM UP

- I The mode of production plays a determining role in shaping the social structure. Rural society is based predominantly on agriculture. It is not only the source of livelihoods and survival for them. It is also a way of life.
- I The rural people are also engaged in a variety of other activities, apart from agriculture. A large numbers of weavers, potters, ironsmiths, goldsmiths, carpenters are also found in the village economy. Different occupations are traditionally linked to the caste system. However, the caste system has experienced change with the elapse of time.

- I Rural sociology is mainly concerned with the study of agrarian social system. The importance of land, landholdings and land relations, including its control and management, assumes significant meaning in rural life as we have already mentioned. It is because of the fact that a large number of people depend on land directly or indirectly. Anthropologists, sociologists and economists have stressed the aspects of rural agrarian structure with a focus on land tenure system, land ceiling, land reforms, land control and management. These studies have also included the problems of peasantry and peasant struggles.
- I In India unequal distribution of property and income forms the basis of agrarian hierarchy. Indian agriculture comprises of multiple social systems each displaying a different process of change. Thus, the land relations vary in different historical epochs.
- I The Colonial rulers imposed zamindari and ryotwari land tenure systems in Indian society. These intermediaries were introduced to extract maximum tax on land. This had resulted in exploitation of the indigenous cultivators and thus added extreme poverty to their conditions of living. Thus, the Indian feudal system was created and nurtured by the colonial power and acted as a means to drain off wealth. In both the systems land was considered as private property and commodity and was placed in the hands of landlords. Land became a major source of revenue for the colonial administration.
- I Independence from colonial rule and launching of development programmes started a new phase in the history of Indian agriculture. A substantial volume of literature shows that the agrarian structure has transformed the direction of a capitalist mode of organisation at least in areas that experienced the green revolution.





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## 5.8 FURTHER READING

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## 5.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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**Ans to Q No 1:** (a) Agriculture (b) Rural areas

**Ans to Q No 2:** Castes were traditionally linked to occupations. A person born into a caste could only practice occupation associated with caste, so that occupations were hereditary, that is passed on from generation to generation. A particular occupation could only be pursued by the caste associated with it – members of other castes could not enter the occupation. Some occupations were considered inferior while some as superior. For instance, barbering, washing clothes, pottery, shoe making, weaving, etc. were considered inferior. Learning, priesthood, teaching were prestigious professions mostly pursued by the Brahmins. Individual talents and achievements were neglected. But agriculture was open to all the castes.

- Ans to Q No 3:**
- (a) Agrarian structure
  - (b) Functional , Marxian
  - (c) J.C. Kumarappa

**Ans to Q No 4:** Lord Cornwallis in 1793

- Ans to Q No 5:**
- (a) Land
  - (b) Planned Development , agrarian reforms and industrialisation
  - (c) 1950s to 1960s

**Ans to Q No 6:** The Indian government adopted the green revolution strategy to reform the agrarian structure. Of all developmental programmes introduced in the Independent India, green revolution is considered to have been the most successful. In 1960s and 1970s, the green revolution brought significant changes where it took place. It had been first used during the late 1960s to refer to the effects of the introduction of higher yielding varieties (HYV) seeds of wheat and rice in developing countries. However, the green revolution was not just about the use of HYV seed. It was a package. The new varieties of seeds required fertility-enhancing inputs, that is, chemical fertilizers, controlled irrigation conditions, and plant-protecting chemicals (pesticides). The other components of the package consisted of providing cheap institutional credit, price incentives, and marketing facilities. In order to back up the application of new technology on local farms, a large number of agricultural universities were also opened in the regions selected for the new programme. It was under the direct supervision of the Ford Foundation that the Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) was started in 1961.



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## 5.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

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**Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

**Q 1:** Write short notes on the following:

- (a) Zamindari and Ryotwari Systems
- (b) Land relations in the Ancient Period
- (c) The Caste System
- (d) Feudalism

**Q 2:** Discuss the interrelationships between castes and occupations in Indian society. To what extent, these relationships have undergone changes in the recent context?

**Q 3:** Elucidate the positive and negative impacts of the Green Revolution on Indian agriculture.

**Q 4:** Do you think feudalism still exists in Indian society? Discuss with examples.

**Long Questions** (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

**Q 1:** Write an essay on the Indian Agrarian Structure.

**Q 2:** Discuss the land ownership pattern in village societies. Elucidate the changes that have occurred after Independence.

**Q 3:** Discuss the sociological significance of 'contract farming'.

**Q 4:** What measures do you think the government must take to protect the rights of the small and landless farmers?

**Q 5:** Write an essay on the growth of urban centers and their impacts on the village societies.

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## **UNIT 6 : CASTE, CLASS AND POWER IN RURAL INDIA**

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### **UNIT STRUCTURE**

- 6.1 Learning Objectives
- 6.2 Introduction
- 6.3 Changes in Caste in Rural India
- 6.4 Continuity in Caste in Rural India
- 6.5 Changes and Continuity in the Class System in Rural India
- 6.6 Changes and Continuity in Power in Rural India
- 6.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.8 Further Reading
- 6.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 6.10 Model Questions

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### **6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- I understand the change and continuity in the Caste system of India
- I explain the changes and continuity in the Class system of India
- I discuss the changes and continuity in the Rural Power Structure.

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### **6.2 INTRODUCTION**

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Social Scientists, both Indian and foreign, are interested in understanding and analyzing social change in India. Social Change is a complex multi-dimensional and multi-faced phenomenon. Social Scientists have been engaged in understanding the diverse meanings, nature, content, direction, quantum, causes and effects of social change in India. Social Change in rural India has been brought about by internal as well as external forces, which paved the way for rural development. In the previous unit, we have discussed about Rural Economy. This unit will try to comprehend changes and continuity in caste, class and power in rural India.

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## 6.3 CHANGES IN CASTE IN RURAL INDIA

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Caste is a major form of stratification in rural India, which varies in structure from one place to another yet connects people belonging to the same caste with shared cultural beliefs and practices. Significant changes have taken place in caste as a form of stratification since independence. S.L. Doshi and P.C. Jain have conceptualized these changes in caste system in rural India in terms of structural changes and peripheral changes. Structural Changes are those which have far reaching effects on caste system like abolition of intermediaries, introduction of Panchayati Raj, Community Development Programmes, Village Cooperatives, legislations, adult franchise, reform movements, Gandhian movement against untouchability, education, increase in standard of living, urbanization, industrialization and so on. Peripheral changes include establishment schools, public health centres and construction of roads, improved means of transportation and communication, proximity to urban areas and rural-urban migration. Some of the major structural and peripheral changes in caste in rural India are discussed below.

- I **Modernization:** M.N. Srinivassays that the process of modernization started during the British rule in colonial India. Yogendra Singh says that modernization is a value-loaded concept which includes ideology, system of values, world-views, technology, science and other aspects of development. Indian villages were introduced to the process of modernization through the agricultural and industrial development, through education and mass media. For Example: due to modernization the Jatavas of Agra who belonged to low caste converted to Buddhism to get out of the oppressive caste system. M.N. Srinivas notes that in Rampura people took recourse to urban law courts in case of disputes rather than approaching the village caste associations and panchayats.
- I **Sanskritization:** Caste system in rural India has undergone phenomenal change in its structure due to the process of sanskritization. Sanskritization has led to positional changes within the caste system in

rural India. The concept of Sanskritization was developed by M.N. Srinivas to explain the process of social mobility whereby a low caste imitates habits, customs, food patterns, dress and ways of life of upper twice born castes to move upward in the caste hierarchy. For example, in some parts of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, Chamars belonging to low castes seek to improve their status in caste hierarchy by giving up their traditional low occupations of shoe-making and skinning of carcasses.

- I **De-Sanskritization:** The process of downward social mobility whereby an upper caste gives up the sanskritic restrictions to interact with low castes is known as De-Sanskritization. For example: K.L.Sharma who has done intensive study in Rajasthan observes that in contemporary period the upper castes like Brahmin, Rajput and Jat do not hesitate to minimize the gap of social distance while interacting with low castes. Jats share smoke or gutkha with low castes.
- I **Decentralization of democratic power:** The decrease in social distance is also due to decentralization of democratic power in the form of Panchayati Raj, which empowered and included traditionally excluded communities in grassroot power structure. Decentralization of democratic power also protected the interests of weaker sections in education, employment and in accessing benefits specially implemented to uplift the weaker sections. The interactions between various castes are common during elections and political meetings. This has led to weakening of caste associations in rural India. Studies conducted by A.Nageswara Rao in Andhra Pradesh shows that there has been shift of power from the dominant castes to scheduled castes.
- I **Occupational Structure:** There have been changes in occupational structure of the castes which are no longer ascertained on the basis of one's caste. The traditional occupations on the basis of one's caste are no longer strictly followed. Jajmani system has weakened and is replaced by contractual relations. It has been observed that all kinds of

occupations are now taken up notwithstanding one's caste. Gaurang R.Sahay's study of rural Bihar shows that people are not condemned or penalized for performing jobs other than their caste occupations. Studies show that in some cases oilpressers (Teli) and weavers (Julaha) have given up their traditional occupations and economic mobility has been observed in these caste groups. M.N.Srinivas's study of Rampura shows that fishermen have given up their traditional occupation and have become agriculturalists.

- I **Ease in social restrictions:** There has been an ease in social restrictions, especially inter-dining among various castes during the time of marriage or communal feasts has become common. M.N.Srinivas observes that in Rampura earlier the demarcation between the castes were noted on the distance and elevation in social interaction. For example, the upper caste would sit on a chair on an elevated ground in courtyard while the low caste had to sit on the ground. Now the low castes were allowed to sit on the elevated ground on a mat. The upper caste now also accepts cut food from the lower castes whereas earlier upper castes accepted only uncooked and uncut food from the lower castes.
- I **Education:** One of the important factors, which have led to changes in caste structure in rural India, is education, which led to empowerment and improvement of status of non-dominant castes.K.L.Sharma observes that social mobility among the scheduled castes of Gujarat due to attainment of education and employment has led to the demand of the annihilation of the oppressive caste system. I.P.Desai also observes that constitutional safeguards for the scheduled castes has aroused consciousness among them and helped them to mobilize against the upper castes.
- I **Radio and Television:** Changes in caste in rural India is also due to the spread of knowledge and information through radio and television

as this has reduced the knowledge-gap between the different sections of rural society.

Despite these changes in caste structure, the essential characteristics of caste continue to remain which are discussed in the next section.

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## 6.4 CONTINUITY IN CASTE IN RURAL INDIA

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Caste has a strong hold in rural society than in urban society. Caste determines the functions, occupation, status, available opportunities and sometimes even handicaps the individual. As caste largely ascertains the ideals and ways of life of rural social groups, it also shapes the value system and worldviews prevailing in the rural society. There are still many villages in India which are isolated due to absence of road or the roads are so primitive that during monsoons the inter-village communication and transportation is cut off, far removed from basic urban facilities like means of modern transport, recreation, electricity and institutions and values of the West like equality, efficiency, punctuality, diligence and so on. Education facilities provided by the government in most of the villages are absent or non-functional. The standard of living has not qualitatively improved and the government benefits are still cornered by upper castes. In spite of the changes discussed there are some of essential are primarily structural characteristics of caste which continue to remain. These are discussed below:

- I **Ascribed Category:** Caste is ascribed at the time of one's birth and remains unchanged for the rest of the life.
- I **Hierarchy:** Caste is based on a hierarchical relationship, which is ascertained at the time of birth. However, there are regional variations in the hierarchical relationship between the castes. Sometimes the same jati was ranked higher in one region than in another. In spite of the variation in caste, the notions of hierarchy and social interactions are guided by the hierarchical notion of caste in rural India.



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- I Traditional Occupation:** Caste fixes one's traditional occupation at the time of birth. The caste occupational mobility is lesser in rural India than in urban India. The division of labour ascertain by traditional occupation, which helps in functioning of the Jajmani System, which is based on the symbiotic relationship between jajman or patron and kamin or client. The services provided by the kamin to jajman can be remunerated in cash or kind on daily, monthly, quarterly or yearly basis. The Jajmani System regulates economic and socio-religious interdependence of the castes. Even though jajmani system is weakening in contemporary period still there are few occupational services which are required during ceremonies which may be remunerated in cash, kind or both. Manual scavenging is still being carried out by local scavenger castes. Moreover, the Dalmias, Birlas and so on established as big business due to their traditional commercial caste occupations.
- I Endogamous Group:** Castes are endogamous group. Matrimonial alliances have to be formed within one's caste group but outside one's gotra or clan or outside one's village. There are few inter-caste marriages within a village. Restrictions on inter-caste marriages are still operational in rural India and it is strictly observed in rural India.
- I Social Restrictions:** Caste decides the consumption pattern from which particular caste one can accept what kind of food (cooked or uncooked). It also determines the choice of utensils to offer food. Caste governs one's physical contact, social distance and social interaction. Caste determines the location and type of house in the village. For example, M.N. Srinivas observes that in Rampur the Brahmins generally reside in the centre of the village while the Shudras or untouchables resided near or outside the boundary of the village.
- I Caste Associations:** Empirical data shows that caste associations in rural India have strengthened in contemporary period in spite of its weakening power challenged by elements of democracy. Caste Associations act as a political, social and administrative unit in deciding

on matters regarding to maintenance of the purity of one's caste and representing one's caste group in the village platform. Caste Associations mobilize people belonging to the same caste and may lead to formation of blocs which act as vote banks during the time of elections.

- I **Dominant Caste:** M.N. Srinivas developed the concept of Dominant Caste in his study of Rampura village which is a short distance from Mysore city, Karnataka. Dominant Castes are a potent source of power and leadership in rural India. Dominant caste exerts their dominance through numerical preponderance, usually has a high place in caste hierarchy, ownership of majority of land and making important decisions in a specified locality and/or a region. Apart from M.N. Srinivas, Andre Beteille in his study of Sripuram observes that despite changes in rural India, dominant castes still has an important position in rural India as they continue to occupy power positions, own majority of village lands and enjoys their high status in rural society.
- I **Radio and Television:** Studies had recommended that radio and television would reduce the knowledge-gap between different sections of rural society. However, mass media failed to bridge the knowledge-gap between the different sections of rural society and, instead, was used as a means to enhance one's status and used as a source of entertainment by the elites.

Caste is not weakening in the contemporary rural society in India. Instead it has got a new lease of life shaping the contours of social and political development. People are now competing to get backward caste status to get the benefits of reservation for the weaker sections especially during admissions to higher studies and employment in government jobs. Caste solidarity has been entrenched in contemporary period in political institutions seen in the form of vote banks during elections, mobilization in non-Brahmin movements and in social institutions observed during matrimonial alliances, ritual/socio-cultural ceremonies and in times of need. Caste still facilitates functioning and maintaining of the village social

structure. Thus, not only functional changes have taken place in the caste system in rural India but there is also structural continuity in caste system in rural India.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q1:** Who developed the concept of Sanskritization?

.....

**Q2:** Mention one of the major forms of stratification in rural India.

.....

**Q3:** Give an example of de-sanskritization.

.....

## 6.5 CHANGES AND CONTINUITY IN THE CLASS SYSTEM IN RURAL INDIA

Class is a form of stratification whose members share similar economic resources, which influence the lifestyles they are able to lead. Membership to a class is achieved and can change during one's lifetime. Classes are more fluid in comparison to caste and the boundaries between classes are not clear cut. The chief characteristics of class differentiation are based on ownership of means of production and reproduction. Structural changes were introduced in the class structure of rural India especially the princely states of Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujarat and Karnataka due to the abolition of intermediaries, zamindari and jagirdari systems. K.L. Sharma in his intensive study of Rajasthan observes two kinds of changes in the class structure in rural society- proletarianisation and bourgeoisification. The process of transformation of landlords, ex-zamindars and jagirdars and their kins, due to abolition of intermediaries and withdrawal of their power, to the status/ position of a proletariat is known as proletarianisation. The ex-zamindars and jagirdars and their kins took to cultivation and menial work due to

withdrawal of their power with the abolition of intermediaries and reforms to form an egalitarian society introduced in post-independent India.

The process of maintaining and even elevating the status and position of landlords to bourgeois through accumulation of wealth and surplus and investment of their wealth and compensation they received (due to abolition of intermediaries and conversion of princely states to states in Indian republic) in big business like hotel, trade and transportation is known as bourgeoisification. Another affect of abolition of intermediaries is the social formation of the class of rural elites and upper classes. As discussed in Unit 4 the ex-zamindars and jagirdars to avoid land ceiling and to avoid passing of their landed property to landless people formed fake agricultural co-operative societies and legally divided thousands of acres of lands among their kins, relatives and friends. Even servants, acquaintances and hired members were either made members of such societies or were given landholding rights for namesake. In reality, the land was still controlled and owned by ex-zamindars and jagirdars.

New classes have emerged in rural society in post-independent India due to agrarian reforms, green revolution, white revolution and planned development. The 'not so green revolution' led to the growth of capitalist production in agriculture governed by laws of market and growth of wage-labour. These new classes comprise big/capitalist farmers, elites and rural political leaders belonging to agriculturally dominant castes while the core of agricultural labourers and sharecroppers constitute scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. However, there are classes also among the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes which led to the demarcation in constitutional safeguards into creamy layer and non-creamy layer. The creamy layer belongs to upper classes whereas the non-creamy layer belongs to lower classes.

Inspite of the changes in the class structure of rural India there are certain elements of continuity which remain which are discussed in the following section.

The continuity, which one observes in the class structure of rural India, is the polarization of the classes into haves and have-nots. The haves comprise of classes, who belong mainly to upper castes and the creamy layer of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes, classes who have cornered the benefits of rural development, whereas, the have-nots comprise those classes, who are pauperized and oppressed by the former classes to further their own interests and to accumulate surplus to maintain their domination and subordination over the have-nots. Studies conducted by Yogendra Singh, Myron Weiner and Kathleen Gough shows that the power positions especially in Panchayati Raj and in Community Development Programmes are taken up by the rich upper classes. Even though power may pass to have-nots it comes back to the traditional power elites. The abolition of intermediaries and land reforms did not lead to formation of egalitarian society. Land was still owned and controlled by ex-zamindars and jagirdars who to forgo land ceiling, had passed their landed property to their kins, friends, loyal tenants and to ghost schools and temples which existed only on papers.

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## **6.6 CHANGES AND CONTINUITY IN POWER IN RURAL INDIA**

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As seen in Unit 4 and 5, traditionally power, ownership of means of production especially the size of landholdings in a particular area and the decision making power rested with the dominant caste group. The traditional panchayats were patrimonial revenue come administrative systems strengthened by castes and landownership. People who belonged from high castes and had landownership also got hold of the formal positions of power in Panchayat. The poor and low caste people had no representation in Panchayats. This scenario of power structure in Panchayati Raj changed after independence due to adult franchise, education, development of transportation and communication, political consciousness and introduction of mass media which included people from lower-middle and backward castes holding formal positions of power. With the introduction of

constitutional safeguards for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes and adult franchise, the size of landholdings and dominant castes have ceased to be the only bases of power and these have brought changes in rural power structure in post-independent India. The amendment in Panchayati Raj has not only empowered scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes but also women in rural India. The framers of Panchayati Raj realized that discrimination and oppression faced by weaker sections would not end only through social and economic empowerment. Political empowerment of weaker sections through adult franchise and representation in administrative and political bodies is also required to improve their status and they will have a say in the decision making process at the grassroot level. Reservation of seats for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes and women is thus an important step in changing the traditional bases of power and empowering the weaker sections in rural India. New bases of power have emerged which are not essentially based on caste or class. Rural power is not primarily based on ascription like caste, hereditary ownership of land and property but now could be achieved through individual potentialities, networking, traits, personality and qualities. It has been observed that rural leaders came from different castes, classes, may or may not have ownership of land and property but had access to rural power.

In spite of the changes introduced in power structure of rural India through constitutional safeguards and adult franchise, studies conducted by T.K. Oommen show that the power remained in the hands of the traditional rural elites. He gave the concept of power reservoirs and power exercisers to explain the camouflaging of power in the hands of traditional rural elites. He said that in most of the cases the power reservoirs control the resources of the rural society; have contacts with influential political leaders and administrators to whom they extend their support and co-operation and expect the same from them; have accumulated wealth and property and oblige their kins, relatives and friends to form a support structure in the rural society. The power exercisers, the pseudo power elites, to retain their

official position, obligethe power reservoirs by granting loans, benefits and resources. Even after independence a section of ex-zamindars' and jagirdars' continued to be dominant as they quickly responded to the changing power scenario through Panchayati Raj and accepted the new situation. The ex-zamindars and jagirdars economic prosperity and their numerical preponderance in the villages aroused their political consciousness to aspire for positions of power and prestige. F.G. Bailey's study of Bisipara village in Orissa shows that caste system continues to order the political relation among the various groups which are also reflected in their economic status within the village. Rajni Kothari observes that the upper castes especially Brahmins were the first to take the benefits of western education which enabled them to garner political and administrative benefits. Studies conducted by K.L.Sharma, T.K.Oommen et al show that a section of landowners held formal positions of power in the Panchayati Raj and manipulated the benefits in their own interests, and in the interests of their kins, relatives and friends.

From the above discussion, we can see that structural continuity in caste, class and power remain along with functional changes in caste, class and power in contemporary rural India. There cannot be revolutionary changes to uproot the existing society to form an egalitarian society as envisioned by Karl Marx. But changes have been taking place in caste, class and power of rural India along with its structural continuity.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q 4:** Give an example which led to decentralization of power in rural India.

.....

**Q 5:** Give an example of land revenue system which existed in colonial India.

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## 6.7 LET US SUM UP

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- I Social Change in rural India has been brought about by internal as well as external forces which paved the way for rural development. This unit tried to comprehend changes and continuity in caste, class and power in rural India.
- I Significant changes have taken place in caste as a form of stratification since independence. S.L. Doshi and P.C. Jain have conceptualized these changes in caste system in rural India in terms of structural changes and peripheral changes.
- I Structural Changes are those which have far reaching effects on caste system like abolition of intermediaries, introduction of Panchayati Raj, Community Development Programmes, Village Cooperatives, adult franchise, reform movements, Gandhian movement against untouchability, education, increase in standard of living and so on.
- I Peripheral changes include establishment of schools, public health centres and construction of roads, improved means of transportation and communication, proximity to urban areas and rural-urban migration.
- I Caste has a strong hold in rural society than in urban society. Caste determines the functions, occupation, status and available opportunities of an individual, and sometimes even handicaps the individual. As caste largely ascertains the ideals and ways of life of rural social groups, it also shapes the value system and worldviews prevailing in the rural society. Castes are not weakening in the contemporary rural society in India. Instead they have got a new lease of life.
- I Structural changes were introduced in the class structure of rural India especially in the princely states of Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujarat and Karnataka due to the abolition of intermediaries, zamindari and jagirdari systems. K.L. Sharma in his intensive study of Rajasthan observes two



kinds of changes in the class structure in rural society- proletarianisation and bourgeoisification.

- I The process of transformation of landlords, ex-zamindars and jagirdars and their kins, due to abolition of intermediaries and withdrawal of their power, to the status/position of a proletariat is known as proletarianisation.
- I The process of maintaining and even elevating the status and position of landlords to bourgeois through accumulation of wealth and surplus and investment of their wealth and compensation they received (due to abolition of intermediaries and conversion of princely states to states in India republic) in big business like hotel, trade and transportation is known as bourgeoisification.
- I The continuity, which one observes in the class structure of rural India is the polarization of the classes into haves and have-nots. The haves comprise of classes who belong mainly to upper castes and the creamy layer of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes who have cornered the benefits of rural development whereas the have-nots comprise those classes who are pauperized and oppressed by the former classes to further their own interests and to accumulate surplus to maintain their domination and subordination over the have-nots.
- I With the introduction of constitutional safeguards for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes and adult franchise, the size of landholdings and dominant castes have ceased to be the only bases of power and this has brought changes in rural power structure in post-independent India. The amendment in Panchayati Raj has not only empowered scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes but also women in rural India.
- I In spite of the changes introduced in power structure of rural India through constitutional safeguards and adult franchise, studies conducted

by T.K.Oommen show that power remained in the hands of the traditional rural elites.



## 6.8 FURTHER READING

- 1) Doshi, S.L.& Jain, P.C. (1999). Rural Sociology. New Delhi: Rawat Publications.



## 6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No1:** The concept of Sanskritization was developed by M.N.Srinivas.

**Ans to Q No 2:** Caste is one of the major forms of stratification in rural India.

**Ans to Q No 3:** An example of de-sanskritization is when a jat shares smoke or gutkha with low caste person.

**Ans to Q No 4:** Panchayati Raj led to decentralization of power in rural India.

**Ans to Q No 5:** Jagirdari System is a form of land revenue system which existed in colonial India.



## 6.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

**Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

**Q1:** Distinguish between Sanskritization and De-Sanskritization.

**Q 2:** Distinguish between proletarianisation and bourgeoisification.

**Long Questions** (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

**Q1:** Elaborate the changes in caste in rural India.

**Q 2:** Discuss the changes in power structure in rural India.

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## UNIT 7 : PEASANT MOVEMENTS

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### UNIT STRUCTURE

- 7.1 Learning Objectives
- 7.2 Introduction
- 7.3 Peasant Movements in Colonial India
- 7.4 Peasant Movements in Post-Colonial India
- 7.5 Role of the State in Rural Transformation
- 7.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.7 Further Reading
- 7.8 Answers to Check your Progress
- 7.9 Model Questions

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### 7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- I know about the Peasant Movements in Colonial India
- I understand the issues and concerns of peasant movements in Post-Colonial India
- I explain the role of the state in Rural Transformation.

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### 7.2 INTRODUCTION

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In the past few decades there has been an emerging interest among scholars in understanding social movements as agents of social change. Social Movements arise due to dissatisfaction with some aspects of existing society and efforts are geared to rectify it by creating a new order. Social Movements could be divided into two types: Old Social Movements and New Social Movements. Old Social Movements are different from New Social Movements on the basis of issues focusing on quality of life, organizational form which consisted of loose network of people, new action repertoires like use of mass media to gain support, non-violent in nature, greater discretionary resources, have cheaper and quick geographical mobility, collaboration of different organizations and new social constituencies comprising of first time protestors, feminists, students, retired

people and so on. Examples of New Social Movements are feminist movements, civil rights movements and environment/ ecological movements like Narmada Bachao Andolan, Chipko Movement, Apikko Movement.

In the previous unit, we have discussed about the continuity and changes in Caste, Class and Power in Rural India. In this unit we shall be focusing on peasant movements in India as it is one of the prominent social movements taking place in rural India. Peasant Movement(s) is termed differently by different scholars like peasant struggle, peasant uprising, peasant discontent, peasant unrest, peasant agitation and peasant revolution. Peasant Movements are a kind of social movements to end the exploitation of the peasants and improve their conditions. Peasants are people who are directly involved in agriculture and they generate source of living out of it. Peasants comprises of tenants, sharecroppers, small farmers, hired labourers and landless labourers who work for landlords and rich farmers. Daniel Thorner has divided peasants into three categories: Malik, Kisan and Mazdoor. Malik are peasants who have land ownership documents. The tillers of the soil who do not have land ownership documents are known as Kisan. Sharecroppers are also included in the category of Kisan. Mazdoor comprises of the landless agricultural labourers. Peasants can also be categorized on the basis of size of landholdings into rich peasants, small peasants, marginal farmers and landless peasants. Rich peasants comprise those peasants who own more than 15 acres of land. Poor Peasants are those who own land between 2.5 to 5 acres of land. Marginal farmers are those who own land below 2.5 acres. Landless peasants are those who do not have any ownership of land and work in agricultural land for wages as sharecroppers or tenants. In reality there is no prescribed typology of who constitutes peasants but the category is defined according to empirical situations. Peasant Movements in India could be traced to the period of colonial rule in India. The movement got impetus with the nationalist struggle for freedom roughly during 1920s. But it gained momentum during 1930s as the peasants who were affected by the economic depression caused due to Second World War. Some of the

peasant movements which took place during the colonial rule in India are discussed in the following section.

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### **7.3 PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN COLONIAL INDIA**

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The agrarian crisis during the end of First World War in 1918 marked the entry of peasants into the political arena and led to the development of their political consciousness. They formed their own organization, own programmes along with their own flag. Prior to 1918 there were peasant movements in colonial India but these had limited economic aims. For example, the peasant movements during 1860-1897 were mostly due to economic crisis caused by recurrent famines and were directed against the zamindars, moneylenders and the British government. The tactics used by peasants followed a pattern: first refusal to pay taxes, then disobeying the dictates of the courts, following obstruction to eviction and finally an armed uprising. One such peasant movement where the peasants refused to pay taxes and revolted against the British rule is the Phulaguri uprising of Assam in October 1861. The high fertility of the lands of the Brahmaputra valley facilitated the peasants to carry on with agriculture as their primary vocation, and, as a result, they did not feel the necessity to work in tea gardens of the British planters. In order to induce the peasants to work in tea plantations the peasants were pauperized through high taxes and introduction of income tax. The peasants revolted against the British rule through non-payment of taxes, disobedience of the dictates of the British officials and finally taking to arms. The movement was suppressed by sentencing the leaders and imprisoning the others. But it left a mark in the pages of history of peasant movements in colonial India which was a direct revolt against the British rule.

Peasants in colonial India became part of the global trade. Fall in cotton prices during Civil War in United States of America hit the peasants hard. Cotton was exported as a cash crop and the fall in its prices led to indebtedness of many peasants. To bail the peasants out of their debt, Deccan Agriculturalists Relief Act was passed in 1879. Peasant Movements

broke out in various parts of colonial India. Some of these movements are discussed below:

- I **Champaran Satyagraha:** The movement was launched in 1917. Mahatma Gandhi after returning from South Africa realized the apathy of the peasants and led the movement in Champaran, Bihar against the indigo planters and zamindars. The global market for indigo cultivation collapsed gradually from 1900-1913 due to its substitution by synthetic dye produced in Germany. Peasants were compelled to produce indigo and did not have freedom to produce crops of their choice. They were paid meager wages by the landlords and compelled to pay exorbitant land taxes. These led to the apathy of the peasants. Partial relief was provided to the indigo cultivators but Gandhiji could not bail the peasants out of the excessive rents and debts. Through the movement in Champaran Gandhiji learnt the strength of Satyagraha and became closely acquainted with the problems of the peasants and eventually he emerged as a national leader.
  
- I **Kheda Satyagraha:** This movement was also known as no-tax peasant struggle. Gandhiji led the Satyagraha Movement of peasants of Kheda, Gujarat in 1919 against the collection of revenue which the peasants could not pay due to failure of crops caused by famine. Most of the peasants of Kheda were Patidars who were known for their agricultural skills. Kheda consisted of fertile soil suitable for the cultivation of tobacco and cotton. But famine led to crop failure. Reassessment of the lands of Kheda by the government on the basis of crops cultivated led to an increase of land taxes. The government insisted on the collection of land tax or *lagan* and turned a deaf ear to the peasants' conditions. The movement was led by Gandhiji along with Vallabhbhai Patel, Shankarlal Pareek, Indulal Yagnik, N.M. Joshi and other leaders of Gujarat. Due to the Kheda Satyagraha it was agreed that rich Patidar peasants would pay the taxes and the poor peasants were granted remissions. The poor peasants were satisfied with the outcome of the movement and

became conscious about their demands. The success of the movement reached far and wide across Gujarat and in the neighbouring states. Peasants in large numbers started participating in the freedom struggle as they inferred the struggle for Swaraj or fight for independence as struggle against collection of hefty land taxes.

- I **Moplah Rebellion:** This rebellion was launched in 1921 led by Muslim Communists against the Jenmis, landlords of Malabar comprising of Nambudri Brahmin and the British government who exploited the Moplah peasants comprising of Muslim agriculturalists. The Moplah peasants did not have security of tenure and were thrown out of the agricultural fields were they worked without any notice. They had to pay high rents and fees to the landlords and the British Government. The Moplah peasants took active part in Khilafat Movement and revolted against their exploitation. The Moplah Rebellion turned violent when the peasants took to arms. The British government crushed the movement by killing and imprisoning the rebels.
- I **Bardoli Satyagraha:** The movement was started in Bardoli district of Gujarat in 1926 against increased land tax. Initially the movement which took place during 1928 to 1929 was led by Vallabhbhai Patel. Later on this movement during 1930 to 1931 was led by Mahatma Gandhi. The movement was against land taxes and its hike subsequently. In 1926 Bardoli district was hit hard by famine, which led to crop failure. The peasants were not in a condition to pay land taxes and requested cancellation of land taxes for a year. But instead the government increased the land taxes by 30 per cent and forcefully confiscated property of the peasants including cattle. However, due to the movement the government restored the confiscated property, cancelled the hiked land tax and land tax for the subsequent year.

Peasant movements in colonial India were given impetus by the formation of Kisan Sabha in parts of Punjab, Bengal and Central provinces during 1926-1927. Peasant Movements further gathered momentum in

the 1930s. Kisan Schools were started to train peasants to carry out propaganda and organizational work. First of such Kisan Schools was started in Nidubrolu in 1938. Sir Abdul Rahim and Far-ul-Haq bought together the Muslim peasants of Bengal and started the Praja Party which was later renamed as Krishik Praja Party. Kisan Sabha in Bihar formed in 1927 developed into an extensive organization in 1934. In the subsequent year, Kisan Congress was formed by the Congress party to bring together the grievances of peasants in one platform and to act as a supreme peasant organization. The first Kisan Congress was held in Lucknow in 1935. Later on dissatisfaction among peasants grew towards the Congress party due to the false promises made by the Congress, the arrest of the peasant leaders, banning of the kisan meetings and use of police force especially in Bihar. The same year in 1935 Provincial Kisan Sabha was formed in Uttar Pradesh which fought for the abolition of the zamindari system. All India Kisan Sabha was formed in 1936 under the leadership of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. Many relief acts were passed to bail out peasants from indebtedness. But these did not improve the condition of peasants which further aggravated the peasant movements in colonial and post-colonial India.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q 1:** Define Peasant Movements.

.....

**Q 2:** When was Champaran Satyagraha launched?

.....

**Q 3:** When and where was the first Kisan School started in colonial India?

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## 7.4 PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN POST-COLONIAL INDIA

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Peasant Movements against the zamindars/landlords continued even after the independence of the country. The peasants in post-colonial India came under the flag of hammer and sickle i.e. under the Communist Party of India. Peasant Movements in Uttar Pradesh grew strong against the atrocities of the zamindars during 1947-1949. A party of zamindars attacked the village of Hamirpur in Sultanpur district and looted the houses and destroyed the crops. In Kaima village in the same district one was reported to be murdered and five were injured. The clashes continued until 1949 when zamindars were attacking peasants. All India Kisan Sabha under the influence of Communist Party of India raised slogans to abolish zamindari system and end atrocities on peasants. The Socialists formed the Hind Kisan Panchayat to work for the welfare of rural people. Peasant Movements continued to raise the grievances and end the exploitation of peasants. Some of the peasant movements in post-colonial India are discussed below.

**I Tebhaga Movement:** The movement started in Undivided Bengal on the eve of independence of the nation in 1946. It was a movement of sharecroppers over reduction of landlord share in the produce to two third and thereby to reduce  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the produce as rent to jotedars or rich farmers who held special rights on land. The production was low due to famine. The movement grew under the leadership of Bengal Kisan Sabha led by Bhowani Sen mobilizing the sharecroppers, tenants of various categories and agricultural labourers against the jotedars, zamindars, moneylenders, traders and the British government. The movement marked its distinction from the peasant movements led by Gandhiji on the grounds of the articulation of its demands and it was consciously organized by Kisan Sabha. The movement was crushed soon after the independence of the nation.

**I Telengana Movement:** Telengana Movement started in 1946 in Nalgonda district of erstwhile state of Hyderabad and continued till 1951. The movement was a revolt of the peasants who wanted freedom from

the oppressive jagirdari system, the theocratic regime of the Nizams and the exploitation of landowners like Patils, Deshmukhs, Deshpandes and Jagirdars in the state of Hyderabad. The peasants worked as bonded labourers in the estates of the Nizams. Under the Jagirdari system of landownership, peasants were exploited through forced labour, payment of exploitative taxes and high rates of interest for lean season loans. Apart from this revenue officers or tax collectors of the district, turned landowners like Deshmukhs and Deshpandes illegally captured thousands of acres of land and converted it into their personal property. Peasants were turned into tenants at will.

Peasants were exploited through a system of forced labour known as Vetti System where a member of a peasant's family served as a bonded labour in the landlord's house running daily errands like collecting wood for fuel, carrying supplies or post to other villages and so on. Apart from this the landlord had to be served with free supplies of foodstuffs, cloth, footwear and agricultural tools. Peasant girls were kept as slaves in landlord's house and sent off along with the marriage of the daughter of the landlord to her family of procreation where she served as concubines.

The tolerance of peasants reached its peak when an employee of a landlord murdered a village activist who was raising consciousness of village people regarding land issue. Further peasants were evicted from their lands which resulted in their revolt against the Nizams, the landlords and the moneylenders. The peasants' tactics to revolt included forceful acquisition of lands, no-rent campaigns and later on they took to arms against the Razakars and later the Indian union forming guerilla squads. The Communist Party of Andhra Pradesh aided the Telengana Movement by providing reliefs and supplies. The entry of Indian army in the state of Hyderabad led to the surrender of the Nizam and the suspension of the Razakars. The army then turned to the peasants, where the guerrilla squads had to turn to forests, the rich or middle peasants who were the main force of the movement withdrew their support with the surrender of the Nizams and the movement

was repressed in 1951. With the end of the movement forced/bonded labour was abolished, jagirdari system was abolished, lands were redistributed to the landless, minimum wages of agricultural labourers were increased and a new era ushered in the all round development of the peasants.

**I Naxalite Movement:** The movement was started in Naxalbari, West Bengal in 1967 and thus the movement acquired its name. The movement grew under the leadership of Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santhal. For the first time in West Bengal, a non-Congress United Front government was formed in 1967 who promised to distribute land to the landless peasants. The landowners were not happy with the decision of distribution of their land to sharecroppers. The ruling government faced difficulties in the distribution of land in terms of granting of pattas or verification of lands. The movement was triggered by the murder of a local sharecropper by goons hired by local landlord in a village near Naxalbari on 24 May 1967. Communists belonging to Darjeeling district of North Bengal realized that the land reform was not possible through legal means. Inspired by Communists ideology they believed in mass movement to overthrow the existing oppressive order and forcibly capturing lands through guerilla warfare in favour of the oppressed, the landless labourers. The villages under Naxalbari became an active ground joined by 20000 peasants for guerilla activities and violently capturing property from the landowners. Differences grew between the Communists and Naxalites. Clashes grew between the Naxalites and the police. The Communists Party of India, (Marxist) siding with the Naxalites, left the ruling government and acted as a mediator between the United Front and the Naxalites for cordial solution. Finally, the movement ended soon after the fall of United Front government in March 1970 and declaration of President's rule in West Bengal and continuous police repression by either killing the Naxalite leaders or imprisoning them.

In the post-colonial India, Communist Party of India which has been working to improve the conditions of peasants formed the Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union in 1968. The changes and development that has occurred in peasant movements of post-colonial India is the revolution of farm production and transition from subsistence farming to capitalist farming. Peasants started to recognize between rich peasants/farmers and poor peasants/landless labourers. Peasant movements in post-colonial India were violent with far reaching consequences. The tactics of protest and demands has also changed. In post-colonial India, peasants' demands have been centered on land redistribution from rich to poor, better price for their produce, better wages and working conditions and ways to increase the agricultural production. The state did listen to the demands of the peasants and tried to improve their conditions through various ways of rural transformation like Panchayati Raj, Community Development Programmes, land redistribution, establishment of village co-operatives and schemes for improvement of condition of peasants which are discussed in the next section.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q 4:** Name one of the leaders of Naxalite Movement.

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**Q 5:** Give an example of New Social Movements in India.

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## 7.5 ROLE OF THE STATE IN RURAL TRANSFORMATION

Peasants are subjects of the state and peasant movements are a concern of the state. Rural transformation through Panchayati Raj, Community Development Programmes, land redistribution, establishment of village co-operatives and schemes for improvement of condition of peasants are some of the ways the state shoulders its responsibility towards the peasants which are briefly discussed below.

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- I **Panchayati Raj:** Panchayati Raj led to decentralization of power at the village level and empowered the rural people to participate in the democratic set-up of the nation. Village Panchayats are statutory institutions, which were set up during the British rule in India. In post-colonial India, states were expected to have village panchayats as per the Directive Principles of the Constitution (Article 40) where panchayats would function as units of self-governance, institutions for securing social justice and fostering co-operative life at village level. Panchayats had the powers to enforce sanitation laws, develop and manage village lands, increase production, develop village industries, schools, health centres, maintain roads, lighting and irrigation, provide water supply, resolve disputes and so on at the village level.
- I **Community Development Programme:** Community Development Programme sponsored by the Government of India was launched on 2 October 1952. Community Development Programmes were modeled on the basis of Extension Services in Agriculture of the United States of America. Community Development Programmes aimed to assist the rural reconstruction through improving the agrarian economy and the lives of the rural people. Community Development Programmes are ways of bringing transformation at village level by improving public health and hygiene, providing better education, cheap litigation, employment, reorganizing panchayats if it was not working properly, developing co-operatives, spreading awareness regarding the various ways of rural reconstruction and working towards the welfare of the village from a communitarian perspective.
- I **Land Redistribution:** Land Redistribution was based on the philosophies of Sarvodaya or progress of all to reconstruct rural society. Land Redistribution was sought to be achieved through Bhoodan, Sampatidan and Gramdan Movements initiated by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. The idea of Bhoodan came to Acharya Vinoba Bhave when he was touring Telengana district of Hyderabad in 1951. Through Bhoodan

landlords were expected to give away one-sixth of their property to landless labourers. Similarly, Sampattidan is gift of land or wealth for the welfare of the rural society. The difference between Bhoodan and Sampattidan is that in Bhoodan one redistributes the mode of production or agricultural land but in Sampattidan one redistributes the income from mode of production. Gramdan was started in 1952 popularized by Acharya Vinoba Bhave's foot marches in Orissa. The first gramdan received in Orissa was obtained in Manpur, Cuttack district on 30 January 1953. It sought to bring about change in existing rural social order and lead to the development of egalitarian society.

- I **Village Co-operatives:** Village co-operatives are an important source of livelihood of rural people to bring about change in existing social order and striving for the development of egalitarian rural society. Village co-operatives minimized the role of traders, middlemen and exploiters by directly connecting the seller to the buyer. Village co-operatives use resources collectively and manage the production for the common interests of its members.
- I **Government Schemes:** There are several government schemes geared towards the welfare of the rural people by providing employment (National Rural Employment Gaurantee Act), better education (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), improving nutrition of school-going children (Mid-Day Meal), improving the skills of the rural people (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana), improving the roads (Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana), providing houses to poor (Indira Awas Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin) and so on.

Thus, from the discussion, it can be inferred that the state has developed several ways to reconstruct the rural society in India and strive for its all round development. Inspite of the several state efforts and launching of several governmental schemes limited section of rural society gets the benefits and sometimes the schemes are not properly implemented adding to the list of welfare schemes, which remain just on paper. The role of the

state does not end in launching of welfare benefits for the deprived sections of rural society but also in its efficient implementation, ensuring the benefits and welfare measures reach ]the targeted population.



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## 7.6 LET US SUM UP

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- I Peasant movements in India is one of the prominent social movements taking place in rural India. Peasant Movements are a kind of social movement to end the exploitation of the peasants and improve their conditions.
- I Peasants are people who are directly involved in agriculture and generate source of living out of it. Peasants comprises tenants, sharecroppers, small farmers, hired labourers and landless labourers who work for landlords.
- I Peasant Movements in India could be traced to the period of colonial rule in India. The movement got impetus with the nationalist struggle for freedom roughly during 1920s. But it gained momentum during 1930s as the peasants were affected by the economic depression caused due to the Second World War.
- I Some of these movements are Phulaguri Uprising of Assam in 1861, Champaran Satyagraha in 1917, Kheda Satyagraha in 1919, Moplah Rebellion of 1922 and Bardoli Satyagraha.
- I Kisan Sabha formed in some parts of Punjab, Bengal and Central provinces during 1926-1927 gave impetus to the peasant movements in colonial India which gathered momentum in 1930s. Kisan Schools were started to train peasants to carry out propaganda and organizational work. First of such Kisan Schools was started in Nidubrolu in 1938.
- I Peasant Movements against the zamindars/landlords continued even after the independence of the country. Some of the peasant movements

which took place in post-colonial India was Tebhaga Movement, Telengana Movement and Naxalite Movement.

- I The changes and development that has occurred in peasant movements of post-colonial India is the revolution of farm production, in demands and tactics of peasants.
- I Peasants are subjects of the state and peasant movements are a concern of the state. Rural transformation through Panchayati Raj, Community Development Programmes, land redistribution, establishment of village co-operatives and schemes for improvement of condition of peasants are some the ways the state shoulders its responsibility towards the peasants.



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## 7.7 FURTHER READING

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- 1) Desai, A.R. (1969). Rural Sociology in India. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- 2) Doshi, S.L.& Jain, P.C. (1999). Rural Sociology. New Delhi: Rawat Publications.



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## 7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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**Ans to Q No 1:** Peasant Movements are a kind of social movement to end the exploitation of the peasants and improve their conditions.

**Ans to Q No 2:** Champaran Satyagraha was launched in 1917.

**Ans to Q No 3:** The first Kisan School was started at Nidubrolu in 1938.

**Ans to Q No 4:** Charu Mazumdar was one of the prominent leaders of Naxalite Movement.

**Ans to Q No 5:** An example of New Social Movement is Narmada Bachao Andolan.





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## 7.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

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**Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

- Q 1:** Discuss how Old Social Movements were different from New Social Movements.
- Q 2:** Write a note on Telengana Movement.

**Long Questions** (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

- Q 1:** Discuss the different peasant movements that took place in Post-Colonial India
- Q 2:** Discuss the role of state in reconstruction of rural society in India.

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