
UNIT 5 SOCIAL WORK AMONG COMMUNITIES

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit aims at providing an understanding of the nature of Indian communities; the problems they face; and the possible Intervention measures from the perspective of a Professional Social Worker. The unit begins by explaining the concept of community and viewing community as a system. Next, it explains the concept of social change and briefly dwells upon different theories of social change. It then examines the concept of community in the Indian context. Broadly speaking, Indian communities can be divided into three types – rural, tribal and urban communities. Since these three types are the main components of Indian social structure, they are explained in greater detail by subdividing each type into sub-types. The study of this unit is expected to enable you to understand:

- basic concept of a community and community as a social system;
- concept of social change;
- types of communities in the Indian context;
- features of the Indian communities – Rural, Tribal and Urban;
- major institutional structures in the community – Rural, Tribal and Urban;
- problems and issues in the community – Rural, Tribal and Urban; and
- professional social work intervention in communities – Rural, Tribal and Urban.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The modern age, beginning with the Industrial Revolution (1750) in England, saw deep-rooted changes not only in the material world, but also in the world, of ideas. The age-old belief of accepting poverty, misery, unhappiness, etc. as a part of one's ordained fate was no longer acceptable. The earlier condition where religion provided solace for one's life situations changed. The Industrial Revolution drastically altered the production system,

which, in turn, affected the world of beliefs and ideas. Slowly, the idea took root that human conditions can be changed and bettered, for which conscious efforts need to be undertaken. The efforts need to be made by the individual and the family, but also from the society at large. Different forces have emerged from the 18th century onwards – the growth of the nation-states; the slow emergence of a welfare state and the evolution of political forces; all with a common purpose, that is the improvement of the human condition.

Professional Social Work was one of the new forces, which emerged with a similar notion. Its beginning can be traced back to the 1880s, and in the earlier stages, it was driven by charitable intentions, trying to meet the needs of the western society undergoing large-scale urbanization and industrialization. Gore traces the history of Professional Social Work to the period of transition in Britain when agriculture based communities were breaking down and a middle class was emerging. This period saw displacement of the population on a large scale and Social Work emerged to help the “lone Individuals, of waifs and strays, of unattached women, of the abject poverty of low paid workers and the unemployed.” In the early phase of Industrialisation, neither the State, nor the employer took responsibility for the ‘workers’ job security, safety or well-being’ (1997:442,443).

Social Work started with charitable intentions, with the idea that the more fortunate were doing their duties to those in distress. This was based on the notion that the help rendered should be minimal to keep people active and, at the same time, ward off hunger and death. Over a period of time, some of the ideas got modified.

5.2 COMMUNITY AS A SOCIAL SYSTEM

Concept of Community

The term ‘community’, as Raymond Williams (1976) suggests, has been in the English language since the 14th century, when it meant a community of relations or feelings. The word ‘community’ is commonly used in social sciences, particularly in sociology, while it is an area of practice for the Social Work Profession. According to one compilation, there are 94 definitions each differing from the other on one or the other characteristic. Two well-known sociologists (MacIver and Page) have identified four major features of the concept – any area of common life; somehow distinguished from other areas; having typical characteristics; and the boundary should have meaning.

- The concept of community has territorial or geographical implications.
- There are common socio-economic characteristics.
- There is an element of we-feeling and cohesiveness.

Let us now examine them in greater detail:

- i) To refer to any group of people as a ‘community’ would mean that they reside in a common territory or occupy the same geographic space. The most common example, which comes to the mind, is of a village. Residence in a common area is the defining element.
- ii) Mere residence would not be sufficient. There must be some common socio-economic characteristics. For instance, a village is considered to be a good example not only because of a common residence, but also because they speak the same language, share common cultural traits, must be using the same well, school and

going to the same religious shrine. The primary items in food consumption, such as eating of rice or wheat must be common to all the members. A majority of the villagers are linked to the agricultural system. The festivals and marriage festivities will have common elements, irrespective of caste and economic differences.

- iii) The first two features lead to the third feature. Common residence and sharing a common socio-economic pattern of life induces a feeling of cohesiveness. People begin to identify with each other and a sense of we-feeling develops. This we-feeling is of being an insider vis-a-vis non-community members, who are viewed as outsiders.

Community as a System

The word system is used to refer to a totality comprising a number of parts, functionally linked to each other. Functionally means the performance of a useful role. For example, the human body is a system in the sense that it consists of a number of parts – hand, legs, eyes, hair etc., and each part performs a useful role, contributing to the total functioning of the complete human body. Even if one part is removed, the human body becomes incomplete and, to that extent, the ‘totality’ gets reduced, while the part, which may be a leg or a hand, will wither away and die. The Dictionary (Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, 1981) defines the word as, “anything formed of parts, placed together or adjusted into a regular and connected whole”; or “a set of things considered as a whole”.

To understand Community as a system, we can divide it into three sub-systems:

- Economic Sub-system
- Political Sub-system
- Social Sub-system

Economic Sub-system

To understand the economic sub-system of a community, we will have to examine the main occupation of the people; the wages they receive; the mode of payment; the assets, which people have in terms of house, land, savings, etc.; and the expenditure patterns. If we want to understand the economic sub-system of a village, it is necessary to understand the primary and secondary occupations in the village; whether the payment is on a weekly or monthly basis; who owns land and how much of it is irrigated; how many households are landless? What proportion of the income is spent on food, housing, clothing, education, health, etc. The answer to these questions will help us to understand the economic sub-system of the village. A similar exercise can be done with an urban community – some of the questions will have to be modified to be relevant to the urban economy. Example: Village as an Economic Sub-System.

The primary occupation of an Indian villager will be cultivation or labour work. A small section will be managing their own land by employing labourers, while the majority will be working on other’s land as labourers. Land ownership, particularly that of irrigated land, is concentrated only in the hands of a small section of the population. Different regions will have different systems, but generally speaking, labourers will be paid on a weekly basis. In many of the villages, old occupations, like that of washermen, goldsmith, ironsmith, etc., have been abandoned, while new occupations have emerged. With the expansion of the school system and Panchayati Raj Institutions, many salaried jobs have been created. Milk business, selling agricultural products in nearby towns, etc., have also created new occupations.

Political Sub-system

The word political is used here to refer to the concept of power. While power is an abstract concept, it is real and is used to the benefit of some sections of the society. Those sections of the society, which benefit are powerful, while the sections excluded are powerless. To understand the power structure in a community, the following three questions have to be answered – Who has the power in the community? On what is the power based? How is this power used? An answer to these three questions will provide us with an overview of the power-structure of the community. Let us try to answer these questions one by one:

- Who has the power in the community?

An easy way of the identification of powerful people in a community is by identifying the leaders, both formal and informal. Formal leaders refer to individuals occupying formal positions in local organisations. The organisations could be religious, political, economic or social. In comparison, it is more difficult to identify informal leaders, since these individuals exercise power without occupying positions. A simple way to identify informal leaders is to ask a number of people in the community to name a few individuals who are helpful and influential. The names, which occur the most often and do not occupy formal positions, can be considered as the informal leaders of the community.

- What are the bases of power?

The second question is to do with the bases of power. Leadership has to have some foundations and this could refer to a number of factors – economic assets in the form of money, house, land, etc.; caste membership; education; information; contacts and networking; family prestige; memberships in important political parties; and business establishment. Generally, a combination of these factors helps in the emergence of leadership.

- How is power utilised?

The third question has to do with the utilisation of power. Power can never be a status quo arrangement. Power always seeks to strengthen itself in various forms and ways. Political power reinforces economic power, while in turn, economic power reinforces political power. A person with political power will try to strengthen his economic base by acquiring assets, business, contracts, etc. while an economically powerful person, to strengthen his position, will develop political contacts or get his person in important positions. Example: Village as a Political Sub-system

Formal leadership in a village will be exercised by the Sarpanch/Head and other elected members of the Gram Panchayat. The office-bearers of the milk cooperative, agriculture credit cooperative society, religious organisations, social organisations, Mahila Mandals, etc. could be other formal leaders of the village. The members of the land owning section of the village would exercise informal leadership. Land, access to political parties, education, information, caste, etc. generally form the bases of power. The power may be used to get a family member or a member of one's group into a position of importance, to obtain license to run the ration shop or distribute kerosene, to run Government aided schools and hostels, to obtain salaried jobs, etc.

Social Sub-System

All non-economic and non-political matters will be covered under the heading social sub-system. The social structure with reference to marriage and family; caste system; religious beliefs; values and norms would be some of the aspects to be studied. Festivals, food habits, ornaments, etc. could be some of the other aspects.

Community in the Indian Context

Gangrade has highlighted the need to understand the concept of community in the Indian context, where it is often seen as referring to ‘caste’, ‘linguistic’ and ‘religious’ groups. Membership of these social groups is based on birth and it divides the Indian society both horizontally and vertically. Marriage and kinship ties are strongly rooted within the caste and religious categories and form the primary identity of the individual. As a result, his/her responsibilities and obligations are more to these categories and less to the society at large. A community understood in this sense tends to become narrow and exclusive in outlook, going against the social work philosophy of treating every human being on equal terms. A social worker has to develop an attitude and a behaviour above and beyond caste and religion. The problem, “is to break up the narrow loyalties of these groups in the interest of the larger groups in such a way that each draws strength from the other and becomes complementary rather than mutually exclusive” (1971: 11, 12).

Check Your Progress I

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

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Name the three main features of the concept of community.

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2) Explain what “community as a social system” means? Briefly explain the three sub-systems.

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5.3 SOCIAL WORK WITH RURAL COMMUNITIES

Features of the Rural Community

- In majority of the villages, the economy is based on agriculture. The life-cycle of a village community would centre on the specific nature of agriculture. Indian Agriculture is dependent on monsoons for most parts of the country, leading to a great degree of uncertainty. The labourers do not have work throughout the year, while the farmers are unsure of a good crop. This uncertainty would be reflected in the life of the people – long term planning to spend and save becomes difficult, affecting children’s education, health and other long-term expenditures.
- The main occupations are cultivation and labour work. With the onset of monsoons, for tilling and ploughing the land, and during the harvesting season, the demand for

labour goes up pushing up the wages. During the off- season, not only would the wages come down, but the families may also have to migrate in search of jobs. The cultivator, who is dependent on market prices, gains if the prices are high and vice-versa; with falling prices, he tends to loose.

- Compared to an urban community, the population of a village would be much smaller. Occupationally, and in terms of residence, people would be less mobile. In a rural community, occupations tend to be inherited – a cultivator’s son would turn to farming, while children from a landless household would turn to labour work. Occupational changes are easier when a person migrates to an urban centre. Members of a rural community share similar cultural patterns, such as, the same language, religion, food habits, etc. Overall, a village has a great degree of homogeneity.
- The social structure of the village is based on the caste system and the traditional family structure. The primary ties would be important with a strong sense of belonging. A person’s role and perceptions would emerge as an outcome of his position in the local society. There would be a fundamental acceptance of the normative and perceptual values of the group. Members of the same caste tend to stay close to each other in the village.

Institutional Structures in a Rural Community

Institutional structures refer to organisations with policies, programmes, finances and administrative hierarchy; and in the last fifty years, a number of them emerged undertaking different functions. Powerful castes and economic categories control them. They affect the life of the local community in various ways and it is necessary to understand how they work. They can be of three types:

a) *Governmental Organisations*

A number of departments of the state Government affect the life of the local community, such as the Revenue, Forest, Irrigation, Health, General Administration, Public Works Department, etc. The Government exercises direct control and takes all decision related to recruitment, working conditions, payment of salary, work allotment, supervision, etc. Then, there are autonomous organisations like the State Electricity Boards and the Police Department.

b) *Non-Governmental Organisations*

Local communities have a number of formal and informal organisations. They could be of different types – social, political, religious, etc., undertaking different functions in the community. Most villages may have one or two Mahila Mandals and a committee managing the affairs of the local shrine. Members of political parties tend to be more active than members of other organisations and could be mobilised for some of the social work issues. A major characteristic of NGOs is that the Government does not exercise direct control over them.

c) *Statutory and Public Institutions*

In the last half a century of development, a number of statutory organisations have emerged, such as, Panchayati Raj Institutions and co-operative organisations in the area of credit, agriculture processing and marketing, supply of agriculture inputs, etc. Milk co-operatives have been set in many rural areas. They are public bodies reflecting local interests with political overtones. Since the leadership emerges after fighting elections, these bodies have strong local roots. The most widespread of such organisation

is the Panchayati Raj Institution, which works at the District (Zilla Parishad), Block (Panchayat Samiti) and the Village (Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha) level. Each state has passed its own legislation for the implementation of Panchayati Raj. In the area of rural banking, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development has been set up under the NABARD Act, 1981, which is a Central legislation.

Problems in a Rural Community

The problems in a rural community can be understood in the following manner:

a) *Problems at the level of Individuals*

Family conflicts of various types will come under this category. The most common would be conflicts between the spouses or conflicts between two generations of the family members. These conflicts are more in the nature of value-conflicts, centered on one or two individuals in which the role of the human personality is important.

b) *Problems at the level of Groups*

The problems at the group level could be more in the nature of socio-economic conditions. These could be the problems of the aged, single parents, marginal farmers, landless households, illiterates, school drop-outs, teenagers, etc.

c) *Problems at the level of Communities*

The defining element here would be a section of population larger than a group being affected. This could be a large segment of the community or the whole community. At this level, there are implications on policies affecting the village community and the working of the local institutional structures. In terms of issues, it could be that of alcoholism, sanitation, health, violence, environmental degradation, drinking water, matters related to land and forest, problem of wages, infrastructural problems, problem of exploitation and oppression, below poverty line families etc.

An important area of work could be the functioning of the Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha is supposed to be the base of the Panchayat Raj System and, in principle, exercises the maximum powers at the village level. All adult villagers constitute the Gram Sabha and are supposed to meet four times a year to review the work done by the Gram Panchayat and make new plans to be implemented by the Gram Panchayat. In practice, this never happens and a small group controls and monopolises both the Gram Panchayat and the Gram Sabha.

Conceptualising the Social Work Intervention Measures

The identified problems have to be developed in the format of an 'Issue'. To implement this process, the following steps should be undertaken :

- Identify the problem to be worked upon;
- Decide on the target group – the quantitative dimension;
- Operationalise the objectives, which could have both quantitative and qualitative dimensions;
- Identify local institutional structures for collaborative work;
- Decide on a line of action;
- List out a few qualitative and quantitative indicators to evaluate the work done.

Once these steps are undertaken, then the broad outline of the intervention measure is ready. Now, specific steps have to be decided upon, for which the following details of the proposed line of action would be helpful:

- What specific steps have to be taken?
- What resources are required for the proposed steps?
- From where the resources are to be obtained?
- Discussion with the personnel of the institutional structures on the nature of collaboration to be undertaken.

5.4 SOCIAL WORK WITH URBAN COMMUNITIES

Features of an Urban Community

- The occupational pattern of an urban community would be dominated by non-agricultural occupations. The working hours would be regulated and monetary compensation would be in the form of wages and salaries. A segment of the population would be linked to the formal economy where rules and regulations operate, and a greater element of economic security operates. There would also be provisions for social security measures in the form of old age pensions, savings schemes and provisions for taking loans.
- Low-Income households would be tied to the urban informal economy where economic insecurity is higher and the scope of rules and regulation is lower. The provision for social security measures is very poor in the urban informal economy. Generally, low-income households stay in slums, which are of two types. Those slums recognised by the municipal authorities not only get civic facilities, but the residents become owner of their plot of land/house and become taxpayers. But non-recognised slums suffer from a double disability. Since they are not recognised by the municipal authorities, they are not eligible for civic amenities and could, at any time, be removed from their houses/sites. In addition, they cannot create an asset by improving the house-site.
- A portion of the urban community would be migrants. In smaller towns, the migration would be from the nearby villages, while in bigger towns and industrial cities, the migrants could be from far off places. The migrants would be coming with their own culture and, possibly, could be from a different linguistic group, caste group or religion.
- The population of urban communities would be large in size and also exhibit a great deal of heterogeneity.
- The social structure would see greater influence of secondary ties and the nuclear family. Geographic and occupational mobility in an urban community would be greater than in a rural community.
- Owing to influences from a variety of sources, a member of an urban community need not share the normative and perceptual values of his/her group of origin in its totality, and also, his sense of belonging to the group need not be very strong.

Institutional Structures in an Urban Community

Urban communities will see a wide variety of organisations as compared to rural communities. Part of the variety will be due to the heterogeneous nature of urban communities and partly because urban areas tend to be centres of industries and local administration. They impinge on the life of the local community in various ways and it is necessary to understand how they work. They can be of three types:

a) *Governmental Structures*

A number of governmental departments undertake their functions, which are important in an urban community. The Department of Revenue, the General Administration Department, the Town Planning authorities, the Rationing Department, Department of Industries, etc., are some of the examples of government departments.

b) *Non-Governmental Structures*

Urban communities have a number of Non-Governmental organisations. Educational bodies, starting from the primary level till the highest level, would be seen in urban areas. The Chambers of Commerce, Merchant's Associations, religious bodies, social organisations, student organisations, women's group, etc. are some of the other common organisations. Commercial Institutions, such as industries and banks play an important role in urban setting. Political parties and social work organisations are other notable organisations in the urban communities.

c) *Statutory and Public Structures*

The most prominent public structure would be the municipality. In the field of cooperatives, many organisations are to be found – the most common would be co-operative housing societies and credit co-operative bodies. In many states, town planning is entrusted to statutory bodies.

Problems in an Urban Community

a) *Problems at the Level of Individuals*

Family conflicts of various types will come under this category. The most common would be conflicts between the spouses or conflicts between two generations of the family members. These conflicts are more in the nature of value-conflicts and the focus is on one or two individuals, in which the human personality plays a role. Problems of children could become a separate area of work. Inter-generational conflicts are likely to be more common in urban families.

b) *Problems at the Level of Groups*

The problems at the group level could be more in the nature of socio-economic conditions. This could be the problems of the aged, single parents, unemployed, beggars, school drop-outs, destitute, orphans, victims of crime, juvenile delinquents, AIDS affected group, mentally ill patients, differently-abled, etc.

c) *Problems at the Level of Communities*

The defining element here would be a section of population larger than a group being affected. This could be a large segment of the community or the whole community. In terms of issues, it could be that of alcoholism, sanitation, health, violence, environmental degradation, drinking water, problem of wages, infrastructural problems, problem of exploitation and oppression, etc. The other issues could be of poverty and employment; getting the names of poor people included in the BPL list.

Conceptualising the Social Work Intervention Measures

The identified problems have to be developed in the format of an 'Issue'. To fulfill this process, the following steps should be undertaken :

- Identify the problem to be worked upon;
- Decide on the target group – the quantitative dimension;

- Operationalise the objectives, which could have both quantitative and qualitative objectives;
- Identify local Institutional structures for collaborative work;
- Decide on a line of action;
- List out a few qualitative and quantitative indicators to evaluate the work done.

Once these steps are undertaken, then the broad outline of the intervention measure is ready. Now specific steps have to be decided upon, for which the following details of the proposed line of action would be helpful.

- What specific steps have to be taken?
- What resources are required for the proposed steps?
- From where are the resources to be obtained?
- Discussion with the personnel of the institutional structures on the nature of collaboration to be undertaken.

5.5 SOCIAL WORK WITH TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Features of a Tribal Community

- The problem of defining a tribe has long defied administrators, anthropologists and sociologists, all of whom have given different definitions. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its report of 1953 stated that, “there can be no standard, which can apply to all indigenous or aboriginal groups throughout the world” (Deogaonkar, 1994: 15). However, any group displaying the following characteristics can be treated as a tribe:
 - A definite habitat and area.
 - A unified social organisation based primarily on blood relationship (Consanguinity).
 - A cultural homogeneity.
 - A common scheme of deities and common ancestors.
 - A common dialect with a shared folk-lore.
- Under Article 366 of the Indian Constitution, the tribal community has been declared as Scheduled Tribes and it includes 212 tribes from 14 states. The President of India is empowered by Article 342 (i) to notify and specify any tribe/tribal community from any area as a ‘Scheduled Tribe’. On such notification, the tribe so specified is added to the list of Scheduled Tribes in the Fifth Schedule and is, thus, entitled to all the Constitutional Safeguards and Protection.
- The constitution of India contains many provisions for the protection and welfare of the tribal population. Article 46 mentions that the state is committed to the welfare of the scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes and their protection from all types of socio-economic exploitation. Article 275 provides for special grants for tribal welfare from the Government of India to some states and forms part of the Sixth Schedule. Article 164 makes it obligatory to appoint a Minister-in-Charge of Tribal Welfare in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Article 244

makes applicable the provisions of the Fifth Schedule to the administration and control of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes.

- Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh and Orissa have the largest scheduled tribe population in our union followed by Maharashtra and Rajasthan. As per the 1991 Census, the scheduled tribes constitute 8.01 per cent of the total population of the country.
- According to Verrier Elwin, tribals can be classified into four categories. First, those still residing in forests and following old life-styles. Secondly, those staying in rural areas and dependent on agriculture. Thirdly, those who have migrated to urban areas and have taken up modern industrial occupations. Fourthly, those who have been completely absorbed and become a part of the Indian mainstream. The well-known Indian sociologist Ghurye has a different scheme of classification. The first category comprises those who have struggled and attained a high position in Hindu society, such as Rajgond. Secondly, those who have become partially Hinduised and thirdly, those who reside in forests and are opposed to outside culture.
- In terms of size, tribal communities are small. Traditionally, tribals were land-owners and in spite of the problem of landlessness, large sections of them still own land.
- Traditionally, tribals were governed by notions of collective ownership of property including land and meeting many of their needs from the forest. Even today, tribals are less integrated with the market structures as compared to members of other communities.
- The status of women in tribal communities is better and they enjoy more decision-making powers. This is indicated from the fact that in olden times, a 'bride-price' had to be paid rather than 'dowry', as the case is with mainstream society.
- In the pre-British period, the tribals had an autonomous culture and were a nature loving community. Starting with the British period onwards, the tribal community is getting assimilated into the mainstream Indian society, but at the lower end of the society. This process is called acculturation, which "is the process by which a whole way of life is in a process of change under the influence of another culture. This cultural change may be slow or rapid, and in due course, it may lead to partial or even total assimilation with other cultures. Each tribal group may be at a different level" (Deogaonkar, 1994 :16).

Institutional Structures in a Tribal Community

- Traditional Institutions like the Ghotul, which helped in the socialisation of youth, is weakening, while modern structures are emerging. The Panchayati Raj System, Co-operative bodies, educational institutions and market structures are now slowly being formed in tribal areas. Many Government departments, some of which have specialised in tribal affairs, are functioning among tribal communities. In many tribal areas, social work organisations, mostly NGOs, have made important contributions in the field of education and health.

Problems in a Tribal Community

Land Alienation

A large section of tribals own land, which is cultivable. Starting from the British period, tradesmen, money-lenders and hardy farmers have entered tribal areas and unscrupulously grabbed the tribal lands. Thus, the tribals, who were traditional farmers

became farm-servants and in many cases bonded labour in their own land. Later on, legislation was passed to prohibit any land transaction between a tribal, and a non-tribal monetary or otherwise, which, to an extent, has checked the process.

Forest and Tribals

Since time immemorial, tribals have cohabited with nature and depended upon the forests for fuel, fodder and other necessities of life. By collecting minor forest produce, they could sell it to itinerant tradesmen or in nearby markets to buy necessary things from the market. Right from the British regime, these traditional rights, known as nistar rights, were accepted and given official recognition by the Government. The tribal use of the forest was purely for home-based consumption and the forest cover was preserved.

The British period saw the beginning of commercial exploitation of forest, which continued in the post-Independence period as well. This process led not only to the abridgment of tribal rights over forest, but unscrupulous contractors, in nexus with bureaucrats, cut vast stretches of forest. The tribal access to forest was reduced and a right for limited use was granted, requiring permission from local forest officials necessitating bribes and harassment. Currently, there has been some change in the forest policy and moves have been taken to entrust the management of forest to local communities under the Joint-Forestry Management Schemes.

Displacement

A major problem, which the tribal community is facing and more so for those staying in remote areas, is the problem of displacement. In the post-Independence period, a number of projects were set up, which took away tribal lands and the forest where they were staying. The social movements from 1980s onwards have focussed on this problem and now a rehabilitation package is included, while implementing any big project. Apart from the difficulty of an adequate rehabilitation package and problems of proper implementation; there is the larger problem where a tribal loses land and is awarded a monetary compensation. She/He has problems in investing the compensation in a secure way or in buying an equivalent piece of land. When entire tribal communities are uprooted, then the loss is of a way of life for which no monetary compensation can suffice.

Poverty and Unemployment

The tribal way of life was based on 'use' and on a subsistence mode. Ownership of property, increasing production, saving and dealing with market forces was relatively unknown. The onset of modernization can be traced back to the British period. The growth of urbanization and industrialization, the emergence of modern education and new skills left the tribal community at a disadvantage. While the Old World was disintegrating, they were ill-equipped to deal with the demands of a modern age. Poverty and unemployment is rampant among the tribal community. In the last two decades, a small section of tribals has emerged, who are educated and have got good jobs. The socio-economic policies of the last few decades have led to the setting up of schools, hostels, scholarships being awarded, developmental projects, and a small stratum of tribals have taken the benefits of these programmes – they are educated and have got stable jobs in the public sector. But these changes have not taken place among a large number of tribals.

A majority of poor tribals are either landless or are subsistence farmers. Owing to the poor spread of irrigation, farming in India is dependent on monsoons. Growing a single

crop leaves the tribal farmer no surplus to build up some savings, while for half of the year, there are no jobs for the landless tribals.

Language and Identity

A majority of tribals are spread throughout the country, and in most places, do not enjoy a numerical majority. Perforce, they have to learn the language of the state to which they belong in addition to Hindi and English and in the process, the tribal language and scripts are dying. Along with the loss of their language is the loss of their way of life and the question of identity crisis. In some places, tribal movements have taken place to protest against their exploitation by outside forces and also to assert their tribal identity. One outcome of these processes has been the creation of the state of Jharkhand carved out of Bihar. Apart from the North-Eastern states, Jharkhand is the only state where the tribals form a numerical majority.

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.
- b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) List three major features of an Indian Village.

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2) What are the problems faced by tribal communities?

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5.6 LET US SUM UP

Traditionally, community was the context in which people lived, learnt about their own culture and related to other human beings. The modern world based on industrialisation and urbanisation is eroding the concept of community. In India, the word community could also mean a caste, religion or language based group. In this unit, we have examined one area of social work practice, that is, ‘social work with community’ with reference to rural, urban and tribal communities.

We have given a few definitions of the concept of community and elaborated the important characteristics of community. To develop an understanding of the various dimensions of community, a framework of three subsystems has been presented. The economic subsystem deals with occupation, income, etc., while the political subsystem discusses the distribution of power in the community. The social subsystem studies the social and cultural life of the community. The three sub-systems are inter-related to each other. Political matters will have roots in economic issues and vice-versa. All matters have a social context.

The definitions, characteristics and the subsystems enable the learner to grasp the conceptual nature of the community, preparing s/he for the next stage, that is, the methodology of social work intervention. The intervention has been discussed in the context of urban, rural and tribal communities. Prior to the intervention measures information has to be gathered and an understanding has to be developed of each of the setting. To do this, we examine the main features, the institutional structures and the problems, which the community faces. An understanding of these three aspects would help us to go to the third stage, that is, to design effective and relevant intervention measures. To further the understanding, a few examples have been cited. The unit ends with a brief discussion on the nature of goals to be pursued.

5.7 KEY WORDS

- Social** : The term refers to life in an organised community, that is being born and growing up in a community. It is characterised by a cooperative association with other human beings and also learning the culture of the group with reference to language, literature, music, tradition, norms and values, etc.
- Political** : Political here refers to the concept of power and the manner in which power is distributed in a society. Some sections of society will have power, while others will be powerless and there is a constant struggle between the two. It is this process, which characterises the word political.
- Change** : Change here refers to making an alteration to a situation, thereby making it different from an earlier situation. To pass from one state to another state of affairs could be termed as change. The word is used in the context of society where something different keeps on happening. Sometimes, it could be small things, which do not get noticed or, at times, it could be major things, which become noticeable immediately. Major changes are preceded by smaller changes.
- Conflict** : The expression conflict means a clash or a struggle. A contest between two different opinions results in a conflicting situation. In this unit, the word conflict is used in the larger sense of society, where on many social, economic and political matters, there will be contradictory view-points. Conflict inherently need not be a negative situation and once resolved, it can lead to an improved situation.
- Institutional** : The word Institutional refers to the formal establishment of organisations, which have objectives, staff, funds, policies and a programme to be implemented. Organisations get created in a certain socio-economic framework, serving a larger purpose and, in this sense, the word Institutional is used.

5.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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5.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) The concept of community has three main features, which are as follows:
 - 1 A group of people residing in the same locality, as in the case of a village in rural areas and a neighbourhood in a town.
 - 1 This group of people shares some similar social and economic characteristics. Similar occupation, income and expenditure could be some of the economic characteristics. Caste, religion, language or cultural traits could be some of the social characteristics.
 - 1 This group of people tends to identify with each other and there is a feeling of cohesiveness among them. The sense of “we-feeling” is limited only to the members of the community, which differentiates them from other communities.
- 2) Community as a system means that it is, totality comprising a number of parts, which are functionally related to each other. Functionally here refers to the useful role, which each part has to play. When all the parts are linked to each other functionally, then it makes an integrated whole. Community as a system has three sub-systems, which are as follows:
 - 1 The economic sub-system deals with aspects like occupation, income, expenditure and assets.

- 1 The political sub-system examines how power is distributed in a community. It seeks to answer questions like who has power in the community, on what is it based and how is it used.
- 1 The social sub-system examines the life of the people in terms of caste, religion, values and norms, marriage and family, music, festivals and related aspects.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) The three major features of an Indian village are as follows:
 - 1 The economy of the majority of villages is based on agriculture. As most of the farmers still depend on monsoon, there is a great degree of uncertainty of timely rains and the possibility of having good crops. Untimely rains would lead to poor crop yields and low income. This affects the household in terms of long-term planning for children's education or saving money or making a major investment.
 - 1 Even after more than half a century of growth and developments the two major occupations in the village are cultivation and labour work. Non-agricultural and related occupations are very few in numbers.
 - 1 The village social structure is strongly based on caste and a traditional family structure. Members of the same caste stay close to each other. Primary ties are strong and traditional norms and values govern the life of the people.
- 2) The following are the problems faced by the tribal communities:
 - 1 Their traditional rights of using forest resources for household consumption are being restricted.
 - 1 Their land is being taken-over by the non-tribals.
 - 1 They are being displaced because of the implementation of large projects.
 - 1 Loss of language and identity.