
BLOCK III
Cultural Change among
Indigenous People

THE PEOPLE'S
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UNIT 8 CULTURAL CONTACT AND CHANGE*

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- understand the anthropological concept of indigenous communities, their living and livelihood with respect to economy, social and cultural life;
- explain the various processes of cultural change more specifically the concept of Sanskritisation, Modernisation, Religion Syncretism and the meaning of Little and Great Tradition; and
- know how culture is dynamic by nature and its dynamism is contextual to time and space.

8.0 INTRODUCTION

Society lives through cultural dynamics. The dynamic aspects of any society are reflected through the dichotomy of adoption and rejection of cultural traits. Therefore, it is popularly said that no society is static, rather it is dynamic by nature. The speed and degree of dynamism of any society depends on various barriers and constraints encountered and opportunities faced by the people. Cultural change in a society goes through definite processes; however, may not follow same and similar directions. We see that any cultural change process may go up or down, forward or backward, towards progression or regression, but it is always meant to be a movement from one stage to another with a definite direction. All the cultural processes that take place in a society may be categorised as (i) culture sustaining and (ii) culture transforming. Culture sustaining processes maintain and strengthen cultural traditions, while culture transforming processes bring about necessary modifications, deletion or

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replacement of traditions. In this context we will discuss the cultural change processes observed in a society and the concept of indigenous people.

8.1 CONCEPT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Let us discuss the concept of indigenous people, their distribution around the world, and different Acts, Rules and Regulations centered on them. The term ‘indigenous people’ who are also called as ‘primitive people’ are identified by certain characteristics. They are viz. non-literate, non-civilised, non-industrial, non-urban, lacking economic specialisation, most vulnerable, less civilised, having low technical achievements with simple and small traditional tools and techniques. They are also identified with certain features like close knit social ties, pervasive religion, possessing a world view based on nature and natural objects.

Around 300 million indigenous people are living in around 70 countries of the world stretching over the Arctic Circle, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Anthropologists normally classify these tribal communities on the basis of social formations like hunting-gathering, pastoral, nomads, settled agriculturists, industrial workers etc. with an assumption that the predominant economy of these communities at different time periods has influenced to determine the type of their social formation and world view.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions No-107 of 1957, 169 of 1989 have well defined the term ‘indigenous’ and protection of these communities. The United Nations International Year for the Worlds Indigenous Peoples recognised the Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous People.

Let us give an elaborate conceptual meaning to the term ‘indigenous communities’ as defined by the sub-commission on Human Rights Commission of the UN, developed in the year 1972 by a Special Rapporteur, Martinez-Cobo. “Indigenous communities, people and nations are those which having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system”.

A couple of important conventions framed by the International organisations for the protection of the indigenous communities include Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1951), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Rio Declaration of Environment and Development, and Agenda 21 (1992), Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), Report of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994), Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001), and the U N Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

8.2 INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF INDIA

In India the indigenous people are popularly known by different names in different time periods. They are viz. Vanyajati, Adimajati and Adivasi. As per clause (1) of Article 342 of the Constitution of India, in India the Scheduled Tribes are enlisted and presently they are constitutionally declared as Scheduled Tribes. As per Census of India these people share 8.2 per cent, with a total population of 84 million in the country's population. The identification of scheduled tribes is done on the basis of certain socio-economic characteristics like primitive traits, distinctive culture, and geographical isolation, shyness of contact with other communities at large and over all backwardness. In India there are 461 ethnic groups recognised as Scheduled Tribes and they are considered as India's indigenous people. Most of these tribal communities are rated as very low when measured on various human development indicators like food security, health, education, access to safe drinking water, transport and communication.

In post independence period the Constitution of India guarantees to safeguard the interests of tribal people under Article 15 (4), 16 (4), 46, 243M, 243ZC, 244, the first and second proviso to 275 (1), 334, 335, 338 A, 339 (1), and the Fifth and the Sixth schedules. Apart from, Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, the Proviso of the Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 and State Acts prohibiting alienation and restoration of tribal land, control of money lending and reservations in posts and services, are also meant for the protection of these communities.

With this background let us discuss indigenous communities as a stage in the realm of social evolution, subject to various culture change processes. Like other communities they are also dynamic by nature and receptive to change which is due to various factors. Many of such change processes are visible in their socio-economic life and living.

Check Your Progress

- 1) Explain various rules and regulations made for the protection of indigenous communities by international agencies and Indian Constitution.

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8.3 CULTURE PROCESSES

Different anthropologists have different views with respect to the differences between tribe and caste. G.S. Ghurye defined tribal people as backward Hindus who vary in degree, while V Elwin argued in favour of the tribal people as social and cultural category. Andre Beteille defined tribal people as isolated with few externalities, who spoke a variety of dialects which separates them

from caste Hindu people. Mostly tribal people speak different dialects, while the caste Hindus has their own scripts. N.K. Bose looked at the differences both in terms of their marriage networks and clan exogamy maintained by tribal groups and caste endogamy maintained by caste groups.

Culture is dynamic both in its structure and function. The change may occur due to deletion, addition, modification, replacement or rearrangements of the traits and complexes. Such forces are both internal and external to culture. Such changes in the culture in various forms either lead to extinction, devolution or growth of culture. This shows that though there are stimulating factors which bring changes in the culture, culture change is not a smooth and unopposed process. Such stimulating forces are reflected in the form of social and cultural processes and have visible manifestations.

The term culture as a process implies a continuous change taking place in a definite manner under the influence of a series of factors. Culture change processes do not always follow the same process of upward and/or downward, forward and/or backward, towards progression and/or regression, but it is a movement from one stage to another. Culture processes can be of two types. First one is culture sustaining which contributes in consolidating culture and tradition, while culture-transforming processes bring modifications, deletion or replacement of cultural tradition. These cultural processes may be identified as parochialisation, universalisation, sanskritisation, westernisation, modernisation, secularisation, industrialisation, cultural revivalism and globalisation. The following section attempts to explain some of these concepts to critically analyse the cultural change processes so far experienced in Indian society. The concept of great tradition and little tradition as a part of the universalisation and parochialisation process are also explained briefly.

8.3.1 Sanskritisation

M. N. Srinivas while studying the Coorgs of Mysore of South India during 1952 first used the term 'Sanskritisation'. He developed this concept in his book, *Religion and Society among Coorgs of South India*. He tried to understand the process of social change among the lower castes and tribal groups in upward direction. Srinivas defined Sanskritisation 'as a process by which a low caste/tribe adopts the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and in particular, a twice born (dwija) caste'. For example a low caste/tribe or any other group may give up taking non-vegetarian foods, consuming liquor, doing animal sacrifice and imitate the Brahmins or any other dwija caste life style in matters of food, dress and rituals. By adopting this, lower caste/tribe claim a higher status in the social hierarchy.

Srinivas has given a good number of examples to describe the taking up of the process of Sanskritisation in Indian society. He observed that the Harijan caste of Mysore does not accept cooked food from the Smiths who are certainly one of the touchable castes and there fore claim to be superior to the Harijans. Even their claim to be *Viswakarma* Brahmin is not accepted. Similarly, peasants (*Okkaligas*) and shepherds (*Kurubas*) do not accept cooked food and water from *Marka* Brahmins.

The process of Sanskritisation is seen in many parts of the village of India. In Bihar, *Rajwars* a scheduled caste, claim themselves as *Rajvansi Kshatriya*; *Koyeris*, backward castes claim themselves as *Kushwaha Kshatriya*; *Dusadh*, another scheduled caste claims themselves *Gahlout Kshatriya*. While Sanskritising themselves they have adopted the names, rituals, festivals and festivities of higher castes. The *Tiya*, a non-dwija caste of West Bengal today call them as *Rajbansi or Suryabansi* and claim a position in Kshatriya *varna*. Such processes are also observed among *Mahar* caste of Maharashtra, *Pasi* of Uttar Pradesh, *Baira* and *Balai* of Rajasthan who have given up polluting (menial/cleaning) occupations and adopted clean occupations to upgrade their position in the social hierarchy.

The process of Sanskritisation is also observed among tribal people like *Gonds*, *Cheros*, *Sudha Saoras*, *Paudi Bhuiyans* of Central India. In Odisha *Sudha Sauras* of Gajapati district and *Paudi Bhuiyans* of Keonjhar district have also stopped taking liquor and beef, started worshipping *Tulsi*, and Goddess *Lakshmi* by observing *Manabasa Gurubara*, performing marriage rituals with the help of *Brahmins*. *Srinivas* remarked that the 'mediation of the various models of Sanskritisation through the local dominant castes stresses the importance of the latter in the process of cultural transmission'. Thus, if the locally dominant caste is *Brahmin*, it will tend to transmit a *Brahminical* model of Sanskritisation, whereas, if it is *Rajput* or *Bania* it will transmit *Kshatriya* or *Vaisya* model. The importance of these models is explaining the specific types of Sanskritisation processes to different regional conditions and historical antecedents.

The concept of 'resanskritisation' is also observed among few caste/tribal groups. Resanskritisation is the process where a caste/tribal group being influenced by outside socio-cultural forces left the values and socio-cultural way of life again backs and adopts them. For example, the westernised *Rajputs* of U.P. returned to Hindu symbolism, and the converted Christian (basically lower castes) returned to Hindu religious life again. *Sanskritised Koris* of U.P. refused to accept water even from *Brahmins* considering them less pure than themselves.

The Concept of Desanskritisation

Therefore, Sanskritisation is a multi-factorial sociological process in which the imitating caste groups are economically and socially lower than the reference caste group. The imitating caste groups have higher aspiration to improve the social status. Finally, the imitating caste group maintains close interaction with the reference caste groups. Therefore, Sanskritisation is a complex and heterogeneous model. It is a major cultural change process in the history of India. This process is indigenous and universal by nature.

Check Your Progress

2) Discuss Sanskritisation as a process of culture change in India.

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8.3.2 Modernisation

Modernisation is a process of cultural change in the indigenous culture. Yogendra Singh (1973) has defined Modernisation as a form of cultural response, involves attributes which are basically universalistic, evolutionary, pan-humanistic, trans-ethnic, and non-ideological. In his book 'Modernisation of India Tradition' he has shown how the Indian tradition, both Hindu and Islamic tradition has been responding to the forces of Modernisation. For him the characteristic features of Indian tradition are hierarchy, holism, continuity and transcendence and that the challenge of Modernisation is to break away from them-a break from hierarchy to equality, from holism to individualism, from continuity to historicity and from transcendence to this worldly rationalism and secularism.

Modernisation as a process of cultural change is understood at two levels. At individual level it implies a change in values, attitude and behaviours of the individuals which is popularly known as 'social mobilisation'. Modernisation at societal level is characterized by structural differentiation, high specialization, and differentiation of individual activities and institutional structures.

The process of Modernisation began mainly with the western contact especially through the establishment of the British rule in the world in general and India in particular. Couple of British impact in Indian society in making Modernisation includes a universalistic legal system, expansion of western form of education, urbanization, industrialization, and spread of new means of communication, transport and social reform. The impact of Modernisation is also seen in the judiciary, army and industrial bureaucracy, a class of business elite, growth of trade unions etc. The impact of Modernisation is not only seen in the micro level social institutions like family, caste and village councils/community, but also in the household gadgets, ornaments, clothes, food pattern, festival and festivities, kitchen appliances used by the people of Indian society. The essentials of Modernisation are the commitment to scientific world-view, the internalization of humanistic and philosophical point of view of science on contemporary problems and not merely the volume of technological changes. The modern values are universal, evolutionary, might not be typical to any one particular cultural tradition, whereas, the traditional cultural values may be particularistic and typical.

Use of coir technology by the coconut growers in rural India to meet the market demands of the coir products, use of saw mills to cut woods into specific sizes and use of flour mill for making flour from wheat are some of the examples of Modernisation popularly observed in the society.

Check Your Progress

- 3) What do mean by Modernisation? Explain briefly the impact of Modernisation on the social and cultural life of India.

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- 4) Modernisation has brought a revolutionary change in the life and livelihood of rural people. Explain with examples.

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8.3.3 Religious Syncretism

Let us discuss the meaning of syncretism from a historical perspective. Syncretism means the fusion of two or more thought systems. It involves the merger of original traditions especially in theology and mythology of religion. It is also observed in arts and culture called as eclecticism as well as politics i.e. syncretic politics.

The Oxford English Dictionary first used the word syncretism in English in 1618. It is derived from Latin word *syncretismus*, drawing on Greek *synkretismos* means ‘*Cretan fedaiaion*’

Syncretism facilitates coexistence and unity between different cultures and world views. It refers to a state of affairs where one culture combines with another culture and thus, a new culture is build with the elements of previous cultures. Often contradictory ideas contribute to form a new idea in the process of syncretism. The fusion of culture, religions and philosophies under the process of syncretism may or may not destroy the old ones but creates a new one. Such fusions are commonly observed in the field of religion.

Religious syncretism usually involves blending of various essential parts of one religion with another, resulting in a new religious system. It diverges various religious beliefs and practices of different religions in the world. For example blending of two or more religious systems like Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Greeks may result the formation of a new religious faith group which may occur due to various reasons. Such religious syncretism is possible where different religious groups live close to each other and they maintain interaction in day to day life and living.

Religious syncretism is observed in almost all the major religions of the world. They are viz: ancient Greece, Judaism, Roman world, Christianity, Mormonism, Islam, Druze religion, Barghawata, Baha’i Faith, Caribbean religions and cultures, Indian traditions and Buddhism.

For example many Christian sects in Korea are almost unrecognizably Christian because of the profound syncretistic effects of Buddhism and native Korean beliefs. Religious syncretism in Korea integrates the best aspects of Buddhism and Confucianism.

In Asian context due to the melting nature of different religions one finds the configuration of religious beliefs and practices in day to day life of certain sections of the population. The concept of *ahimsa* (non-injury), Yoga, reincarnation, and *karma* have been co-opted from the non-Aryan communities by the Aryan during their invasion.

In modern society in order to maintain harmony such religious syncretism is formulated and focused before the people. For example the Satya Sai cult reflects as a combination of different religious beliefs. It provides a platform to the people of the world belonging to different religious groups. The process of syncretism helped to make cultural compromises to establish beliefs, values, and customs in a place with different cultural traditions to win popular support in foreign lands.

Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism in ancient India have adopted many beliefs and faiths of different religions over the millennia. The Moghal emperor Akbar who had also consolidated various aspects of different religions in his empire popularly called as Din-i-Ilahi, is considered as a syncretic religion which merged the best elements of the regions of his empire. Buddhism syncretized with many traditional beliefs of Confucianism philosophy, Chinese folk religion, Taoism and Korean Shamanism of different East Asian societies.

Check Your Progress

5) Explain the concept of religious syncretism with examples.

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8.4 CONCEPT AND MEANING OF LITTLE AND GREAT TRADITION

We know that the concept of Great Tradition and Little Tradition did not touch the scope of the study of the first generation of anthropologists like Malinowski, Radcliffe Brown who basically concentrated on studying remote, self contained and small scale societies. Only after the World War-II anthropologists started studying communities in the context of religions like Buddhism and Christianity. Since 1950 the concept of Great and Little Tradition attracted at the University of Chicago to anthropologist like Robert Redfield

As we have understood, Robert Redfield a leading American Anthropologist first time used the twin concepts of Little Tradition and Great Tradition. His book ‘Peasant Society and Culture’ (1956) based on his study in Mexican communities explains both these communities. Both Robert Redfield and Milton Singer applied these concepts while studying Madras city in Indian cultural setting as an approach to analyse social change in Indian society.

Tradition means handing down of information, beliefs and customs by oral means from one generation to another. In other words, tradition is the inherited practices or opinion or conventions associated with a social group for a period.

It is commonly observed that the Great tradition is associated with the elites, literate and reflective few who are capable of analyzing, interpreting, and

reflecting cultural knowledge. It is a body of knowledge which functions as the beacon light of knowledge. Similarly we believe that little tradition comprises of the belief pattern, the institutions, the knowledge, including proverb, riddles, anecdotes, folk tales, legends, myths, and the whole body of folklore of the folk and/or the unlettered peasants who imbibe cultural knowledge from the great tradition.

Little tradition is the intellectual influences that come out from localized not known much to people of wider world. Great tradition on the other hand cultivated in schools and temples and is known to the people in a civilization. They are transferred through written literature, based on rationality, specialized and self conscious by nature.

We see in India there are several centres of great tradition which maintain a network of relationships, based on cultural knowledge and ideology. The role incumbents of little tradition include folk artists, folk musicians, story teller, and tellers of riddles, street singers, mendicant performers, and interpreter of proverbs, and puzzles, street dancers, astrologers, fortune tellers and medicine men.

You know that the great epics like Ramayan, Mahabharat, and Bhagabat Geeta; the deities like Shri Krishna, Shiva, and Lakshmi; and the religious places like Kashi, Puri, Dwarika, Ayodhya and Varanasi are elements of great tradition in India. Odissi dance and Bharat Natyam are the dance of great tradition, while the Chhau dance of Mayurbhanja in Odisha and Purulia of West Bengal represents the Little Tradition.

Great Tradition is also called as elite tradition, while Little Tradition is called as folk tradition. There is a constant collaboration, cooperation, and unequal interaction between great and little tradition. Both the traditions have long effect on each other.

Milton Singer used the terms like 'hierarchic and low culture', while McKim Marriott (1955) contrasted Indian village religion with the San-skritic textual tradition of Hinduism. Marriott observed that fifteen out of nineteen village festivals celebrated in the village were sanctioned by at least one Sanskrit text. Depending on the flow of practices from Great to Little or from Little to Great tradition he gave the concept of Universalisation and Parochialisation. In Indian context anthropologists like Yogendra Singh, Indra Dev, and S.L. Srivastava have also used these concepts of Great and Little Traditions in their empirical studies.

ACTIVITY

1. Document the impact of Modernisation on the life and living of different caste groups in your neighboring households from anthropological perspective.
2. Explain how the impact of Modernisation is visible in your family.
3. List out major changes observed in the cultural practices of different caste groups in around living in your locality.

Check Your Progress

6) What are Great Tradition and Little Tradition? Explain how both influence each other.

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7) Write short note on the followings:

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a) Sanskritisation

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b) Modernisation

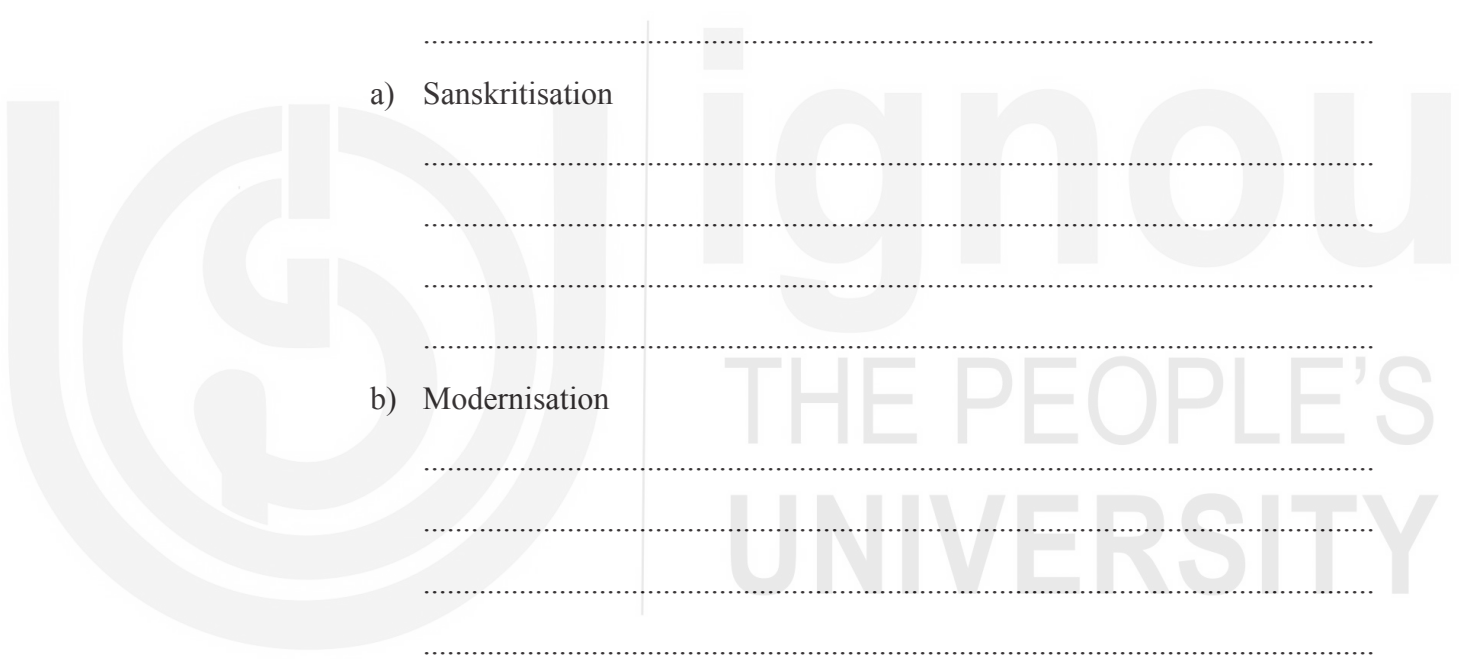
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c) Great Tradition

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d) Little Tradition

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e) Religious Syncretism

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f) Indigenous People

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8.5 SUMMARY

In this unit an attempt has been made to study some of the dynamic aspects of Indian culture. M.N.Srinivas has developed three concepts of Sanskritisation, Westernisation and Secularisation to explore three different processes to cultural change. Robert Redfield coined the terms like Great Tradition and Little Tradition and interrelations between both the traditions which he used to study Indian civilisation. In addition to this, in Sociology and Social anthropology different scholars have used different socio-cultural processes of cultural change in Indian society. Any understanding of cultural change in India requires an analysis of culture change by using various processes effective at various levels of living in Indian society.

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8.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) Refer to section 8.1 & 8.2
- 2) Refer to sub-section 8.3.1
- 3) Refer to sub-section 8.3.2
- 4) Refer to sub-section 8.3.2

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- 5) Refer to sub-section 8.3.3
- 6) Refer to section 8.4
- 7)
 - a) Refer to sub-section 8.3.1
 - b) Refer to sub-section 8.3.2
 - c) Refer to section 8.4
 - d) Refer to section 8.4
 - e) Refer to sub-section 8.3.3
 - f) Refer to section 8.1



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UNIT 9 EDUCATION AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION*

Contents

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Education: Meaning, Forms, and Functions
- 9.2 Understanding Anthropology of Education
- 9.3 Education as a Key to Social Transformation
- 9.4 Education among Tribal People in India: Issues and Challenges
- 9.5 Summary
- 9.6 References
- 9.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- understand the meaning, different forms, and functions of education;
- explain how the field of anthropology views education;
- examine the role of education in social transformation; and
- identify various factors that affect schooling among tribal children.

9.0 INTRODUCTION

Education has always received wide recognition around the world for numerous reasons. It acts as a catalyst in bringing change in the society. It aids in promoting economic growth, facilitates in improving the basic needs of people and plays a crucial role in the overall development of an individual. It is also considered as a powerful tool for disadvantaged sections like tribal groups, who face many challenges to move ahead in life. Due to its multifarious functions, education continues to have immense significance not only among common people but also among policy makers and academicians. Since the term 'education' is very broad, multi-functional, and has multiple interpretations, scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds carry out research on the domain of education.

In this unit, we are going to discuss the different interpretations of the term 'education', its functions, and its various forms or channels through which it can be acquired. We will also learn how the discipline of anthropology views education. Apart from this, we will also try to examine how education forms the key to social transformation. Last but not the least; we will make an attempt to understand the Indian scenario of education among the tribal people and the various issues and challenges related to it.

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9.1 EDUCATION: MEANING, FORMS, AND FUNCTIONS

Etymologically, the word education is derived from a Latin word *educare* i.e., to “bring up” or “rear”. This Latin word is in turn, related to another word *educere* i.e. to “bring out” or “lead forth”. Both these meanings signify that education is viewed as the process of rearing as well as to bring out the potentialities of an individual.

However, to confine our understanding of the term ‘education’ only to etymological meanings would not be adequate as the term has wide connotations. In its broadest sense, education is a deliberate and systematic attempt to socialize an individual. It is a process through which knowledge is acquired and this accumulated knowledge is passed on from one generation to another.

The father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi viewed education as an “all-round drawing out of the best in man – body, mind and spirit.” In order to achieve this all round development, he strived to integrate schooling with useful and productive work, called as basic education. He introduced this revolutionary concept of basic education in India to make school education self-reliant and the school as a productive institution (Kumar, 2009). The eminent philosopher John Dewey pointed out that education is not preparation for life; education is life itself. He argued that there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education, and thus, education must be based on the actual life experience of individuals (Dewey, 1938). Emile Durkheim, one of the founding fathers of sociology and social anthropology, viewed education as “the influence exercised by adult generations on those who are not ready for social life” (1956: 71). For anthropologists George and Louise Spindler, education is the process of transmitting culture, which includes skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values, as well as discrete elements of behaviour (Spindler, 2000). The Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen views education as a basic capability that enhances the freedom of a person to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value (Sen, 1999). His approach, called as capability approach, acted as a catalyst in holistic understanding of human development and attained immense popularity across many countries.

Though the interpretations of the term ‘education’ may be different, knowledge or skill acquisition remains an indispensable aspect of it. This can be attained through three major forms or channels of education: i) Formal education; ii) Informal education; and iii) Non-formal education. In formal education, knowledge is usually acquired in institutionalised settings like schools and colleges with a standardised curriculum. In the second type i.e., in informal education, family, kin group, etc. imparts knowledge to children at home. Apart from formal and informal education, there is a third way of attaining education, which is known as non-formal education. This type of education has emerged to meet the increasing demand of children who are unable to attend the formal education due to various socio-economic reasons. For such out-of-school children, instruction is given outside the formal system.

Like its meaning and forms, the functions of education are also manifold- it contributes to economic growth, reduces poverty, promotes income distribution, improves basic needs, health and nutritional status and has positive relationship

with general social, political and economic development and overall quality of life (Tilak, 2002). Education among women is even more important as illiteracy makes women more vulnerable and deprived. Thus, education not only promotes increased participation of women in social, economic and political spheres, it also enables women to have more decision making power, awareness of legal rights, more freedom of choice, etc. Eventually, these changes lead to empowerment of women.

Due to its multifunctional nature and having immense importance, education has been declared as a fundamental right of individuals in India. The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act notified in 2002 made education a fundamental right for children in the age group of 6-14 years. It states, “The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.” This was operationalised through a landmark legislation in 2009, which is called as ‘The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act’ (RTE).

Check Your Progress

- 1) What is the meaning of the term ‘education’ and what are its various forms and functions?

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9.2 UNDERSTANDING ANTHROPOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Understanding the culture of people at all times and in all places remains the core of anthropology. Anthropologists’ preoccupation with culture is extended to education as well. The way anthropologists study the field of education is very different from other disciplines. The unique feature that sets apart the field of anthropology of education from various other disciplines studying education is its diversity. Anthropology takes a broad view of education that encompasses almost everything that a person learns in his lifetime.

The sub-field of anthropology of education emerged with diverse research interests. In the beginning, anthropologists like Margaret Mead, Raymond Firth and others primarily worked in simpler societies where institutions of formal schooling were absent. Thus, their initial engagement with education started with understanding the process of cultural transmission in informal settings. Such understanding is clearly reflected in the earlier studies conducted in simple societies. Studies on socialization and enculturation, as informal means of cultural transmission, played a significant role in unravelling the learning process. Of the many famous studies on socialization, Margaret Mead’s *Coming of Age in Samoa* carved its own niche. Also in the 1930s, British anthropologists, Meyer Fortes and Raymond Firth analysed the educational forms among the Tallensi of Africa and the Tikiopia in the South Pacific respectively.

Example of a study on socialisation

Coming of Age in Samoa by Margaret Mead

Of the many famous studies on socialisation, Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) has immense prominence. The book is based on her nine-month long fieldwork among the Samoan islanders. Mead, a student of Franz Boas, wanted to find out whether the stress and anxiety of adolescents in the United States is universal and whether this is due to biological factors or it is culturally determined. By comparing the Samoan culture with American culture, Mead argued that the transition from childhood to adolescence stage in Samoa is not marked with stress and storm as seen in American culture. She concluded that the cultural conditions of the Samoans are such that it makes the adolescence stage stress-free. Apart from studying the adolescent behaviour, her research also focussed on understanding Samoan rituals, child rearing practices, adolescence, education, personality, social structure, and so on.

The book received immense popularity and made her a very famous anthropologist. However, the book also received criticism in the later years. Anthropologists like Derek Freeman questioned her findings on adolescent behaviour.

As formal schooling became a dominant mode of learning, anthropologists also started studying schools and their role in socialization as well as in learning process. The influence of home and child rearing practices in learning was very evident in the early studies of formal education. Most of the studies pointed out the variance in the values and attitudes in the school and home atmosphere, which, in turn, affected the child's performance in the school. The cause of these variances, as reflected in many studies, was rooted in different socialization experiences of children.

Apart from this, anthropologists also focussed on the relationships and processes within the schools and several other non-school factors while researching the field of education. Kneller (1965), for instance, suggested that education in terms of schooling is only one of a number of enculturation agencies like the family, church, peer group and mass media. If the educator wants to cultivate certain qualities in the child like clear thinking and independent judgement, he/she may not be able to do so as other agencies might be moulding the child differently. Anthropologists are of the view that in order to create effective educational exchanges in schools, educators must take into account the distinct cultural styles and understandings that may be operating across school, family, and other community contexts (Foley et al, 2001).

Though schools were initially viewed as change agents of the society, there was an interesting turning point in this sub-field. In the 1970s, critical approaches started emerging and as a result, schools were viewed from an entirely different

¹These scholars argued that despite the promises of upward mobility, schools played a role in perpetuating the existing social pattern of inequalities. Thus, most children of the subordinate class ended up in the same class and had adopted the same values and meanings as the parental generation. This approach, called as social reproduction approach, threw light on the reproduction of structural inequalities in the schools (For details, see Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

perspective. Many scholars like Karl Marx, Pierre Bourdieu and others challenged the earlier approach of schools as change agents. These scholars argued that schools are not sites for upward mobility, but play a crucial role in increasing the class inequalities¹. This approach towards schools found a prominent place in the sociology and anthropology of education.

Although formal education through schools has gained immense popularity, anthropologists' special interest towards informal education and the indigenous knowledge acquired through informal education cannot be undermined. Indigenous knowledge, also called as traditional or local knowledge, refers to the large body of knowledge and skills that are developed by the communities outside the formal education system. As the World Bank rightly puts it, "It encompasses the skills, experiences and insights of people, applied to maintain or improve their livelihood. It is developed and adapted continuously to gradually changing environments and passed down from generation to generation and closely interwoven with people's cultural values"². This kind of knowledge is acquired through family, kin groups, surroundings and is unique to a particular community.

Learning through informal means plays an immense role among the tribal population. Such knowledge is orally transmitted from one generation to another generation through day-to-day activities, rituals, folk songs etc. In the recent past, such indigenous education and the knowledge acquired through it is losing its significance with increasing number of schools. Since tribal communities live in synergy with their environment, the knowledge gained through informal means is very much relevant even in present time. Such knowledge is context specific and learned through day-to-day experiences. It has immense practical value and can be applied in various spheres like health, natural resource management, agriculture, etc.

Activity

Think of the ways in which indigenous knowledge can be integrated into school curriculum.

To sum up, anthropology looks at the influence of both school as well as non-school factors on the individual and society as a whole. Anthropologists focus on all forms of education and study the learning process both inside as well as outside the classrooms. For them, education is a lifelong process and cannot be confined to schooling alone. Schooling is just one aspect of the larger process of education.

Check Your Progress

2) Explain the emergence of the field of anthropology of education.

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²Source: <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ik/basic.htm> Accessed 25 June 2015

3) How do anthropologists view education and what is their contribution to the field?

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9.3 EDUCATION AS A KEY TO SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Any individual is not just a biological being, but also a social being. Social interactions, relationships, customs, norms, sanctions, beliefs are integral part of any individual's social and cultural life. The social relationships, which are an essential part of the social life, are hierarchical in India. Thus, Indian society is stratified in terms of caste, class, gender etc. Based on these stratifications, various dichotomies exist like high caste-low caste, upper class-lower class, male-female, and so on. There has been discriminations based on these aspects and people are deprived of equal opportunities in the society. Such discrimination or exclusion based on caste, class, gender, language, religion, and other aspects are considered as major barrier in bringing change in the society. These stratifications also hinder the overall process of development.

However, no society remains static forever and change is an inevitable aspect. In such a scenario, education is often viewed as a means to bring change in societies. It not only plays a crucial role in challenging the social norms and culturally evolved taboos, but also helps in making an egalitarian society where stratifications become insignificant. Precisely, education lays the foundation in bringing social transformation in the society. UNESCO refers societal transformation as “the change of society's systemic characteristics. This incorporates the change of existing parameters of a societal system, including technological, economic, political and cultural restructuring. It implies changes in hierarchical relationships, values, norms and stratifications over time”.³

Transformation through education can take place at the societal level as well as at the individual level. Some of the ways by which education brings in social transformation are below:

- **Empowering individuals:** Education also plays a fundamental role in empowering individuals. Anthropologists understand the concept of empowerment in relation to another vital and inseparable concept i.e., ‘power’. Empowerment in true sense comes when there is rearrangement of power relations in such a way that an individual can control the decisions that affects his/her life. A person belonging to lower socio-economic strata can act and make decisions in his/her favour despite resistance from others. This change at the structural level is possible only when an individual is educated. Education enables a person to make informed choices and helps in

³Source: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/social-transformation/> Accessed: 20 June, 2015.

better decision making. An educated person is also empowered to question the status quo and stereotypical patterns of behavior and practices.

- **Increased Participation:** Education not only helps in empowering individuals, but is also instrumental in making them socially and politically conscious, increasing their awareness, and ensuring their inclusion through equal participation. Increased participation of the individuals in economic and political issues leads to social transformation.
- **Improved economic status:** A positive relationship between education and the economic status of an individual has been usually noticed. Education accelerates in improving the income levels, thereby contributing in improving the economic status of a person. The overall process of change in the economic status is termed as economic mobility. This economic mobility can occur between generations (intergenerational like parent-children) or in a person's lifetime. Though there are number of other factors that are associated with economic mobility, education is considered to be one of the key factors associated with it.
- **Poverty Eradication:** Education plays an important role in reducing poverty of a nation. It is often argued that higher the level of education, greater would be the possibilities of employment opportunities. Eventually, increased employment opportunities will lead to economic well being and creation of wealth, thereby bringing a reduction in the poverty levels. Achieving universal elementary education is the first step in this direction.
- **Upward Social Mobility:** In the broadest sense, social mobility is referred as change in one's social position, which can be upward or downward movement. Education fosters upward social mobility. This is usually measured by comparing the social status of the parental generation through class, income and other factors with that of the children's generation. For instance, a farmer's son can become a doctor by acquiring education and the latter leads a better quality of life than his parental generation. Thus, education lays the foundation for upward social mobility.
- **Better health and nutritional status:** Education is the key for a healthy family and a healthy nation. An educated person is aware of the benefits of proper hygiene, good sanitation, and right nutrition. Right from the birth to adulthood, a healthy way of life goes a long way in imparting a better health status of a family. In this process, education plays a significant role in improving general awareness of health issues. Education facilitates in reducing mortality, increases life expectancy, and improves standards of living. Thus, there is a positive relationship between educated individuals and the overall health.
- **Personality development and character building:** Education contributes in personality development through intellectual, moral, spiritual, emotional, and aesthetic development. It increases the confidence and self-esteem levels of an individual and helps in facing the world without any fear or hesitation. An educated person has increased awareness about equality and social justice and develops a respect for diversity.

Activity

Think of other ways in which education can bring social transformation.

On the whole, education triggers change at societal as well as at the individual level. At the broader societal level, education helps in evolving an egalitarian society based on equity and inclusion. It brings changes in hierarchical relationships, values, norms, and stratifications over time. At the individual level, a person is empowered and better equipped to question the conventional hierarchies and seeks to find solutions to it.

Check Your Progress

4) Education plays a vital role in social transformation. Elaborate.

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9.4 EDUCATION AMONG TRIBAL PEOPLE OF INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

As we have discussed in the previous sections, education plays a significant role in bringing social transformation. In India, formal education through schools has been given much importance and its relevance has been reiterated time and again in various five year plans and government policies. When so much importance is being laid on education, particularly formal education through schools, it is an undeniable fact that every country would strive for hundred percent literacy of its population and India is no exception to this. Much impetus has been given to Universalisation of Elementary Education (henceforth, UEE) i.e. to provide universal, free and compulsory basic education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years. Many policies were implemented and many strategies were planned by the government to achieve UEE. A considerable progress has been made under the UEE but still there is a long way to go. In this context, education among tribal children deserves special attention here.

As per census 2011, tribal population constitutes 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country. When the literacy level of tribals is taken into account, it is an issue of major concern. As per Census 2011, the literacy rate⁴ of Scheduled Tribes (STs) is 58.96%, out of which only 49.35% of the females are literates. The table below gives a comparative picture of the literacy among STs and all social groups for the past six decades.

⁴As per Census, a literate person is 'a person aged 7 and above who can both read and write with understanding in any language'.

Table 9.1: Literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes (STs) and all social groups over the past six decades

Year	STs			All Social Groups		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	13.83	3.16	8.53	40.40	15.35	28.30
1971	17.63	4.85	11.30	45.96	21.97	34.45
1981	24.52	8.04	16.35	56.38	29.76	43.57
1991	40.65	18.19	29.60	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	59.17	34.76	47.10	75.26	53.67	64.83
2011	68.53	49.35	58.96	82.14	65.46	74.04

Source: Census of India

The above table (table 2.1) depicts that though there has been a steady increase in the literacy rate of the tribals over the past six decades, it remains low when compared to other groups. There are several factors, which affect the literacy rates of the tribal population. These include school factors, non-school factors and also external factors at the level of planning and administration.

Among the non-school factors, economic constraint of the families is considered to be one of the major determinants for children dropping out from schools and consequently affecting literacy rate of tribal population. Household responsibilities, need for children to work at home (fetching water, looking after younger children, cooking, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, etc.), early marriage of girls, low parental motivation are other factors for irregular attendance and dropping out of tribal children.

School factors include inadequate infrastructure, poor quality of instruction, instruction in language other than the mother tongue, non-availability of books, unhappy teacher community, and so on. Physical access to schools, particularly among those tribal populations, which are concentrated in remote areas and with low population density, is also a major reason for poor enrolment of children.

Apart from the school and non-school factors, there are also external constraints at the levels of policy, planning, implementation, and administration. A major drawback is the lack of understanding of complex realities of tribal life and culture in the policies on tribal education (Sujatha, 2002).

The picture of female literacy among tribals is very disappointing in India and needs immediate attention. Endemic female illiteracy in India is due to many reasons like early marriage, household responsibilities, parental apathy, dissonance between social role and perceived function of education, instruction in language other than the mother tongue, and indifference of the teachers towards girls (Channa, 1996). The gendered division of labour, patriarchal norms and practice of dowry further intensifies gender disparities (Dreze and Sen, 1995).

Since the participation of children of tribal communities has been very low and drop-out rates are high, time to time special incentives have been introduced to increase their enrolment and retention in school till the completion of elementary education. These incentives for tribal children include free textbooks, uniforms, mid-day meals, scholarships, school bags, stationary, and so on.

Apart from the above mentioned incentives, new schools in tribal areas are being opened up. To further increase the access to schools among tribal children, Ashram schools and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBVs) are also being established. Ashram schools are residential schools established in predominantly tribal areas. Such schools provide education exclusively to the tribal children of poor economic backgrounds from tribal areas where there are no regular schools. In order to reduce the gender disparity in education, KGBVs are established. These are also residential schools but exclusively for girls at the upper primary level predominantly belonging to the disadvantaged sections and minority communities.

Despite increasing the number of schools and providing incentives to the tribal children to bring them on par with other children, quality remains a major concern. Factors like poor infrastructure, inadequate teachers, teacher absenteeism, lack of toilets and drinking water facilities, language issue etc are often responsible for poor quality of education in tribal areas.

Apart from infrastructural and teaching-learning related factors, quality of education is further affected if the education system does not take into account the special needs of the tribal children. It is an undeniable fact that the needs of tribal population are different from the rest. Their traditions, customs, values, language are unique in their own way. In other words, each tribal community has its own culture and its own way of life. This uniqueness needs to be respected and preserved. Integrating this uniqueness in the education systems will have a far-reaching impact.

Several initiatives such as instruction in tribal language, reflection of tribal life and culture in curriculum, involving the community in school rituals, use of examples from tribal culture and use of local resources during teaching could be taken up in this direction. One such initiative from Andhra Pradesh is being discussed here wherein the government has introduced teaching in tribal languages.

Multi-Lingual Education in Andhra Pradesh: An example of innovative approach

Language is one of the most important facilitating factors that help in the teaching-learning process. The transaction is smooth when there is coherence between the language used in schools and that of home. On the other hand, when the language used at home and school is different, it influences the learning of the students. In tribal areas, language is an important issue as the language used at school is different from the tribal language spoken by the child at home.

In this context, mother tongue-based education called Multi- Lingual Education (MLE) for tribal education was introduced in Andhra Pradesh in the year 2003 to strengthen the child's mother tongue. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has introduced teaching in mother tongue of tribals in eight tribal languages in 1000 schools as a pilot project. Under this project, teaching is imparted to children belonging to classes 1 to 5 and textbooks are prepared for these classes in tribal languages. Apart from textbooks, teaching-

learning materials were developed and training was given to teachers to teach in tribal languages. There are eight tribal languages in which the MLE programme is being implemented: Koya, Kuvi , Lambada, Savara, Adivasi Oriya,Gondi, Kolami, Konda.

Apart from these, tribal communities are blessed with rich indigenous knowledge and integrating such knowledge in the school curriculum would be of immense value. This will not only make learning more enriching, but would also help in preserving the rich knowledge.

Check Your Progress

- 5) Discuss the various factors that affect the literacy rate of tribal communities.

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- 6) What are the different initiatives taken by the government to improve the literacy rate among tribal children?

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9.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have tried to understand the meaning of the term education and its different interpretations, various forms, and functions. We have also tried to understand how education is viewed by anthropologists and their contribution to the field. Apart from this, we have examined the various ways through which education plays an essential role in social transformation. We have specially focussed on the tribal population of India and tried to understand several issues related to their education.

As discussed in previous sections, anthropologists’ focus on education is very extensive – right from cultural transmission through informal means to studies of formal education. Moreover, school factors as well as wider aspects outside the school are equally fascinating to them. As far as schools are concerned, formal schools have penetrated in almost every nook and corner and tribal areas are no exception to this. One of the prime goals of education is to bring social transformation. In order to bring social transformation among tribal people, equal opportunities to quality learning, which is free from any forms of discrimination at school as well as at the societal level, should be provided and promoted.

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9.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) Refer o section 9.1
- 2) Refer to section 9.2
- 3) Refer to section 9.2
- 4) Refer to section 9.3
- 5) Refer to section 9.4
- 6) Refer to section 9.4

UNIT 10 TRIBE-CASTE CONTINUUM IN INDIA*

Content

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Tribe, Definition and Argument
- 10.2 Caste
- 10.3 Functions of the Caste System
- 10.4 Caste-Tribe Continuum as a Feature of the Indian Society
- 10.5 Summary
- 10.6 References
- 10.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- explain what is a tribal community;
- understand what caste is; and
- understand the similarity and differences that exist between caste and tribe.

10.0 INTRODUCTION

Population in India has always presented a remarkable variety of cultural traits and organizational features. K.S. Mathur and B.C. Agarwal (1974), rightly comment that “traditional India is said to have three types of communities – tribal, caste and peasant”. They claimed that tribal communities like the Naga of Nagaland, the Munda of Chotanagpur, the Gond of Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh, and the Toda of Nilgiri hills in Tamil Nadu – constitute a distinct society of their own.

They do not regard themselves as part of the greater society in India, they had a discrete and distinctive way of life, an individual dialect and a socio-religious system distinctively their own. Castes or *jati*, on the other hand – are communities linked into a wider social organization of the Hindu society based upon a well-defined and understood system of stratification and status differentiation. Anthropologists who have examined tribe and caste have differed on the question relating to tribe and caste identities. According to Ghurye tribal people are backward Hindus differing only in degrees from the other segments of Hindu society. Elwin argued for the recognition of separate social and cultural identity of tribal people. Government of India gives tacit recognition to this identity of keeping alive under constitution sanction their lists of Scheduled Tribe.

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10.1 PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEFINITION OF TRIBE

Tribe is a social group identified with a definite geographical area or territory, known by a common name, speaking a common dialect, sharing a common culture, rules, belief and rituals. They also exhibit features of endogamy, and usually have a distinct economy based on mutual cooperation and interdependence. The term tribe has not been described by the constitution of India. Unlike 'tribe', the term Scheduled tribe is an administrative term and those so categorized have some privileges under the Constitution of India. The Constitution of India recognizes 645 distinct tribes. Some of the major tribes of India are Baiga, Banjara, Bhumij, Gond, Birhor, Chero, Ho, Santhal, Munda, Kisan, Kondh, Mahli, Oraon, Tharu, Bhot, Bodh, Gaddi, Shippis, Gujjar, Khampa, Labana, etc. The Scheduled tribe status, even of the same named community varies from different from state to state.

The term "Scheduled Tribes" refers to specific peoples whose status is acknowledged to some formal degree by national legislation. The term 'Scheduled Tribe' was mentioned by the constitution of the India. Article 341 (1), empowered the President of India to specify the tribes or tribal communities by public notification. India has 8.2 per cent of total tribal population. The tribal population of the India can be divided into four major types. The first one consists of tribes who are forest dwellers of an original forest habitat. Second type of population is of those practicing settled or shifting agriculture in rural areas. Third category of tribes refers to those who are semi assimilated with major dominated communities. The last one is the 'Assimilated population'. In India, many of the groups which are now regarded as tribal have been in contact with Hindu society since time immemorial. Direct or indirectly the Hinduism has influenced them. Historically there has been a two-way process with the Hinduization of the tribes and tribalization of some Hindus. Some of them have adopted "the full Hindu faith... they retain old tribal names, observe clan and totem rules and retain elements of tribal religion" (Elwin 1942). Some tribal groups have gone to the extent of acquiring a Hindu caste and are registered as Hindus in the census. The names of some of the present day castes and sub castes betray tribal origin.

D.N. Majumdar (1967), however, defines tribes with reference to religions subtexts. According to him, a 'tribe' is culturally and linguistically a homogeneous group which does not follow any major religion such as Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, etc. He emphasizes two important characteristics of 'tribes' in the Indian context. According to Majumdar 'tribe' a territorial group having a traditional territory to which the emigrants always refer as their home and the second feature he mentions about the kinship, which operate as a strong associative, regulative and integrating principle. Ghurey(1963), define tribe, his major focus in regard to show them a labelled Hindu which we can see in his definition of tribes when he argues tribes as backward Hindus who are not yet perfectly integrated with the caste system. The caste system is a social structure in which classes are determined by pre-determined heredity. He calls 'tribes' as those Etno-social groups who have been sub-merged under the "sections of people", the promotion of whose educational and economic interests has been declared to be one of the directive principles of state policy (Hasnain, 1991).

Tribal culture is seen to be problematic if we separate it with the age long culture of caste system because culture is not a static entity. Hence the distinction of caste and tribe can be seen as a Victorian anthropological notion. Beteille in his essay on 'tribe and peasantry' states that the country like India total populations is a peasant. By using four criteria generally used to differentiate tribal from castes- isolation, size, religion, and means of livelihoods he argued that there is no distinction between tribe and peasant in India. He also argues that India is not like the Australia and the others new World. Here no given population that cans claim indigeneity because they cannot reasonably bedescribed as the settler or aliens like New Zealand and Australia. Battalion, Crippins Bates and like many scholars has a belief that Adivasi is a colonial invention and argues that we needs to admit that we all Indians are real habitants or Adivasi means that the continuity of a culture is long age old having a history of a cultural contacts between the caste and trial. The colonial discourse has seen tribal as a way of life which has embedded through forest.

Indian constitution has a provision in article 342 which empowers the president of India to make a list of ST in consultation with the Governor of each state. This is the subject for parliament revisions. The orders and the specification of the scheduled tribe by the president and such have been amended by the parliament act to give the status of the Tribe. The social scientists, ethnographers have failed to provide a universal definition of the tribe. The definition given by the social scientists does not apply equally to all the tribes living in India. Most of the definitions equally apply to the castes and the tribes. The tribe as like the Scheduled Caste is an administrative category in India. This is precisely the reason that a particular community is listed as tribal in one state and non-tribal in other states. The Santhals are listed as tribal in Jharkhand, West Bengal and Orissa and as 'Other Backward Community' (O.B.C.) in Assam, in the case of the Gurjars, they are classified under the Other Backward Class (OBC) category in some states in India. However, in Jammu and Kashmir and parts of Himachal Pradesh, they are designated as a Scheduled Tribe under the Indian government's reservation program of positive discrimination. This example can be seen easily, how administration articulates the caste and tribes.

The term 'tribe' was introduced in India by the colonial writers in the last quarter of the last century. The initiative was recognizing tribes and caste firstly taken by the colonial ethnographer and the census department of the British India. It is also a peculiar feature of Indian society and culture by which caste and tribe continue to refer the term 'Jat' or 'jati' to denote their social category. The terms for the tribe in some of the tribal languages given in the additions, such as, Santal (jat, jati), Ho (jati, patki) and Kurukh (jat, jati), Dimasa (jati), Garo (jat), Khasi (jaid), Konyak Naga (jat), Phom Naga (jat), Zeliang Naga (jati), Kabui Naga (jati), confirm the above statement. Different communities often considered them to be the castes. Due to continuity and change in Indian society even the colonial writers were also not clear about the 'Caste-Tribe' divide. The boundary line between the two continued indistinct were often interchangeably used. It is also argued that Indian played a major role in the colonial construction of the tribes and castes. The monographs on the various communities studied the castes and the tribes together because it is not easy to separate them from caste. It is fair because the cultural contact of the tribe and the caste is age old. The study including caste and tribe as a one junction was

‘Cochin Tribes and Castes’ by L.K.A.Ayyar, ‘The Tribes and Castes of Bengal’ by H.H.Risley, ‘Castes and Tribes of Southern India’ by E.Thurston, ‘Hindu Tribes and Castes’ by N.A.Sherring, ‘Tribes and Castes of Madras Presidency’, ‘Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India’ by Russel and Biralal, and C.William’s ‘Tribes and Castes of the North-Western India’. The studies of the castes and the tribes were undertaken together because of the complexities of caste and tribes line up.

Somewhere it is also argued that Tribe is original Jan (inhabitant) of the India. The age long process of continuum in Indian society incorporates the castes and the tribes into a same juncture in many of the cases. But except the continuum there is also a boundary line of the caste and Tribes in their rituals, beliefs, religion, and in the functions of political and economic organization. The basic features of the caste and tribal organizations do not differ in much extent but having any basic distinction. The boundaries between the two remain blurred and undefined. And yet, it does continue to over-emphasize the Caste-Tribe dichotomy. The first administration initiative to draw up a boundary line between tribe and caste was done by the census department under the colonial regime. If we saw the ethnographic writing in India during the 18th century, firstly the caste has often been used synonymously with the tribe and later on, for a long time, not synonymously but in a cognate manner as in the phrase ‘castes and tribes’, as if they were cognate social groups. But afterward the colonial administrations and report gradually shape the term ‘tribe’ to replace ‘caste’ in many extents for their colonial interest. 1891 Census report is the first initiatives toward this division.

Baines, in the 1891 Census Report, included ‘Forest Tribes’ as a sub-category under the category of ‘Agricultural and Pastoral Castes’. The ancient writers did not distinguish castes and the tribes. The social categories of caste and tribes were created in India ignoring the existing social continuum. Those who believed in the dichotomy were more confused. The caste and tribe both had a backward section of peoples in the colonial time so it was not easy to mention that who belongs to caste and who belong to the tribe but the colonial administrator according to their knowledge and to fulfill their interest draws a distinction. The term ‘animist’ was used by the colonial ethnographers and officers like Risley and Gait respectively. The ethnographers and Social scientist more focuses on tribal religion to draw a distinction between caste and tribes along with the divide up in society in religious ground. The belief of ‘animism’ has replaced the ‘tribal religion’ by Ruttom. The kind of distinction has many drawbacks. The concept of ritual pollution a one of the feature of the caste is also seen in many tribal like Gond of all areas. The ritual pollution can be observed at the time of birth and death in a family. In each case the pollution comes to an end after a purification ceremony a feature of Indian which is consistently followed by a ceremony feast. The tribal of Gond is also said to be polluted if they eat food or accept water at the hands of any untouchable caste under of Hindu caste model. The ritual pollution can be observed at the time of birth and death in a family. In each case the pollution comes to an end after a purification ceremony a feature of Indian which is consistently followed by a ceremony feast. The tribal of Gond is also said to be polluted if they eat food or accept water at the hands of any untouchable caste under of the Hindu caste model. Ghurye

observed that “Even if a tribe has a Hinduized section and a non-Hinduized one, the whole tribe is included in the category of ‘forest’ or ‘primitive’ tribe. The categorization of tribes on the basis of language was also bias and a form of administrative steps.

Check Your Progress

- 1) Define the term Tribe.

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10.2 CASTE

The term Caste is derived from a Portuguese term ‘Casta’ meaning breed or race. According to Bêteille (1995) a caste is ‘a small and named group of persons by endogamy, hereditary membership and a specific style of life which sometimes includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and is usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system, based on concepts of purity and pollution.’ the caste has a specific features of its hereditary nature, having a traditional occupations, ascribe hierarchical rank, endogamy, and the practice of pollution rites. Caste system rank people from birth ascribed group membership rather than by individual attributes. It has an endogamous and hereditary feature. So the caste system as a concept is composed of rank groups. Membership in a group is only through birth.

The groups are exhaustive, exclusive and discrete. The caste system, which categorises Hindus into endogamous and stratified social groups, is considered to be the organising institution of Indian society. Caste being a self-enclosed unit naturally limits the social interaction. Castes or jati shaped itself as a vertical structure in which individual caste is hierarchally graded and permanently apart. Caste is communities which weave the social organisation of the Hindu society based upon a well-defined and assumed system of stratification and status. The ritualistic belief and the mystical concept of purity and pollution is based for stratification is based upon mystic notions of purity and pollution. The individual ritualistic behavior is based on purity which demonstrates the people in matters of marriage, food, choice of occupation, and the likes. As an anthropologist, we always use the term ‘tribe’ with the confidence that we know about it clearly. Yet, we don’t know what it implies. We study the tribal communities as demarcated by the constitutional categories and we presume that with the approval of the communities which are categorized ‘tribal’ at the same time that tribal doesn’t enjoy the category of tribal in another state.

We also believe that tribal communities are distinct from the caste communities. They are believed to practice an animistic religion, as if caste Hindu does not. We also believe that tribal religion is different from that of the larger/ mainstream community. The term tribe usually applies to people who were regarded as primitive, with primitive with animistic religion and living in hilly terrain or

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backward areas (Beteille 1995) and having a social-political organisation. It is well known that tribal as well as peasant communities has greater links with nature and they propitiate nature in a different form that gives them bounty. They live in peace and harmony with nature. On the contrary, the others are violent and aggressive by nature. With the kind of changes that were introduced into the religions, where tribes were living in the past, have pushed them out and their entire cultural paradigms have been completely mutilated. Xaxa (2005) observation is quite relevant here. He pithily states that the question of tribes is closely linked with the administrative and political considerations. Hence there has been increasing demand by groups and communities for their inclusion in the list of scheduled tribes in India especially in the period between 1971 and 1981''. This clearly indicates that in India tribe is an administrative or political category rather than an anthropological category. Virginius Xaxa makes an important observation that'' there has been more concern with identification of tribes than with their definition. This does not mean that lists have been drawn without any conception of tribes whatsoever. There are existing some conception. Like the schedule tribe, the schedule caste is also an administrative term. The term 'Scheduled Caste' appeared for the first time in the Government of India Act 1935. In April 1936, the British Government passed the Government of India (Scheduled Caste) Order 1936, specifying certain castes and tribes as scheduled castes in the provinces of Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, Central Provinces, Madras, Orissa, Punjab and United Provinces. Prior to that, these castes were generally known as 'depressed classes'. The depressed classes were systematically categorised in the 1931 census. But the feature of schedule caste is different to schedule tribe. The range from such features of tribal as geographical isolation, simple technology, and condition of living, a general backwardness to the practice of the animism, tribal language, and physical features etc. is different from features of schedule caste. But the problem however lay in the fact they were neither clearly formulated nor systematically applied by the government. One set of criteria was used in one context and quite another in another context. In tribe-caste mobility economy also plays an important role. In the case of agricultural economy the tribal-Caste contacts can be seen as continuum in many regions of the society. Most of the tribes in India like the ground, Ho of Chotanagpur particular a predominantly agricultural. The Gond lives mostly by settled agriculture. They produce paddy, some winter crops and vegetable like the peasant came under the caste system.

Check Your Progress

2) Discuss Caste features.

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3) Define the importance of the caste in Indian society.

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10.3 FUNCTIONS OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

Caste is a form of social stratification characterized by endogamy, hereditary transmission of a lifestyle which often includes an occupation, status in a hierarchy and customary social interaction and exclusion based on cultural notions of superiority (<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/culturalanthropology/chapter/social-stratification/>).

The caste system is credited to ensure the continuity of the traditional social organization of India. It has accommodated multiple communities including invading tribes in the Indian society. The knowledge and skills of the occupations have passed down from one generation to the next. Through subsystems like Jajmani system the caste system promoted interdependent interaction between various castes and communities with in a village. The rituals and traditions promoted cooperation and unity between members of the different castes (<https://www.sociologyguide.com/social-stratification/Functions-of-caste-system.php>).

The caste system provides every individual of the society a definite social status and ways for social intercourse. It makes a person member of a particular caste since his birth and then channelises his or her life throughout the rest of the period. In India Caste system traditionally holds the following functions:

- i) Determination of Social Status
- ii) To provide Mental Security
- iii) Selection of Occupation
- iv) Selection of Life Partners
- v) Control over Behaviour
- vi) Maintenance of the Purity of Blood
- vii) Maintenance of Religious Ideas
- viii) Social Status in Society

Caste determines the occupation of various groups among the caste thereby reducing economic competition. (ii) It strictly follows endogamy. Any member of the caste not abiding the rules is severely punished. Sometimes it becomes so aggressive that honor killing takes place. So marrying a person outside the caste is a hard nut to crack. (iii) Jajmani system is the economic basis of the caste system. In this system, exchange of goods and services takes place through well defined division of labour. The higher landed castes, and the lower occupationally specialized castes also called service caste are traditionally bound by certain Jajmani obligations. The higher class (Jajman) is the owner of land; exchange the land produce against the services provided by other castes. (iv) Caste sometimes is also seen as a social and psychological resource for its members. A sense of solidarity and common consciousness becomes rescuing bait to fellow caste man.

(https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/epgpdata/uploads/epgp_content/S000001AN/P001117/M013265/ET/14634646346et.pdf).

Caste system has also many demerits. Hindu society is facing various problems due to caste system. Caste system promoted untouchability and discrimination against certain members of the society. It hindered both horizontal and vertical social mobility forcing an individual to carry on the traditional occupation against his or her will and capacity. The status of women was affected and they were relegated to the background. The caste system divided the society into mutually hostile and conflicting groups and subgroups.

10.4 CASTE-TRIBE CONTINUUM AS A FEATURE OF THE INDIAN SOCIETY

Indian society has a special character of dichotomy or continuum. This peculiar character of Indian society not only makes it a space for all castes and tribal to practice their rituals and beliefs but also provides a space to interact with each other. The space of practice and space for interaction is the feature of Indian society which is based on continuity and change. Tribe and caste are the cultural pillars of the Indian society from time immemorial. Both have some peculiar dichotomy. The caste claims a common ancestry from a mythical ancestor, while the tribe sometimes traces its origin from some animals which may be treated as its totem. The title of caste implies that all the members follow the same occupation. But the title of a tribe does not indicate a common occupation. The convention of endogamy is strictly followed by the caste. But it is not applicable for all the times to a tribe. Sometimes the members of a tribe may find wives from the members of another tribe.

The caste was originated in ancient Hindu society, with a view to division of labour on the basis of profession and occupation. The tribe came about because of the evolution of community feeling in a group inhabiting a definite geographical area. The concept of tribe-caste continuum in India originates with the work of Surjeet Sinha on Bhumij tribe; and a broad Bailey 1960, 1961 study of caste). Sinha was inspired by Redfield's two concepts of folk-urban continuum and peasant society and culture. They believe that the dichotomy of the society viz. caste and tribal can be seen as caste and tribe as the opposite ends of a single line. At different points along this line particular societies may be located according to their proximity to either the organic caste model or segmentary tribal model. Thus, we would not have to bother to find out which society is a tribe or a caste. Working on the data from Bhotia in Uttar Pradesh, Srivastava deals with the ancillary problem of tribe-caste mobility. He argues that the concept of "cultural approximation" is used to know the tribe caste dynamics. Cultural approximation is a process and an end product at a given time. The form of it is a "form of adaptation" which an interactive and mutually beneficial cultural co-existence is rendered possible. The mechanism is adoptive in nature which is emerged from the within the cultures often without organized efforts. The transformation of a tribe into a caste is subsumed in the wider phenomenon of the absorption of the community into Hinduism. The ideology and the phenomenology of the caste and the tribe are different from earlier days. It is argued that tribal is a forest dweller and they are adimjati (original inhabitant), janjati (folk-people), adimjati (primitive people) vanwasi (inhabitant of forest) pahari (hill dwellers) having some specific life pattern. Not only has the tribe caste also had a peculiar characteristic of hierarchy, purity and pollution, and

specific type of the belief and rituals. The caste and tribal both have a specific culture. The cultural traits have a tendency to spread from place to place.

This type of spread up is a kind of a cultural expansion having an impact on other society culture. The cultural interaction between the societies is happening with the spreading of a cultural trait of a specific society (e.g., material object, idea, or behavior pattern) from one society to another has an impact on the tribal society. The tribal society living in a close contact of the Indian village having an unimaginable diversity along with the caste features. Unconsciously and consciously tribal communities adopting the Hindu myth, ritual belief and the adaptation which is not a one way process but Hindu society is inclusive and the culture is more advanced and stronger than the tribal. Earlier the tribal society who refers as an isolated society has come in contact with different caste communities has different degree of cultural contacts leading the process of the continuum. Before dealing with the continuum, the assumption on the ideology of tribal economy and society is that the tribal communities in India are typified by their geographical isolation and high levels of ethnic closure. For Weiner, as for Dhebar, the 'typical' tribal village is a village of tribal: it is not a mixed village of tribes and castes, nor are any minor castes which might be resident in a tribal village entitled to any occupancy or employment rights therein. Thus, in contrast to a tribal society which is isolated, homogeneous and undifferentiated, a caste-hierarchy, on the other hand, is based on co-partnership, heterogeneity and stratification David Mandelbaum having a similar point in the conceptual discussion of the of tribe and jati: he argues that most tribal people of India live in hilly or forest areas where population is sparse and communication is difficult within their villages and localities most tribal have a strong sense of their distinctiveness and hold themselves to be quite separate from jati villages' (Mandelbaum, 1970).

In the context of continuum approach, Bailey (1960), for example, has attempted to distinguish a 'tribe' from 'caste', using 'direct access to land' as the major parameter. According to him, if the larger proportion of a given society has direct access to land, then closer that society is at the tribal-end of the continuum. Collective ownership of resources entitles all the members of a 'tribe' to have access to land and other resources. Conversely, if the greater access to land is through a dependent relationship as, for instance, big landowners leasing land to tenants, then nearer that society is to the caste pole. In this context, Andre Beitelles appropriately remarks that Bailey is perhaps the only anthropologist working in the Indian field who has tried to characterize 'tribes' in terms of segmentary principles, but what Bailey is interested in the contrast between 'tribe' and 'caste' rather than between 'tribe' and peasant by using his pole parameter. Surjit Sinha, however, does not agree with Bailey and emphasises that the major feature of an 'Ideal tribe' is its independent socioeconomic existence, resulting naturally into its lack of interaction with other social systems. Sinha argues that the interaction with other social system can originate from either their geographical or social isolation and can be of dominant equal or dependent type. Group isolation, in turn, generates group sentiment or solidarity. Since there is social homogeneity within the group, there is, therefore, lack of role-specialization, leading, in turn, to the emergence of social relations on face-to- It is here that Baine's (1891) observation comes closer when he defines tribes to be 'the remnants of primitive communities which

have, so far, escaped absorption' and have preserved, in a distinguished, but distinguishable shape their tribal existence. (Vidyarthi and Rai, 1985) Colonial epistemology thus built both on Brahmanical notions of caste and drew on 18th and 19th century ideas of race. The distinction between the caste and tribe can be related to colonial epistemology. How colonial power develops knowledge to distinguish tribe to caste and also make many sections of the tribe. Which we can see on the way when that the ethnographer and social scientist along with colonial administrator construct the tribe with his conveniences the Nagas and the Mizos as the "true wild tribes of India" and "unlike the broken tribes found in Chotanagpur". The colonial introductory model of the tribe is based on the essential unity, clear body of customary law and unambiguous legitimacies. This was better suited to the task of maintaining public tranquility. Indeed, the tribe which is also termed as noble savage is a kind of a Victorian notion. But we have to know that Tribe within the British tradition and the Asiatic tradition of civilisation has a distinction. The concept of the tribe has a dilemma of universality, 'civilisation by contrast' ideas about the physical nature and differentiation of man, which raised the problem of its universality; ideas about the nature of social order.

Unlike the Beitel, Sinha, and others social scientist some other did not differentiate 'tribes' from 'non-tribes' on the basis of traditional identification marks and features (such as language, culture, race, physical traits etc.), and use the word 'tribe' instead either to highlight a dominant characteristic of their economy which distinguishes them from other economic systems or to designate a particular type of society from other communities on the tribe-caste-urban continuum. In this step we can keep the name of K.S. Mathur and B.C. Agarwal. T.B. Naik (1956) get too resonances, when he argues about the two key-words (caste-Tribe). He used to differentiate a tribal community from a caste-based system –first is solidarity or a feeling of commonality, and the second is co-partnership, the latter being the distinguishing-mark of a functionally interdependent caste-hierarchy (Hasnain, 2004).

Check Your Progress

- 4) Discuss the term cultural continuity in case of Tribe- Caste.

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10.5 SUMMARY

The tribes in India have never been completely isolated. They have been in constant interaction with the mainland population. This interaction has affected both sides and thus given rise to some unique characteristics to Indian society. In some places tribal have assimilated to a great extent in the caste society thus forming their part. In India, caste system is very typical. Since the term does not have an Indian origin, it is hard to find Indian equivalent of the term. Some authors believe that caste represents Varna system, while some equate it to Jati

system. Bailey's argument is that a caste society is hierarchical while a tribal society is segmentary and egalitarian. But in contemporary India both caste and tribe are being merged into a different system which is neither one nor the other.

According to N.K Bose there are many similarities in customs between tribes and castes and they are interdependent. Marriage within the clan is forbidden both in the tribe as well as in the caste. Both generally don't encourage marriage outside the group. And also both tend to maintain their group identity. According to this concept folk-urban continuum of Robert Redfield, there are no urban or rural societies in the strict sense but only a continuation along the same lines. The societies vary in their proximity to any of these poles. Bailey thought that a concept like that also needed in India. Hence came up the concept of tribe-caste continuum. According to this concept, there are no tribes or castes in the strict sense, but various communities varying in their proximity to either of these. In such a scenario it is hard to differentiate between the two.

Tribe and caste in India are a result of ongoing process of interaction over a period of thousands of years and both have borrowed from each other. To an extent that the line of difference between both has diminished. So tribe and caste form two ends of a same continuum in between of which the caste and tribal societies of India lie but the same is not true for all societies and also not for all aspects of society. Regardless of these drawbacks, the model is good enough to understand the cultural milieu of India.

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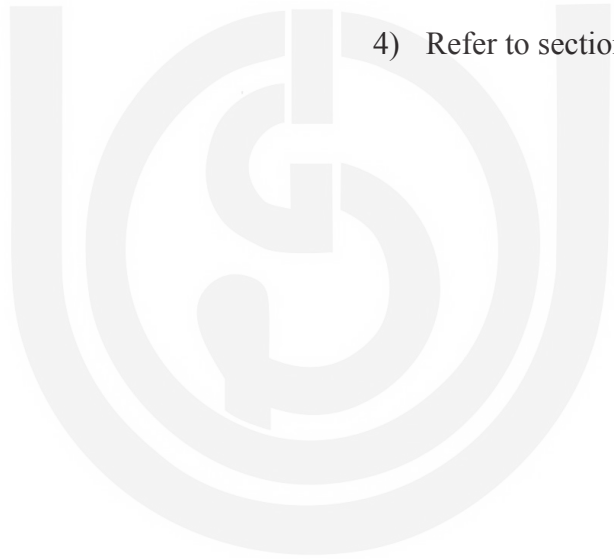
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10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) Refer to section 10.1
- 2) Refer to section 10.2
- 3) Refer to section 10.2
- 4) Refer to section 10.4



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