IGNOU’s Relevant Chapters

Social Issues
1.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you should be able to

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

1.1 INTRODUCTION

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

In the first section, we will specify the meaning of the two terms, diversity and unity.
In the second section, we will illustrate the forms of diversity in Indian society. For detailed treatment we will focus on the four forms of diversity, race, language, religion and caste.

In the third section, we will bring out the bonds of unity in India. These are geopolitical, the culture of pilgrimage, tradition of accommodation, and tradition of interdependence.

Above all, we will note that the unity of India is born of a composite culture rather than a uniform culture.

### 1.2 CONCEPTS OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY

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

#### 1.2.1 Meaning of Diversity

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

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

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

#### 1.2.2 Meaning of Unity

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

There is a difference between unity and uniformity. Uniformity presupposes similarity, unity does not. Thus, unity may or may not be based on uniformity. Unity may be born out of uniformity. Durkheim calls this type of unity a mechanical solidarity. We find this type of unity in tribal societies and in
traditional societies. However, unity may as well be based on differences. It is such unity, which is described by Durkheim as organic solidarity. This type of unity characterises modern societies. Let us see it in a diagram

![Diagram of Two Types of Unity]

**Fig. 1.1: Two types of unity**

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

**Check Your Progress 1**

i) Mark which of the following is the correct meaning of diversity?
   a) Differences between two individuals
   b) Similarities among the members of a group
   c) Dissimilarities among groups

ii) Mark which of the following is the correct example of social diversity?
   a) Temperamental differences between men and women
   b) Property differences between the two neighbours
   c) Differences of religious belongingness between two groups.

iii) Indicate which of the following statements are true and which are false.
   Use T for True and F for False.
   a) Unity means absence of differences.
   b) Unity is opposite of diversity.
   c) Uniformity is a necessary condition for unity.
   d) Unity in diversity is a contradiction in terms.
   e) Mechanical solidarity is based on uniformity.
   f) Unity signifies integration.
As hinted earlier, we find in India diversity of various sorts. Some of its important forms are the following: racial, linguistic, religious and caste-based. Let us deal with each one of them in some detail.

### 1.3.1 Racial Diversity

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

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

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

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

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

The **Mongoloids** are a major racial stock native to Asia, including the peoples of northern and eastern Asia. For example, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Eskimos, and often American Indians also belong to this race. In India, the North Eastern regions have tribes of **brachycephalic** Mongoloid strain. A slightly different kind of Mongoloid racial stock is found in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Mikir-Bodo group of tribes and the Angami Nagas represent the best examples of Mongoloid racial composition in India.
The Mediterranean races relate to the caucasian physical type, i.e., the white race. It is characterised by medium or short stature, slender build, long head with cephalic index (the ratio multiplied by 100 of the maximum breadth of the head to its maximum length) of less than 75 and dark (continental) complexion.

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

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

1.3.2 Linguistic Diversity

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

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

The above constitutionally recognised languages belong to two linguistic families: Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu are the four major Dravidian languages. The languages of Indo-Aryan family are spoken by 75 percent of India’s total population while the languages of Dravidian family are spoken by 20 percent.

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

India is a land of multiple religions. We find here followers of various faiths, particularly of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, among others. You know it that Hinduism is the dominant religion of India. According to the census of 1981 it is professed by 82.64 percent of the total population. Next comes Islam, which is practised by 11.35 percent. This is followed by Christianity having a following of 2.43 percent, Sikhism reported by 1.96 percent, Buddhism by 0.71 percent and Jainism by 0.48 percent. The religions with lesser following are Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Bahaiism.

While Hinduism saw a slight reduction in the percentage of their followers by the year 1991, most of the other religions increased their strength though by very narrow margin. According to the 1991 census the Hinduism has 82.41 percent followers to the total population. 11.67 percent followed Islam and 2.32 percent followed Christianity. Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism followed by 1.99, 0.77 and 0.41 percent, respectively. And 0.43 reported to follow other religions. *(Census of India 1995, Series 1, Paper 1 on Religion)*.

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

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

**Check Your Progress 2**

i) List, in one line, some of the major forms of diversity found in India?

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ii) According to Grierson, how many dialects and languages are spoken in India?

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iii) What are the various religions found in India? Use two lines for your answer.

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1.3.4 Caste Diversity

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

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

In addition to the above described major forms of diversity, we have diversity of many other sorts like settlement patterns - tribal, rural, urban; marriage and kinship patterns along religious and regional lines; cultural patterns reflecting regional variations, and so on. These forms of diversity will become clear to you as you proceed along Blocks 1 to 7 of this course.

**Activity 1**

What language do you speak and to which stock of languages does it belong? Find out what language/s is/are spoken in the ten families living on the left side of your own family. Divide them according to the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian stock of languages. Write down all this information on a separate sheet. Compare your findings with those of other students at your study centre.

1.4 BONDS OF UNITY IN INDIA

In the preceding section we have illustrated the diversity of India. But that is not the whole story. There are bonds of unity underlying all this diversity. These bonds of unity may be located in a certain underlying uniformity of life as well as in certain mechanisms of integration. Census Commissioner in 1911, Herbert Risley (1969), was right when he observed: “Beneath the manifold diversity of physical and social type, language, custom and religion which strikes the observer in India there can still be discerned …… a certain underlying uniformity of life from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin”. We will describe the bonds of unity of India in this section. These are geo-political unity, the institution of pilgrimage, tradition of accommodation, and tradition of interdependence. We will now describe each of them in that order.
Social Structure Rural and Urban

1.4.1 Geo-political Unity

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

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

1.4.2 The Institution of Pilgrimage

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

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

1.4.3 Tradition of Accommodation

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

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

What it shows is that Hinduism has been an open religion, a receptive and absorbing religion, an encompassing religion. It is known for its quality of openness and accommodation.
Another evidence of it lies in its apathy to conversion. Hinduism is not a **proselytising** religion. That is, it does not seek converts. Nor has it ordinarily resisted other religions to seek converts from within its fold. This quality of accommodation and tolerance has saved the way to the coexistence of several faiths in India.

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

**Activity 2**

Write the answers of the following questions on a separate sheet of paper and discuss them with other students at your study centre.

i) Give, at least one example, in each of the following areas, to show the blending of Hindu and Muslim cultures in India.
   a) architecture
   b) literature
   c) music
   d) religion

ii) Have you recently attended a wedding in a community other than your own? What has struck you as a markedly different feature, which is, absent during a wedding in your community?

**1.4.4 Tradition of Interdependence**

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

We shall also discuss the *jajmani* system in the next unit on Rural Social Structure. Here it will suffice to note that no caste was self-sufficient. If anything, it depended for many things on other castes. In a sense, each caste was a functional group in that it rendered a specified service to other caste groups. *Jajmani* system is that mechanism which has formalised and regulated this functional interdependence.

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

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

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

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

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

**Check Your Progress 3**

i) List the bonds of unity in India, in the space given below.

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ii) Indicate the mechanism of the following set of terms, in the space provided against each.

a) geo-political unity .................................................................................

b) geo-cultural unity ..................................................................................

c) religious accommodation ......................................................................

d) social interdependence ........................................................................

iii) Distinguish between great tradition and little tradition, in the space given below.
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iv) Distinguish between composite culture and uniform culture models of national integration, in the space provided below.
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1.5 LET US SUM UP

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

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

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

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

1.6 KEYWORDS

| Brachycephalic | In terms of anthropometric measures, heads with a breadth of 80 cephalic index and over are categorised as broad or brachycephalic. Those with an index under 80, but not under 75, are classified |
Social Structure Rural and Urban

Caucasian
Relating to the white race of mankind as classified according to physical features.

Cephalic Index
The proportion of the breadth of the head to its length is expressed as a percentage and it is called the cephalic index.

Mechanical Solidarity
The condition of unity or of one-ness in a society may be based on the elements of uniformity or similarities. Such condition is described by Durkheim as mechanical solidarity.

Mediterranean
Relating to a physical type of the Caucasian race characterised by medium or short stature, slender build, long head with cephalic index of less than 75 and dark complexion.

Mongoloid
A major racial stock native to Asia including peoples of northern and eastern Asia. For example, Malaysians, Chinese, Japanese, Eskimos, and often American Indians also belong to this race. In India, besides several others the Naga tribes in north east belong to this race.

Negrito
A people belonging to the African branch of the black race. In India, the south Indian tribes like Kadar, the Irula, etc. are said to belong to this race.

Nordic
Relating to the germanic peoples of northern Europe and specially of Scandinavia. This is a physical type characterised by tall stature, long head, light skin and hair, and blue eyes. In India, they are found in different parts of north of the country such as Punjab and Rajputana.

Organic Solidarity
The condition of unity or one-ness in a society may arise out of differences of socio-cultural characteristics. Such unity as described by Durkheim as organic solidarity.

Polytheistic
Relating to the worship of more than one god.

Proselytising
Converting from one religion to another.

Proto-Australoid
Relating to an ethnic group including the Australian aborigines and other peoples of southern Asia and Pacific islands, including the Ainu of Japan the Vedda of Sri Lanka. In India, the Chotanagpur tribes of Bihar called Ho and Bhil are considered to be of this race.
Western Brachycephals They have been divided into three types:

i) the **Alpenoid** is characterised by broad head with rounded occiput (the back part of the head or skull) prominent nose, medium stature, round face. Skin colour is light; hair on face and body is abundant, body is thickly set. This type is found among the Bania of Gujarat, the Kathi of Kathiawar, the Kayastha of Bengal etc.

ii) Amongst the **Dinaric** people, the head is broad with rounded occiput and high vault; nose is very long, stature is tall, face is long, forehead is receding; skin colour is darker, eyes and hair are also dark. This type is represented in Bengal, Orissa and Coorg. The Brahmin of Bengal and the Kanarese Brahmin of Mysore are also some of the representatives.

iii) The **Armenoid** is in most of the characters like the Dinaric. In the former, the shape of occiput is more marked and the nose is more prominent and narrow. The Parsi of Bombay show typical Armenoid characteristics.

1.7 FURTHER READING


1.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i) C

ii) C
iii) Statements a, b, c and d are false. Statements e and f are true.

**Check Your Progress 2**

i) Racial, linguistic, religious and caste-based.

ii) 179 languages and 544 dialects.

iii) Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Bahaism.

**Check Your Progress 3**

i) Geo-political, geo-cultural, tradition of accommodation, interdependence.

ii) a) constitution

   b) pilgrimage

   c) separate cook and kitchenware

   d) jajmani

iii) Great tradition is sanskritic, based on sacred texts and scriptures, and elitist. Little tradition, on the other hand, is oral, village-based and popular.

iv) Composite culture model provides for cultural pluralism while uniform culture model implies dominance of one culture.
SOCIAL PROBLEMS: THE INDIAN CONTEXT

Structure

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Transformation and Social Problems
(Ancient, Medieval, Modern)

3.2.1 Social Problems: Historical Phases
3.2.2 Social Problems: Contemporary Phase
3.2.3 Structural Transformation and Social Problems
3.2.4 Structural Breakdown and Inconsistencies
3.2.5 The Soft State

3.3 Social Factors and Social Problems

3.3.1 Major Social Factors

3.4 Heterogeneity of Indian Society

3.4.1 Religion
3.4.2 Caste
3.4.3 Language
3.4.4 Tribes
3.4.5 Minorities
3.4.6 Population Explosion

3.5 Cultural Elements

3.5.1 Fatalism
3.5.2 Particularism
3.5.3 Attitude to Public Property
3.5.4 Patriarchal System

3.6 Economy, Poverty, Education

3.6.1 Child Labour
3.6.2 Illiteracy and Education
3.6.3 Educational System
3.6.4 Industrialisation and Urbanisation

3.7 State and Polity

3.7.1 Electoral Process

3.8 Let Us Sum Up

3.9 Key Words

3.10 Further Readings

3.11 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress
3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- understand the relationship between social transformation and social problems in the Indian context from a historical point of view;
- describe the linkage between the structural transformation and social problems;
- explain the relationship between social factors and social problems; and
- point out the nature of the State intervention to deal with these problems in India.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we propose to discuss ‘Social Problems: The Indian Context’. There are certain unique features of the Indian Society. Indian Society, even today, maintains continuity with her remote past. The Social institutions such as Varnashram, Caste, joint family system and village communities emerged in the early phase of India society which are also responsible for several of the social problems in the modern period. India has been a multi-religious, multi-linguistic, multi-cultural and multi-regional society, since time immemorial. These diversities of Indian society have made significant cultural contributions and certainly they are a source of strength to the rich cultural heritage of India. But at the same time, they have often posed a number of problems to the social, cultural and political cohesiveness of Indian society.

3.2 TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

We have discussed the theoretical relationship between social transformation and social problems in the Unit-1 of this course. The present unit provides an opportunity to understand this relationship with special reference to India.

In this context, we have to keep in mind the following aspects of transformation and their relationship with social problems:

- historical, and
- structural.

The historical understanding of transformation and its relationship with social problems may be divided in the following two parts:

- understanding social problems through different historical phases, i.e., ancient, medieval and modern (upto the 19th century) periods,
- social problems in the contemporary period.

3.2.1 Social Problems: Historical Phases

The Indian society, being part of an ancient civilisation, has passed through different historical phases. The Vedic period in India sowed the seeds of a
Social Framework

civilisation – characterised by the emergence of sophisticated philosophy, religion, astrology, science and medicine. Its institutional base centered around Varnashram and caste, emphasis on rituals, higher position of ritual performers over others and the sacrifice of animals. The following were the major social problems in the early phase of the Indian civilisation.

- conflict between the two major social groups, i.e., the Aryans and the Dasas Dasyu as mentioned in the Vedic texts.
- increasing rigidity of social hierarchy,
- emphasis on the observance of rituals,
- sacrifice of animals.

Jainism and Budhism emerged as a protest against these practices. It is to be noted that during the Vedic and the post-Vedic periods, the social position of Women was quite high. The child marriages were not common in this period.

India’s contact with Islam has passed through the phases of conflict, gradual accommodation, increasing synthesis and the revival of communal antagonism. With the advent of the Muslim rule in India, two major trends were visible in the Indian Society:

i) The first was the trend of the growing insularity and attitude of avoidance towards others.

This strengthened the notion of the purity – pollution and practice of untouchability. The rigid restrictions on the sea - voyage were imposed on the people in this period. As a consequence, firstly, it reduced the spirit of enterprise and adventure among the Indians. Secondly, it minimised contacts of Indians with the outside world.

ii) During the early phase of invasions and conflicts, the practice of Sati and the child-marriage developed as a defense mechanism among the Hindus. Only a small section of the Muslim population immigrated to India from Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and the Arab countries. The rest of them were local people who accepted Islam. Due to contacts with Hinduism and conversion, the Muslim in India were also influenced by caste-system. Thus, the social hierarchies were introduced even among the Muslims in India.

iii) The second trend was in the form of the emulation of the customs of the Muslim rulers by the elite and section of the upper caste Hindus. This encouraged the adoption of the practice of Pardah (veil to cover the face) by the upper caste women in north India.

In the medieval period, the Bhakti movement, reassert the humanist elements of the Indian civilisation by preaching equality, speaking against rituals, the caste rigidity and untouchability. The practices of untouchability, child marriage, sati, infanticide, organised thagi (cheating) increased in the Indian Society particularly during the declining phase of the Mughal empire. Even the religious beliefs encouraged the addiction of tobacco, hashish and opium.

By the early part of the 19th Century, the colonial administration in India was fully established. After 1820, it adopted a reformist zeal. There were several
social reform programmes to eradicate the practices of Sati and the Thagi – widely prevalent during this period.

In the early 19th Century, the questions related to the social problems of sati, remarriage of widows, spread of modern education, evils of child marriage and of untouchability were raised by social reformers.

In the 19th century, there were four major reform movements:

- Brahmosamaj–led by Raja Rammohan Roy,
- Aryasamaj–led by Swami Dayanand Sarawati,
- Prarthana Samaj–led by Mahadeva Govind Ranade,
- Ramakrishna Mission–inspired by Ramkrishna Paramhansa and led by Swami Vivekanand.

These reform movements opposed the practice of untouchability, Sati, infanticide and propagated in favour of the remarriage of widows and the modern education. Due to the tireless efforts of Raja Rammohan Roy, the practice of Sati was legally abolished in 1829. The Arya Samaj contributed significantly in weakening the caste-rigidity and reducing the practice of untouchability in the Punjab, Haryana and the Western Uttar Pradesh. The activities of the Prarthana Samaj were mainly confined to the Bombay Presidency. The Ram Krishna Mission contributed significantly in the field of educations and health services..

3.2.2 Social Problems: Contemporary Phase

In contemporary India, there are several social problems. Though, they are called as social problems, yet, in some problems socio-cultural overtones are more prominent, whereas, in some others, the economic and legal overtones are conspicuous. Thus, the contemporary social problems may be classified in the following categories:

i) socio-cultural problems: communalism, untouchability, population explosion, child-abuse, problems of the scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes, the backward classes, women, alcoholism and drug addiction,

ii) economic problems: poverty, unemployment, black money;

iii) Legal problems: crime, delinquency, violence, terrorism.

These classifications are only the purpose of narration. They are closely interrelated with each other. Poverty is an economic as well as a social problem. Similarly, communalism is closely linked with economic factors. The crime and delinquency are having legal overtones but they are closely related to the social and economic factors.

As there were organised social movements against social problems in the previous phases of the Indian society, similarly, concerted social and political movements were launched in the contemporary period against communalism, casteism, untouchability, illiteracy, alcoholism and drug addiction. Gandhi—as the leader of the national movement after 1919, devoted a considerable part of his action-programme for the uplift of Harijans, Adivasis and Women. He
tried to reorganise education and village industries. He fought relentlessly against communalism, untouchability and alcoholism.

In the contemporary period, there are organised movements of women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, backwards castes and labour to protect their interests. There are voluntary organisations working against ecological degradation, drug addiction and child abuse in India.

### 3.2.3 Structural Transformation and Social Problems

Several attempts have been made to understand Indian social problems in terms of structural transformation. In the Indian context, the following three patterns of transformation are visible:

- Sanskritisation,
- Westernisation,
- Modernisation.

*Sanskritisation* is a process through which lower castes achieved upward social mobility either by adventure or by emulating the customs and rituals of the upper castes. It is a cultural process but changes in social status and occupations as a consequence of the upward mobility brought about by sanskritisation makes it also a structural process.

The contact with the West, particularly with England, set in motion another process of transformation in India known as Westernisation. It is characterised by Western patterns of administration, legal system and education through the medium of the English language. Under the impact of the Western way of life, a sizeable section of educated and urbanised Indian adopted Western style of dress, food, drink, speech and manners. The emulation of the West inculcated the values of Western democracy, industrialisation and capitalism. There are cultural as well as structural aspects of Westernisation. It brought about structural changes by the growth of modern occupations related with modern education, economy and industry, emergence of urban centres with the introduction of colonial administration and the rise of urban middle class under the impact of education, administration, judiciary and press. As explained earlier, modernisation and westernisation are closely related in the Indian context. The major components of modernisation such as education, political participation, urbanisation, migration, mobility, money, market, modern technology, communication-network and industrialisation were introduced by the colonial administration. They received an impetus in the post-independence period. The independent India adopted a modern constitution, founded a secular democratic state and followed the policy of planned socio-economic development, democratic decentralisation and the policy of protective discrimination for the weaker sections.

The real question is how these patterns of structural transformation have generated social problems in India? Despite of several contradictions existing in Indian society, revolution, as defined by Marxists and as explained in Unit 1, did not take place in India. The processes of transformation—represented by sanskritisation, westernisation and modernisation have been, by and large, smooth and gradual in the Indian context.
3.2.4 Structural Breakdown and Inconsistencies

The following two concepts may help us in understanding the relationship between structural transformation and social problems:

- structural breakdown, and
- structural inconsistencies.

The concept of the ‘structural breakdown’ has been used by Talcott Parsons to mean the systemic rigidity which tries to resist or retard social transformation and thus leads to the breakdown of the system or the social disorganisation. In the Third World Countries, there is a growing urge for modernisation in the post-independence period. These countries borrowed parliamentary democracy, adult franchise, modern constitution without the supporting structural base of economy, industrialisation, modern technology, literacy and normative base of rationality, civic culture and secular values. As a result, in several of the ex-colonial societies – democracy could not function successfully. The ethnic, communal, tribal, caste and regional aspirations have become so strong that they are eroding even the basic structures of democracy, modern state and civic society. This is so obvious in the case of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and in many countries of Africa. The impact of social transformation on the Indian society is visible in the following manner.

- on the one hand, three patterns of transformation as mentioned earlier, has created new problems of adjustment,
- on the other hand, occasionally, the process of social transformation has been resisted. In this context, we may cite the examples of the resistance of the urge of the upward social mobility of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, denial of the rightful claims of women, and obstructing land reforms by hook or crook.

In the Indian context, structural inconsistencies are also visible. They are symptoms as well as the cause of social disorganisation and social problems. By structural inconsistencies is meant the existence of two opposite sub-structures within the same structure which are not consistent with each other. In India, on the one hand, there are highly sophisticated modern metropolitan upper and upper middle classes influenced by consumerism. On the other hand, there is a large number of the Indian people who live in inaccessible tribal and rural areas and who might have not seen even a train. A small section of the Indian society belongs to the jet age, whereas, a large Indian population even today depend on the bullock-cart. This situation is the clear indicator of the gap between the rich and the poor, the rural and the urban creating a gulf between the different groups and strata. These structural inconsistencies are the indicators of poverty, inequality, inaccessibility and deprivation existing in Indian society.

3.2.5 The Soft State

Gunnar Myrdal in his book ‘Asian Drama’ discuses the problems posed by modernisation in several Asian countries – including India. He feels that strong states, effective governments with their capacity to take hard decisions and strict enforcement of the rule of law are the major features of modern European
society but in South Asian countries in general and in India in particular, an approach is being followed by the ruling elite in the post-independence period which has been termed as the policy of ‘soft-state’ by Myrdal. The democratisation of polity has further strengthened this policy. It has weakened the capacity of state in enforcing the rule of law. As a result, there is an increasing rate of crime, violence, terrorism, violation of law, corruption in the public life and the criminalisation of politics.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Describe the major social problems in the following historical phases in India.

   a) ancient
      ........................................................................................................
      ........................................................................................................

   b) medieval
      ........................................................................................................
      ........................................................................................................

   c) modern
      ........................................................................................................
      ........................................................................................................

   d) contemporary
      ........................................................................................................
      ........................................................................................................

ii) Name the four major reform movements of the 19th century.

   a) ........................................................................................................
   b) ........................................................................................................
   c) ........................................................................................................
   d) ........................................................................................................

iii) Mention three major forms of transformations in India.

   a) ........................................................................................................
   b) ........................................................................................................
   c) ........................................................................................................

3.3 SOCIAL FACTORS AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Social problem is a situation that objectively exists in particular society and is subjectively accepted as undesirable by that society. Social problem therefore, is relative to society or has a social context. Hence, study of social problems requires understanding of their social contexts.

The social context may be discussed in a historical or structural perspective. Earlier, we have explained how in various historical phases in India, the different
types of social problems emerged. Now, let us try to understand the major social factors which are associated with various problems.

### 3.3.1 Major Social Factors

Study of Indian social problems – their emergence and persistence in Indian society – requires understanding of the Indian social situation in which the problems exist. One has to analyse the social factors that are relevant to the understanding of social problems in India. Some of the major factors that constitute the social context in India, as far as social problems are concerned, are as follows:

- heterogeneity of Indian population,
- cultural elements,
- economy, poverty and education,
- state and polity,
- urbanisation and industrialisation.

### 3.4 HETEROGENEITY OF INDIAN POPULATION

India is a heterogeneous society – where there are several religions, castes, linguistic and tribal groups. The heterogeneous nature of the Indian population has been the cause of a number of social problems in India.

#### 3.4.1 Religion

The multi-religious nature of society and conflict among the different religions has given rise to the problem of communalism in India. The phenomenon of communalism, as a vitiated form of inter-religious group relationship, particularly between Hindus and Muslims is a grave problem in India. It has its historical linkage with the Muslim invasions in India, early conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, British rule and policy of encouraging communal-divide, competition for political power, service and resources.

Gradually, the problem of communalism has affected the Hindu-Sikh relationship also. There is a sizeable group of Sikhs in India. They are concentrated in a relatively developed region (Punjab) of the country. Their existence as a powerful community in the region and as a minority in the larger nation is to be taken into consideration in understanding the emergence of communal politics followed by terrorism in Punjab. In this context it must be noted that by and large both Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab have shown a great deal of understanding and amity even in the midst of terrorism. The Indian concept of secularism accepts all religions as equal and does not discriminate one religion against another. As indicated by Myrdal, the policy of a ‘soft state’ and not taking hard decisions against communal organisations has also aggravated problems of communalism in India. The considerations of electoral gains by using religions have also contributed in the growth of communalism in the post-independent period of India.
3.4.2 Caste

Another element of Indian social structure is the caste system. The Caste system has been divided Indian population into numerous groups that enter into relationships of various types and degrees among them. It has been the root cause of various social problems in India. The Casteism as a problem refers to both the discrimination of one caste against another and the particularistic tendency of favouring one’s caste group in violation of the principle of universalism. The practice of mobilisation on the basis of caste and favour or disfavour shown in education and employment on caste considerations are the major features of casteism. One may justify caste criterion for welfare programmes in favour of the weaker sections in India social situation. At the same time, such welfare measures have generated tensions and conflicts that exhibit casteist tendencies.

The caste system has had its adverse impact on education in India. Traditionally, caste determined the eligibility of the people for education. In the traditional system, education was considered to be the prerogative of the upper castes. Steeped in this tradition of reserving pursuit of knowledge to the upper castes, the masses did not receive education. This is one of the reasons for the problem of widespread illiteracy in India.

3.4.3 Language

Another aspect of Indian society is that of the existence of several languages which often leads to conflicts between the different linguistic groups. India has recognised the socio-political reality of language by reorganising the states on the basis of language which has encouraged the assertion of linguistic identities. It may also be noted that as a nation, India has not been able to have a national language that is acceptable to all and that effectively serves as the link language. For historical reasons, English continues to be the link language for the purpose of higher education, administration and diplomacy. In this context, there is a two-fold relationship:

- at the national level, there is the question of the relationship between English and Hindi.
- at the State level, there is the question of the relationship between English, Hindi an the regional languages.

The situation arising out of this peculiar linguistic configuration has created the problems of linguistic minorities in several states, border dispute between states, and the question of the medium of instruction in educational institutions. All these issues have repercussions on national integration. They have generated tensions an conflicts.

3.4.4 Tribes

India is a country with large population of tribals. Tribals in India are not a homogeneous group. They differ in terms of their ways of life, exposure to the outside world and adoption of the programmes of welfare and development. The tribals have been isolated from the mainstream of the Indian society for several years which accounted for their backwardness. In addition, they have
been subjected to various types of exploitation by the non-tribals with whom they have come into contact. While the non-tribals exploited the tribals for economic gains, the tribals are facing the phenomenon of detribalisation which refers to the loss or degeneration of the tribal culture and way of life. In this context, the main problems of Indian tribes are backwardness, exploitation, detribalisation, ethnic tensions, various kinds of tribal movements and tribal insurgency in certain parts of India.

3.4.5 Minorities

The heterogeneity of the Indian population has given rise to the problem of minorities in India. The major minority groups that have been identified in India are religious and linguistic. While religious minorities can be considered to exist at the national level, linguistic minorities have their relevance at the state level. Apart from religious and linguistic minority, caste and tribal groups may assume the status of minorities group in the context of inter-group relationships in particular situations.

3.4.6 Population Explosion

Another social factor that has implications of social problems in India is the phenomenon of population explosion. The population in India has been growing phenomenally during this century. Development and welfare programmes for the masses have not been able to catch up with the increasing population. Consequently, the benefits of the developmental programmes gained by the masses whose number is ever increasing, have been far below the expectation. With the increase in population, the problems of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy has been accentuated in India. In absolute terms the number of people who are affected by these problems have been increasing. The sheer size of the population is also a factor that affects the increasing ethnic problem of various kinds. The larger the size of the caste or the tribe, the greater is the tendency to assert their parochial or ethnic identities at the cost of national integration.

In the population of India, there is a considerable number of the physically handicapped also. They are dependent on society at large for their survival. The country does not have enough institutions to take care of the various needs of the physically handicapped. Many of them turn to streets as beggars which is another social problem.

The increasing population of India is making increasing demands on the resources of the land, capital and forest. With the growing population, the hunger for land in both rural and urban areas is increasing. With the growing burden on the national finance, the welfare programmes and social services like education, health, employment, rural development, welfare of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, backward castes, youth and women etc. are adversely affected. The needs of fuel, timbers and the hunger of land for cultivation and habitation are steadily depleting the forest resources. The increasing denudation of the forest areas is creating various kinds of environmental problems in the country. The adverse consequences of the ecological imbalance created by deforestation are visible in the changing pattern of rains, increasing soil erosion, floods, scarcity of fodder for animals and firewood for poor people.
### Box 3.01. Socio–demographic Profile of States in India

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<th>Literacy Rate</th>
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Source: Census of India 2001
Check Your Progress 3

i) Write in four lines on religion and politics.
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................

ii) Describe the relationship between caste and education in four lines.
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................

iii) Discuss the problem of language at the Centre and the State levels in four lines.
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................

iv) Mention problems of (a) tribes, and (b) minorities in three lines each.
   a) .............................................................................................................
   .............................................................................................................
   .............................................................................................................
   b) .............................................................................................................
   .............................................................................................................
   .............................................................................................................

v) Mention five major consequences of population pressure.
   a) .............................................................................................................
   b) .............................................................................................................
   c) .............................................................................................................
   d) .............................................................................................................
   e) .............................................................................................................

3.5 CULTURAL ELEMENTS

There are certain cultural elements that have had their own contribution to the persistence of the certain social problems in India. The following cultural traits can be particularly identified in this context.

- Fatalism,
3.5.1 Fatalism

A cultural element that has been relevant to social problems in India is fatalism. The Hindu doctrines of “karma” and rebirth contain strong elements of fatalistic attitude to life—an attitude of acceptance of and resignation to the vicissitudes and failures in life. It has proved to be one of the mechanisms for checking the resistance of the masses against injustice and exploitation. Social practices such as untouchability, discrimination, bonded labour persisted in India for a long time almost unchallenged by those affected by them. It happened so because the affected people considered these practices as the result of their ‘Karma’ (action) of the previous birth and luck. The welfare and developmental programmes themselves get a setback on account of the apathy and indifference of the masses who are under the spell of religious fatalism.

3.5.2 Particularism

Another cultural trait widespread in Indian society is particularism as against universalism. This reflected in the excessive consideration for one’s own people, kingroup, caste or religion. Often universalistic standards are set aside in one’s decisions and actions. Corruption – involving favouritism or discrimination that is prevalent in our society is the result of such disregard for the norms of universalism. Some of the intergroup conflicts on the basis of caste, tribe, religion, language or region can also be attributed to the mobilisation based on sectional identities and particularism.

3.5.3 Attitude of Public Property

Another trait of the Indian society that has implications for corruption is the disregard for public property and money. There is a belief that Indians have inherited it as a legacy of the colonial rule. Unfortunately, this attitude seems to have continued to exist in India even after independence. This lack of respect for public property is one of the root causes of corruption, black money, tax-evasion, misappropriation of public goods and use of substandard material in public constructions.

3.5.4 Patriarchal System

As elsewhere in the world, the Indian society, by and large, has been patriarchal where woman is subjected to man. The role of woman in the Indian society has been conceived as that of wife and mother. The woman in India possesses a inferior social status to that of man.

The problem is further accentuated by the cultural need to have male offspring for perpetuating the family performing the rituals after one’s death. It has contributed to the cultural preference for a male child and imposition of inferior status to the female. This had led to the subjugation of women and discrimination against them in various spheres of social life. The problems such as dowry, ill-treatment of the daughter-in-law, wife-beating, illiteracy,
occupational discrimination, social isolation, and psychological dependence, etc. faced by women have roots in this cultural preference for the male.

### 3.6 ECONOMY, POVERTY, EDUCATION

Economically, India remains predominantly an agricultural society. Naturally, there is an excessive dependence of labour force on agriculture. This over-dependence of the labour force on the underdeveloped agriculture is the major cause of many of the social problems in India. It directly leads to poverty which is one of the basic causes of many other social problems in India. The malnutrition, ill-health, beggary, prostitution, etc. are rooted in the large-scale poverty in India.

Indian society is characterised by the unequal distribution of wealth. One observes affluence amidst pervasive poverty in both the rural and urban area of India. On account of this disparity, benefits of development and welfare services also accrue unequally to the different sections of the society. The benefits that the poor gain are comparatively low. Consequently, the lot of the poor and the backward sections of the society has not improved as expected. There is a close linkage between economy, poverty and education. The illiteracy and education. The unplanned growth of higher education has created the problem of educated unemployment.

**Some Aspects of Human Development in India**

India is one of those countries who occupies a low rank in the Human Development Index. Some aspects of the Human Development Index (2000 view) of India is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3.02 Human Development Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Life expectancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Adult Literacy rate (15 years and above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Combined enrolment ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. % of Population not using improved drinking water sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Underweight children under age 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. % of people living below National Poverty Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Annual Population growth rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. % of urban population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Population not using adequate sanitations facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Children underweight for age [under 5 years]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. People Living with HIV/AIDS (2001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *UNDP, 2003*

#### 3.6.1 Child Labour

Child labour, a manifestation of poverty in the country has become a social problem in India. A large number of families belonging to the poor section of the society are forced to depend upon their children’s contribution to the family income. They are not in a position to spare their children for full-time or even part-time schooling. Thus children who are expected to be in schools are found working as labourers.
Apart from the economic constraints of the families of the working children, the owners of some of the small-scale enterprises also prefer to employ child labour. For them, child labour is cheap. It reduces the cost of production and maximise their profit. Thus, child labour gets encouragement from both - the parents of the children and the owners of the enterprise. Therefore, despite the appalling conditions under which children work and the low wages they earn, child labour thrives in India.

### Activity 1

Please prepare a report of two pages based on the monthly income and its sources of ten families living in your locality.

### 3.6.2 Illiteracy and Education

Widespread poverty has its own repercussions on education in India. The problem of mass-illiteracy in the country is largely by the result of the situation of poverty under which the masses live. The poor are so preoccupied with the concern for their survival that they do not have the inclination or time for education. It is ridiculous to convince a poor man about the value of education when he is struggling to make both ends meet. Most of the people belonging to the poor section are not inclined for schooling of their children. Many of those who enroll their children in schools withdraw them before they acquire any meaningful standard of literacy. The result is that India is faced with the problem of mass-illiteracy. Nearly 50 per cent of the country’s population capable of acquiring literacy skills are still illiterate.

### 3.6.3 Educational System

The educational system affects the society at large in various ways. Education at the higher level in India has expanded indiscriminately in response to social demands and political pressures. Some of the major features of the educational system in India are as follows:

- widespread illiteracy,
- unachieved targets of the universalisation of education,
- lack of proper emphasis on the primary education,
- misplaced emphasis on higher education which is, by and large, poor in quality excepting institutes of technology, management, medicine and few colleges and universities in the metropolitan centres.

Consequently, there has been no attempt to see that the educational system at the higher level produced the manpower in quality and quantity that the economic system of the country could absorb. The net result of this unplanned expansion has been increased in the educated unemployment and underemployment. Here it is obviously the situation of the producing manpower in excess of the demand of the economic system or mismatch between educational and economy.

There is another kind of mismatch between education and economy in India. It is the situation wherein some of the highly qualified manpower produced by some of the educational institutions in India do not find the placement in the country rewarding enough. The result is the brain drain in which India loses what cream of its highly qualified manpower produced at a very heavy cost of public resources.
3.6.4 Industrialisation and Urbanisation
The process of industrialisation and urbanisation has been slow in India. Industrialisation has been concentrated in certain pockets in the country. The result is the inordinate growth of population in a few urban centres. This over-growth of population in a few urban centres has created various problems of – urban poverty, unemployment, congestion, pollution, slum, etc.

Rural poverty and unemployment have had their own contribution to the urban problem in so far as people migrated from the rural areas to the urban centres in numbers larger than the urban areas can absorb. As a large section of the rural migrants are illiterate and unskilled, they are unable to adjust themselves into the urban economic situation and thereby suffer from unemployment and poverty. Many of them resort to begging and some of these helpless people belonging to the female sex are forced to adopt prostitution for their living. Thus, while urbanisation and industrialisation are processes of development, they have their own adverse by-products in India in the form of various social problems.

3.7 STATE AND POLITY
The intervention of the State has been very significant either in the checking or in finding solution to the social problems in India. In the early colonial period, several steps were taken by the State to abolish the practice of Sati (1829) and to control thagi. In the later part of the 19th century steps were taken to provide legal opportunities for inter-community and inter-caste marriage. In 1929, the Sarada Act was passed to check child marriages. In the post-independence period, India resolved to constitute a democratic, sovereign, secular and socialist society. In the constitution, special provisions were made to safeguard the interests of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward classes, women and children.

The practice of untouchability was declared as an offence. Some special measures such as the Hindu Marriage Act and Succession Act were adopted to reform the Hindu Society in general and the Hindu marriage system in particular. The welfare programmes have been launched for the uplift of youth, children, and physically handicapped. The Five Year Plans were launched for the socio-economic transformation of Indian Society. After 1970, special attention was paid towards the removal of poverty, rural development and generation of employment in the rural areas.

The impact of these programmes is visible on the socio-economic life of India. Despite considerable achievements, India is still beset with so many problems such as poverty, unemployment and sub-standard life conditions for a large section of Indian society. The turn taken by Indian polity and electoral process during the post-independence period is also responsible for several of our social problems.

3.7.1 Electoral Process
Politically, India has a multi-party parliamentary form of democracy. Ideally, political parties are to be organised on universalistic ideologies and the citizens are expected to choose their representatives on universalistic principles. In fact, particularistic tendencies play an important role in the electoral process of the country. One can find political parties formed on communal or parochial lines and political mobilisation undertaken by political parties and individuals on the basis of caste, religion, language and region. The political activities of
this sort are negation of the healthy democratic polity. They are also leading to sectional conflicts, atrocities against weaker sections, linguistic and religious minorities. Thus, the political functioning and the electoral process, as they exist today, are fomenting problems of communalism, casteism and conflicts between the different sections of society.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, first of all the relationship between social transformation and social problems has been discussed. The process of transformation has been explained in terms of historical as well as structural aspects in the Indian context. It has been followed by examining the relationship between social factors and social problems, cultural elements and social problems, economy, polity and social problems. Finally, we have discussed the role of the State in dealing with these problems, and the problems being generated by the actual functioning of the Indian polity.

3.9 KEY WORDS

**Structural Breakdown**: This concept was used by Talcott Parsons to mean the system of rigidity which tries to resist or retard social transformation and thus leads to breakdown of the social structure. The steps taken by the people against systematic rigidity in the form of collective mobilisation has been called by Marxists as revolution.

**Structural Inconsistencies**: This concept indicates the existence of two opposite sub-structures within the same structure which are not consistent with each other.

**Soft-State**: This concept has been used by Gunnar Myrdal in his book “The Asian Drama: An Enquiry into the Poverty of Nations”. By this concept he means the functioning of newly Independent Asian States which find difficulties in taking hard decisions to enforce the rule of law.

3.10 FURTHER READINGS


3.11 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) a) Caste distinctions, overemphasis on rituals over knowledge, rigid hierarchy, higher position of ritual performers, sacrifice of animals.

   b) Attitudes of avoidance, superstition, increased notion of purity and pollution, untouchability, child marriage, lower position of women, strict observance of widowhood.

d) Communalism, untouchability, population explosion, problems of weaker section alcoholism, drug addiction poverty, unemployment, black money, crime, delinquency and violence.

2) Arya Samaj, Brahmastamaj, Prarthan Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission.

3) Sanskritisation, Westernisation, Modernisation

Check Your Progress 2

1) The Indian Society is multi-religious in nature. During the colonial period, the relationship between different religious communities particularly between Hindustan and Muslims was politicised. It encouraged a tendency known as communalism which as been strengthened by mutual suspicious idologies, competition for power, service and resources.

2) The education in the traditional Indian system was primarily confined to the upper castes. It has its adverse impact on the spread of mass education. This is one of the reasons for the widespread illiteracy in India.

3) English continues to be the link language in India for the purpose of higher education, administration and diplomacy. At the level of the centre, there is the question of the relationship between English and Hindi for the purpose of the medium of instructions and administration and at the State level between English, Hindi and the regional languages.

4) a) There are several tribes in India and they comprise around seven percent of India’s population. They are not homogeneous in their customs. They are isolated and exploited and facing the problem of detribalisation.

   b) There are religious and linguistic minorities in India. Sometimes, castes and tribes may also be considered as minorities within specific areas.

5) a) Adverse effects on development and welfare programmes,

   b) Poverty,

   c) Illiteracy,

   d) Increased pressures on land, capital, forest and other resources.

Check Your Progress 3

1) a) Excessive consideration for one’s own kin group, caste, tribe or religion,

   b) corruption-involving favouritism,

   c) discrimination,

   d) inter-group conflicts

2) This lack of respect for public property is one of the root-causes of corruption, black money, tax-evasion, misappropriation of fund and use of sub-standard materials in public constructions.

3) There is a close linkage between economy, poverty and education. The illiteracy in India is directly linked with poverty. There is a mismatch between economy and education in the Indian context.

4) In fact, particularistic tendencies play an important role in the electoral process of the country. Several political parties have been formed on communal and parochial lines. At the time elections, castes, religion, language and region play significant roles. This type of mobilisation is also responsible for many socio-economic problems in India.
REFERENCES


4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we have discussed various aspects of social demography in India as a social problem. After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- describe various aspects of the demographic situation in India, like the size and growth of the population, the fertility, mortality, age and sex structure of the population;
4.1 INTRODUCTION

The term 'demography' is derived from the Latin word 'demos' meaning people. Hence, demography is the science of population. On the one hand, demography is concerned with a quantitative study of the size, structure, characteristics and territorial distribution of human populations and the changes occurring in them. On the other hand, demography is also concerned with the study of the underlying causes or determinants of the population phenomena. It attempts to explain population phenomena and situations as well as the changes in them in the context of the biological, social, economic and political settings. Social demography looks at the population phenomena mainly at the social level.

Keeping these perspectives in mind, Section 4.2 of this unit describes the size and growth of the population of India and their implications. Section 4.3 is devoted to fertility in India, its determinants and implications of high fertility. A detailed discussion of mortality in India, its determinants and implications of declining mortality and high infant and child mortality is undertaken in Section 4.4. The age and sex structure of the Indian population is described in Section 4.5, which also examines the determinants and implications of the age structure and the determinants of the sex structure. Section 4.6 is on family planning and family welfare and the barriers to family planning. Finally, section 4.7 is focused on the Population Policy of India, its evolution and components, achievements, achievements of the family welfare programme and its future prospects.

4.2 SIZE AND GROWTH OF POPULATION IN INDIA

The size and growth of population are two important components of the demographic phenomena in a developing country like India. These have severe implications on the social and economic spheres of our life. Hence, let us begin with a discussion on the size and growth of the population and its socio-economic implications.

4.2.1 Size and Growth of Population

India is the second most populous country in the world, ranking only after China. In the last Census, taken in 2001, the population of India is found to be 103 crores; 18 crores of people were added to the population since the last Census taken in 1991. This means that more than around 1.8 crores of persons are added to India every year. This is more than the population of Australia.

India’s population has more than doubled since Independence. In the first post-Independence Census, taken in 1951, the population stood at 36 crores, with an average annual growth rate of 1.25 per cent for the decade 1941-51. However, the average annual growth rate for 1991-2001 was 2.1 per cent and the decadal growth rate was 21.32 per cent.
4.2.2 Determinants of Population Change

Three factors determine the change in the size of the population of any country: how many persons are born, how many persons die, and how many persons are added to the population after considering the number of persons leaving the country and the number of persons coming into the country. The last of these factors, that is, migration does not play a large role in determining population growth in the Indian context. It, therefore, becomes necessary to consider in greater detail the other two factors, that is, fertility and mortality.

4.2.3 Implications of the Size and Growth of Population

The size of the population of India is itself staggering, and it is growing at a high rate. Despite intensive efforts through development programmes, the achievements have not been able to keep pace with the needs of the growing population.

The per capita production of food grains has increased over the years, but the per capita increase has been only marginal because of the high growth rate of the populations. The housing shortage has also been increasing over the years. The norms for the health and medical services have not been met. The upward trend in the gross and net national products is not reflected in the per capita income to the same extent. The situation related to unemployment and underemployment reflects the inability of the employment market to absorb the pressures of increasingly large labour force.

The growth rate of the population may not appear to be too high. Yet when applied to a large base population, the addition to the population is quite staggering.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Mark the correct answer.

   According to the 2001 Census, India’s population was:
   a) 65 crores
   b) 85 crores
   c) 103 crores
   d) 113 crores

2) What are the implications of the large size and high growth rate of India’s population? Answer in about seven lines.

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4.3 FERTILITY

As you know, fertility is an important determinant of population growth. In this section, we shall discuss the measurement, levels and trends and implications of high fertility.
4.3.1 Measurement of Fertility

At the outset, it is necessary to differentiate between fecundity and fertility. Fecundity refers to the physiological capacity to reproduce. Fertility, on the other hand, refers to the actual reproductive performance of an individual or a group.

While there is no direct measurement of fecundity, fertility can be studied from the statistics of births. The crude birth rate is an important measure of fertility for which only live births, that is, children born alive are taken into account. The crude birth rate is calculated by dividing the number of live births occurring during a calendar year in a specified area by the midyear population of that year. The crude birth rate is generally expressed per thousand of population. It is computed in the following manner:

\[
\frac{\text{Total number of live births during a year}}{\text{Total population in the middle of that year}} \times 1000
\]

The crude birth rate directly points to the contribution of fertility to the growth rate of the population. It suffers from certain limitations mainly because it has in the denominator the total population which includes males as well as very young and very old women who are biologically not capable of having babies. There are other more refined fertility measures like the general fertility rate, the age-specific fertility rates, etc., that overcome these limitations, but these do not concern us here.

4.3.2 Levels and Trends of Fertility in India

As in other developing countries, the crude birth rate has been quite high in India. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the estimated birth rate for India was as high as 49.2 per thousand population. In the decade 1951-61, that is, the decade immediately following Independence, the birth rate declined by only four points, and was around 45 per thousand population. Since 1961, however, the birth rate has been progressively declining, though not at a very fast pace. According to the estimates of the sample registration system, the birth rate in India in 1988, stood at 31.3 per thousand population. For the same year, while it was 32.8 per thousand population for the rural areas, it was 26.0 per thousand population for the urban areas. According to the Sample Registration System, the birth rate in India in 2002 was 25.8 per thousand population. Significantly there have been much regional variations among the states.

4.3.3 Determinants of High Fertility

Several factors contribute to the high fertility of Indian women. Let us examine some of these factors:

i) All the religions of the world, except Buddhism, contain injunctions to their followers to breed and multiply. It is, therefore, not surprising that belief in high fertility has been strongly supported by religions and social institutions in India, leading to appropriate norms about family size.

ii) Another factor contributing to high fertility is the universality of the institution of marriage. Amongst the Hindus, a man is expected to go through the various stages of his life (Ashramas), performing the duties attached to each stage. Marriage is considered one such duty. For the
Hindu woman, marriage is considered essential, because it is the only sacrament she is entitled to, though the Hindu man goes through several sacraments throughout his life.

iii) Till recently, the custom in India required the Hindu girls to be married off before they entered puberty. Even today, despite legislation forbidding the marriage of girls before they are 18 years of age, many girls are married off before they attain that age. In India, traditionally women start childbearing at an early age, and continue to do so till they cross the age at which they are no longer biologically capable of bearing children.

iv) As in all traditional societies, in India too, great emphasis is laid on bearing children. A woman, who does not bear children, is looked down upon in society. In fact, the new daughter-in-law attains her rightful status in the family only after she produces a child, preferably a son.

v) The preference for sons is deeply ingrained in the Indian culture. Sons are required for extending the family line and for looking after the parents in their old age. Among the Hindus, a son is desired not only for the continuation of the family line and for providing security in old age, but also for ceremoniously kindling the funeral pyre and, thus, effecting the salvation of his father’s soul. The preference for sons is so high in the Indian society that a couple may continue to have several daughters and still not stop childbearing in the hope of having at least one son.

vi) In Indian society, a fatalistic attitude is ingrained and fostered from childhood. Such an attitude acts as a strong influence against any action that calls for the exercise of the right of self-determination with reference to reproduction. Children are considered to be gifts of God, and people believe that it is not up to them to decide on the number of children. High infant and child mortality rates also contribute to a large family size. A couple may have a large number of children in the hope that at least a few of them will survive up to adulthood. The low status of women is also a contributing factor to high fertility. Women, unquestioningly, accept excessive childbearing without any alternative avenues for self-expression.

vii) Children in the Indian society have a great economic, social, cultural as well as religious value. Fertility of Indian women is, therefore, high. Often, there is no economic motivation for restricting the number of children, because the biological parents may not necessarily be called upon to provide for the basic needs of their own children since the extended family is jointly responsible for all the children born into it.

viii) Again in the absence of widespread adoption of methods of conception control, the fertility of Indian women continues to remain high.

It is important that none of these factors is to be seen in isolation. Indeed, it is the combination of several factors, that contribute towards the high fertility rate in India. While considering the factors contributing to high fertility, it is necessary also to consider traditional Indian norms which regulate the reproductive behaviour of couples. Breast-feeding is universally practiced in Indian sub-continent and this has an inhibiting influence on conception. Certain taboos are also practiced during the postpartum period when the couple is expected to abstain from sexual activity. The practice of going to the parental home for delivery, specially the first one, common in some parts of the country
also ensures abstinence after childbirth leading to postponement of the next pregnancy. Cohabitation is also prohibited on certain specified days in the month. It is also common knowledge that a woman would be ridiculed if she continued to bear children after she had become a grandmother.

### 4.3.4 Implications of High Fertility

Apart from contributing in a big way to the population problem of the country, high fertility affects the family and, in turn, society in many ways.

Women are tied down to child-bearing and child-rearing for the best years of their productive lives. They are, therefore, denied the opportunity to explore other avenues for self-expression and self-development. This could lead to frustration. Excessive child-bearing affects their own health and that of their children. Looking after a large number of children puts a further strain on the slender physical and emotional resources of such women.

The burden of providing for a large family sits heavily on the bread-winner of the family. The constant struggle to maintain a subsistence level is exhausting. To escape from the problems of everyday life, he may take to drinking. This would lead to further deterioration of the economic and emotional well-being of the family.

The children, often unwanted, unloved and neglected, are left to their own devices to make life bearable. Indulgence in delinquency is sometimes the result. The children in large families often have to start working at a very early age to supplement the slender financial resources of the family. They are, therefore,
denied the opportunity to go to school and get educated. The girl child is the worst sufferer. She is often not sent to school at all, or is withdrawn from school at an early age to help her mother in carrying out domestic chores and to look after her younger siblings when the mother is at work. Early marriage pushes her into child-bearing, and the vicious cycle continues. The children, both boys and girls, in a large family are thus often denied the joys of childhood, and are pushed into adult roles at a very early age.

Happy and healthy families are the very foundation on which a healthy society is built. Excessive fertility, as one of the factors leading to family unhappiness and ill health, needs to be curbed in order to build up a healthy society.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write down the formula for computing the crude birth rate. Use about two lines.

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2) List the determinants of high fertility in India. Use about five lines to answer.

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3) What are the implications of high fertility for the family and society? Use about ten lines to answer.

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4.4 MORTALITY

Mortality is an important determinant of population. Let us examine a few important aspects of mortality.
4.4.1 Measurement of Mortality

Various measures of mortality are employed in the analysis of mortality. For a general understanding of the process of mortality, it is sufficient to describe three basic measures of mortality: the crude death rate, the expectation of life at birth, and the infant mortality rate.

i) Crude Death Rate

The Crude death rate is the ratio of the total registered deaths occurring in a specified calendar year to the total mid-year population of that year, multiplied by 1000. It is computed in the following manner:

\[
\frac{\text{No. of registered deaths during a year}}{\text{Total population in the middle of that year}} \times 1000
\]

As in the case of the crude birth rate, the crude death rate also suffers from several limitations, mainly because it considers the mortality experience of different groups in the population together. The age and sex structure is not taken into account. For instance, a country having a very large proportion of elderly people may have the same crude death rate as that in another country where this proportion is very low. The mortality conditions of these countries cannot be considered to be similar. It is, therefore, customary to calculate age specific death rates, and report them separately for the males and the females.

ii) Expectation of Life at Birth

The average expectation of life at birth is a good measure of the level of mortality because it is not affected by the age structure of the population. The term “average expectation of life” or life expectancy represents the average number of years of life which a cohort of new-born babies (that is, those born in the same year) may be expected to live if they are subjected to the risks of death at each year, according to the age-specific mortality rates prevailing in the country at the time to which the measure refers. This measure is complicated to calculate but easy to understand.

iii) Infant Mortality Rate

Infants are defined in demography as all those children in the first year of life who have not yet reached age one, that is, those who have not celebrated their first birthday. Infants are studied separately, as mortality during the first year of life is invariably high. In countries like India, where health conditions are poor, infant deaths account for a substantial number of all deaths. The infant mortality rate is, therefore, often used as an indicator for determining the socio-economic status of a country and the quality of life in it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1 Measurement of Infant Mortality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The infant mortality rate is generally computed as a ratio of infant deaths (that is, deaths of children under one year of age) registered in a calendar year to the total number of live births (children born alive) registered in the same year. It is computed in the following manner:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| \[
\frac{\text{Number of deaths below one year registered during the calendar year}}{\text{Number of live births registered during the same year}} \times 1000
\] |
| It needs to be noted that this rate is only an approximate measure of infant mortality, for no adjustment is made for the fact that some of the infants dying in the year considered were born in the preceding year. |
4.4.2 Levels and Trends of Mortality in India

Up to 1921, the crude death rate in India was quite high (between 40 and 50 per thousand population), the highest being for the decade 1911-21, mainly because of the influenza epidemic in 1918, when more than 15 million persons died. Since 1921, the death rate has been declining. From 1911-21 to 1971-81, that is, in a period of 60 years, the average annual death rate declined from 48.6 per thousand population to 14.9 per thousand population – a reduction of more than 69 per cent. The estimates of the Sample Registration System indicate that for the year 1988, the crude death rate was 11.0 per thousand population. In 2000 the crude death rate has declined to 8.5 per thousand population.

The average expectation of life at birth has also increased over the years. During 1911-21, it was 19.4 years for the males, 20.9 years for the females, and 20.1 years when both sexes were considered together. These figures may be considered to be the lowest for the country, and one of the lowest anywhere in the world. For the 1941-51 decade, these figures were 32.5 years for the males, 31.7 years for the females, and 32.1 years when both sexes were considered together. During the period 1981-86, life expectancy was 55.6 years for the males, 56.4 years for the females, and 56.0 years when both sexes were considered together. The latest statistics indicates that the average life expectancy in India is 63.3 years. While the female life expectancy is 63.8 years, for male it is 62.8 years.

4.4.3 Determinants of Declining Mortality

The decline in mortality in India has been mainly due to public health and disease-control measures, which were mostly imported from the developed countries. These include DDT spraying, the use of antibiotics like penicillin and vaccines against many communicable diseases like tuberculosis, polio, typhoid, cholera and several childhood diseases. Dreaded “killer diseases” like plague and smallpox have been completely eradicated. The extension of health and medical services to different parts of the country and the application of advances in the medical sciences have contributed in a big way to the decline in mortality in India. The effect of severe famines have also been considerably reduced by preventive and relief measures. Much still remains to be achieved for bringing about further decline in mortality.

4.4.4 Implications of Declining Mortality

The decline in the death rate and high birth rate have been the main factor responsible for the rapid growth of population, as the declining death rates have not been accompanied by corresponding declines in the birth rates.

The increased average expectation of life at birth has resulted in a higher proportion of persons in the older age group, that is, those above the age of 60. At present, the percentage of the aged in India (6.49 in 1981) is not as high as that in the developed countries (for example, 16.47 in the United States, in 1984). The absolute numbers are, however, quite high.

In our country aged persons, do not necessarily contribute to the national income or the family income. They have to be looked after, and the expenditure on their health and medical needs has to be met. When strong supports are not
provided by the joint family, the burden falls on society. Old-age homes or foster care homes for the aged have to be provided through the State funds, when the aged are not in a position to incur the expenditure involved. Many of the state governments have introduced the scheme of pensions for the aged in a limited scale. However, for a poor country like India, all such success of such measures needs a political commitment.

4.4.5 Levels and Trends of Infant Mortality in India

In India, the infant mortality rate was as high as 140 per thousand live births in 1969. In 1989, the infant mortality rate was less than 100 per thousand live births.

India has still a long way to go for achieving the goal of an infant mortality rate of below 60 per thousand live births by the year 2000 A.D.—one of the goals to be reached for securing ‘Health for All’ by 2000 A.D. However in 2002 the infant mortality rate of India was 68 per thousand live births.

| Box 2. Variation in the Estimated Death Rates of the Children Aged 0-4 years by Sex and residence in India and in its Major States, 1998. |
|---|---|---|
| **Total** | **M** | **F** |
| India | 22.5 | 21.0 | 24.1 |
| Andhara | 18.1 | 17.8 | 18.4 |
| Assam | 27.5 | 29.2 | 25.6 |
| Bihar | 22.9 | 21.2 | 24.8 |
| Gujarat | 19.6 | 18.5 | 20.9 |
| Haryana | 22.4 | 19.4 | 26.2 |
| Himachal | 16.7 | 14.1 | 19.7 |
| Karnataka | 16.7 | 16.5 | 16.8 |
| Kerala | 3.6 | 4.2 | 3.0 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 32.6 | 31.6 | 33.7 |
| Maharashtra | 12.7 | 11.2 | 14.3 |
| Orissa | 29.0 | 28.7 | 29.4 |
| Punjab | 16.8 | 15.9 | 17.9 |
| Rajasthan | 27.7 | 27.3 | 28.1 |
| Tamil Nadu | 13.0 | 12.3 | 13.8 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 29.6 | 25.3 | 34.5 |
| West Bengal | 15.0 | 16.2 | 13.8 |

Source: Registrar General of India, Sample Registration System
### 4.4.6 Determinants of Infant and Child Mortality

The determinants of mortality during the neonatal period (that is, the first four weeks of the baby’s life) on the one hand, and the post–neonatal period (that is, the period between one and 11 months) together with the childhood period (that is, the period between one and four years) on the other, are quite different.

#### i) Neonatal Mortality

Biological factors play a dominant role in determining the level of neonatal mortality. These factors are also known as endogenous factors.

a) It is known that neonatal mortality rates are higher when the mother is below the age of 18 or above 35, when the parity is above 4, and when the interval between two births is less than one year. These conditions are fairly common in our country, leading to high infant mortality.

b) While the standards laid down by the World Health Organisation specify that babies with a birth weight of less than 2,500 grams should be considered as “high risk” babies, needing special care, 24 to 37 per cent of Indian babies have a birth weight below 2,500 grams without the possibility of receiving any special care.

c) Ante-natal care, which is generally concerned with the pregnant woman’s well-being is lacking in our country. It is, therefore, not possible to identify high risk cases requiring special care, to administer tetanus toxoid injections for immunising the unborn child against tetanus, and to provide iron and folic acid tablets to prevent anaemia among pregnant women. An anemic mother gives birth to a low-weight baby with slender chances of survival.

d) Proper hygienic conditions and medical care during delivery are not ensured, specially in the rural areas. The delivery is generally conducted by an untrained traditional birth attendant (dai) or an elderly relative. The scheme of providing dais with training has not yet reached all parts of the country.

e) Fortunately, the practice of breast-feeding is widespread in our country. This protects the baby from exposure to several infections. Breast-feeding is, however, initiated only after 48 to 72 hours of birth, and is absolutely prohibited during the first 24 hours. If the baby is put to the breast soon after birth, it acquires several immunities which are passed on by the mother through colostrum (the first flow of breast milk).

This opportunity to acquire immunity against several diseases is denied to the baby, exposing it to the risk of neonatal mortality.
ii) **Post-neonatal and Child Mortality**

The factors contributing to the post-neonatal and child mortality are generally not biological, but arise out of the environment and the behavioural response to it. These factors are also known as exogenous factors.

a) Common childhood diseases, such as, diptheria, pertusis (whooping cough), measles and polio as well as tuberculosis contribute substantially to the post-neonatal and child mortality. Deaths due to these diseases can be prevented, but immunisation services are either not available or easily accessible in the rural areas, or may not be accepted by the rural population either because of ignorance and superstition or sheer apathy.

b) Diarrhoea and its consequence, and dehydration, is another factor contributing heavily to post-natal and child mortality. It has been estimated that every year about 1.5 million children under the age of five years die due to diarrhoea, of which 60 to 70 per cent die of dehydration. The oral rehydration therapy introduced in recent years does not involve heavy expenditure or undue efforts on the part of those who look after the affected child. The oral rehydration solution can be prepared at home with a tablespoon of sugar, a pinch of salt and a glass of boiled water. The material for preparing the solution can also be obtained from the government health workers or the local Health Guide. The obstacle, however, is in the form of the age-old traditional belief that a child should not be given milk or any kind of food during an attack of diarrhoea. The dehydration that sets in due to diarrhoea can be so severe that the slightest delay in treatment can cost the child its life. On the other hand, the oral rehydration solution, which can be considered a household remedy, not only prevents dehydration, but also controls diarrhoea.

c) Nutritional deficiency is another factor contributing to child mortality. The National Institute of Nutrition found in a study conducted in 1981 that around 85 per cent of the children under four years were malnourished, of whom almost 6 per cent were severely malnourished.

These malnourished children are also more prone to contact diarrhoea and other debilitating diseases, exposing them to the risk of dying during childhood. Malnourishment itself could also be a result of attacks of childhood diseases. This vicious circle, unless broken effectively through an educational and service programme, will continue to result in high infant and child mortality rates.

### 4.4.7 Implications of High Infant and Child Mortality

It has been observed that wherever infant and child mortality is high, fertility is also high and vice-versa. A couple is interested in the number of surviving children and not in the number of children born. Because of the high levels of infant and child mortality, a couple may go in for a large number of children in the hope that at least a few would survive to adulthood. Also, when a child dies, the parents are keen to replace it as soon as possible by another. It is also known that when a child dies in infancy, the mother is denied the natural protection from pregnancy provided through breast-feeding. She is then likely to conceive early, leading to high fertility.
Thus, apart from the emotional trauma caused to parents, high infant and child mortality rates result in high fertility rates leading to a population problem. Looking after these children, who die before they can start contributing to the country’s well being, also places a heavy burden on the country’s meager resources. It needs to be reiterated that the level of the infant mortality rate of a country is considered as an important indicator of the socio-economic status of that country and the quality of life in it.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Define “average expectation of life” or “life expectancy”. Use five lines to answer.

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2) What is meant by neo mortality? Use three lines to answer.

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3) What are the factors contributing to high neo natal mortality in India? Mention at least seven factors. Use three lines to answer.

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4) List three factors contributing to high infant and child mortality in India. Use two lines to answer.

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4.5 AGE AND SEX STRUCTURE

Age and sex are the basic characteristics or the biological attributes of any population. These characteristics or attributes affect not only the demographic structure, but also the social, economic and political structure of the population.

Age and sex are also important factors, because they are indicators of social status. Each individual is ascribed a certain status in society on the basis of sex and age. Status and roles are culturally determined, and vary from one culture to another. Even within the same culture, status and roles may undergo changes over a period of time. While in traditional societies, age demands respect, modern societies may be more youth-oriented. While the age structure of a
population may have implications for the status and roles of older persons, the sex structure may be a reflection of the social reality.

The age-sex structure of a population is both the determinant and consequence of birth and death rates, internal and international migration, marital status composition, manpower, and the gross national product. Planning regarding educational and health services, housing, etc., is done on the basis of the age structure of the population.

4.5.1 Age Structure

i) Measurement of the Age Structure

It is customary to classify age data in five year age groups, such as 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19, and so on.

The simplest measure to study the age structure of any population is the percentage distribution of the population based on the absolute numbers in various five-year age groups. This percentage distribution indicates the number of persons in an age group, if the total number of persons considered is 100. This measure is useful for understanding and describing the age structure of any population. It can also be used to compare the age structure of two or more populations at a point of time, or to compare the age structure of the same population at different points of time. Age-sex pyramids can also be constructed with the help of age-sex histograms.

Box 3. Dependency Ratio

An important measure to study the structure of the population is the dependency ratio. This measure indicates the number of dependents per 100 workers. Three age groups are considered for this purpose. The population in the age group 15-50 or 15-64 is considered to be the working population, the population below 15 is considered as young dependents and the population above either 60 or 65 is considered to be old dependents. The dependency ratio is computed by using the following formula.

\[
\text{Dependency Ratio} = \frac{\text{Population in the age group 0-14} + \text{Population in the age group 60} + \text{Population in the age group 15-59 or 15-64}}{\text{Population in the age group 15-59 or 15-64}}
\]

The dependency ratio gives us only a broad idea of economic dependency in any population, and it is not a full measure for assessing the dependency burden. It needs to be noted that not all persons in the working age group (15-59 or 15-64) are employed and not all those in the dependent age groups (0-14 and 60+ or 65+) are economic dependents. In a country like India, children start working at a very early age as helping hands to the parents among craftsmen, poor agriculturalists or newspaper hawkers or as hotel boys. In rural areas, old people continue to engage themselves in some kind of economic activity, as there is no retirement age in an agricultural economy. Then there are activities like those of doctors, lawyers, traders and other self-employed persons for whom the age factor does not lead to retirement from economic activity.

ii) Age Structure in India

Determinants and Implications

India is an old country with a large young population belonging to the age group of 0-14 years and a growing number of aged population in the age group of above 50 years.
According to the 1991 Census, the young dependency ratio in India was 67.2, meaning that 100 persons in the working age group (15-59) had to support 67.2 children in the age group of 0-14 years. Similarly, old dependences in India is to the extent of 12.2.

The age structure of any population is determined by the levels of fertility, mortality, and migration. Of these three factors, migration can affect the age structure of any population only when the migrants are concentrated in any one age group and the volume of migration is large.

India has a large “young” population because the birth rates are high and the number of children born is large. The sustained high level of birth rates has resulted in a large proportion of children and a small proportion of old population. On the other hand, in economically developed countries, the birth rates are low and less children are born. The low birth rates result in a higher proportion of old people. Compared to the role of fertility, the role of mortality in determining the age structure of a population is limited, specially when mortality is high. Rapid reductions in mortality and lengthening of the life-span result in a “younger” population. This is mainly because the improvement is first experienced by the infants and children. More infants and children survive, leading to an increase in the proportion of the young persons in the population as in the case of India. On the other hand, when the mortality level is very low, there is no further scope for any large increases in survivorship during infancy and early childhood, and any improvement in mortality conditions would affect the older age group and lead to a further aging of the population, that is, increase in the proportion of older persons in the population. Such a situation prevails in developed countries like Sweden, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, France and Australia.

A young population implies a heavy burden on the economy of the country as they have to be educated, clothed and provided shelter, while they themselves are not expected to contribute immediately to the family or national economy.

One other implication of the young age structure of the Indian population is that it also has the potential of the high growth rates of the population in further years. Within a few years, these children will grow up, get married and start reproducing. When the number of couples in the reproductive age group (wife in the age group 15-44) is high, the birth rate can also be expected to be high, even with moderate fertility. This, in turn, leads to a high population growth rate.

4.5.2 Sex Structure

In this section we shall discuss the measurement of sex structure, sex ratio and its determinants in India.

i) Measurement of Sex Structure

Two measures are generally used for studying the age structure of any population—(1) the percentage of males in the population or the masculinity proportion, and (2) the sex ratio. Of these two measures, the sex ratio is more frequently used in the study of the population.

The sex ratio of a population may be expressed either as the number of males per 100 females or the number of females per 100 males. The Indian Census
has preferred to define the sex ratio as the number of females per 1000 males, though the definition of the sex ratio followed the world over is the number of the males per 100 females.

ii) **Sex Ratio in India and its Determinants**

Generally, in most countries, the overall sex ratio of the population is favourable to the females, that is, there are more females than males in the population. When the situation is different, that is, when there are more males than females in the population, this is considered unusual. The population statistics available through the Census indicate that the sex ratio in India has always been adverse to the females, that is, the number of the females per 1,000 males has always been less than 1,000. In fact, the sex ratio has been declining from 972 in 1901 to 930 in 1971. A slight improvement was registered in the 1951 Census, and again during the 1981 Census, but the 1991 Census registered a fall by five points—from 934 in 1981 to 929 in 1991. In 2001, female sex ratio was 933, which was an improvement over the 1991 figure.

The following three factors are responsible for determining the sex ratio of any population: (1) the sex ratio at birth, (2) the sex ratio of the deceased persons and (3) the sex ratio of the net migrants. In a developing country like India, another factor could be added to this list. There is always a possibility that women are under-enumerated because they are not reported as members of the household by the head of the household, when the Census enumerator collects the information.

Of all these factors, high mortality of the females appears to be the most plausible explanation for the sex ratio in India, which is adverse to the females. Though biologically stronger than the male, the female in India is in a socially and culturally disadvantaged position, and has been accorded an inferior status over the centuries. The death rates for the females in most age groups are higher than those for the males. Of the other factors, the sex ratio of new born babies is not much different from that in other countries. Hence, a sex ratio that is adverse to the females, a peculiarity of the Indian demographic picture, need not be attributed to this factor. As for international migration of men, it is quite insignificant and is, therefore, not found to affect the sex ratio in India. Under-enumeration of the females cannot explain more than a very small part of the numerical imbalance between the males and the females in India.

**Check Your Progress 4**

1) **Why is India known as an old country with a large young population?**
   Use four lines to answer.
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2) **Why is the sex ratio not favourable to women in India?** Use three lines to answer.
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20
4.6 FAMILY PLANNING AND FAMILY WELFARE

In India, the concepts of family planning and family welfare are very important. Let us know the meanings of the concepts.

4.6.1 Concept of Family Planning and Family Welfare

At the level of the family, family planning implies having only the desired number of children. Thus family planning implies both limitation of the family to a number considered appropriate to the resources of the family as well as proper spacing between the children. The adoption of family planning, obviously, requires conscious efforts made by the couple to control conception.

As a social movement, family planning implies an organised effort by a group of people to initiate change in the child-bearing practices of the people by creating a favourable atmosphere. The birth control movement, as it was initially called, aimed at relieving women of excessive child-bearing, and was seen as a way of achieving the emancipation of women through the right of self-determination.

A family planning programme involves a co-ordinated group of activities, maintained over a period of time, and aimed at fostering a change in the child-bearing behaviour of the females. The aim of the family planning programme may either be to improve the health status of women and their children and/or of reducing the birth rate, and thus reducing the population growth rate of the country. Most countries with a population control policy also emphasise the health aspects of family planning. The various components of the family planning programme are: (1) Information, Education and Communication Activities, (2) Contraceptives: Supplies and Services, (3) Training of Personnel, (4) Research, and (5) Administrative Infrastructure.

When the government concerns itself with promoting the total welfare of the family and the community, through family planning, the programme consists of a wide range of activities, covering education, health, maternity and child care, family planning and nutrition. Since 1977, the Indian family planning programme is known as the family welfare programme with greater emphasis on the welfare approach to the problem.

4.6.2 Barriers to Family Planning

Most of the reasons mentioned in Sub-section 4.3.3, under Determinants of High Fertility, act as barriers to the acceptance of family planning, which implies controlling fertility. These barriers include fatalism, and emphasis placed on having children in the Indian culture and religious beliefs.

In addition, the use of various methods of family planning also pose certain difficulties. The methods are not always acceptable because of the possible side-effects, perceived unaesthetic attributes or the discipline their use demands. All methods are not equally effective. While sterilisation, male and female, can be considered one hundred per cent effective, a method like the IUD is considered to be 95 per cent effective, and the conventional contraceptive like the condom is considered to be only 50 per cent effective. Oral pills are almost
one hundred per cent effective, but their effectiveness depends on taking them regularly and on following a certain regime. The easy availability of supplies and services is a necessary condition for the practice or adoption of family planning. When supplies and services are not easily available, it becomes difficult for people to practise or adopt family planning, even when they are inclined to do so.

Activity 1
Read Sub-section 4.3.3 (Determinants of High Fertility) and Sub-Section 4.6.2. (Barriers to Family Planning) very carefully. Then write an essay comparing the factors mentioned in these sections with the situation prevailing in your society. Exchange your note, if possible, with your co-learners at the Study Centre.

4.7 POPULATION POLICY OF INDIA

India has the distinction of being the first country in the world to have a fully government-supported family planning programme. This is not an overnight development. The foundations were laid in the early part of the twentieth century.

Even during the pre-independence period, the intellectual elite among the Indians showed some concern about the population issue, and supported the cause of birth control. Their British rulers, however, kept aloof from this controversial issue.

Support for birth control was evident when the Health Survey and Development Committee set up by the Government of India, in 1945, under chairmanship of Sir Joseph Bhore, recommended that birth control services should be provided for the promotion of the health of mothers and children. The pressure from the intellectuals that the government formulate a policy for disseminating information on birth control and for encouraging its practice was mounting during the pre-independence period.

4.7.1 Components of the Current Population Policy

With the advent of Independence, family planning as a measure of population control has been given top priority in the development plans of the country, starting with the First Five Year Plan (1951-56). The increasing financial allocations for the family planning programme in each successive plan are also indicative of the growing emphasis accorded to the family planning programme.

a) National Population Policy 1976 and 1977

Though implied in the family planning programme undertaken by the government, the population policy of the country was not explicitly stated, and it remained unarticulated in the formal sense. It was on April 16, 1976 that the National Population Policy was declared. It underwent some modifications in June, 1977.

Till the National Population Policy was first declared in April, 1976, the Population Policy of India was generally equated with the family planning policy. One of the grounds on which India was criticised in international circles was that other solutions to the population policy were ignored. The statement of the population policy took into account some of the complex relationships
between the social, economic and political aspects of the population problem. It included appropriate measures to tackle the population problem, many of which went “beyond family planning”. The policy statement also contained several approaches to the improvement of the family planning programme.

The statement of policy regarding the Family Welfare Programme issued on June 29, 1977, eliminates all measures which have the slightest element of compulsion or coercion, and emphasis on the welfare approach to the problem. The name of the family planning programme, has also been changed to the family welfare programme to reflect the government’s anxiety to promote through the programme the total welfare of the family and the community.

Many of the measures outlined in the National Population Policy, declared in 1976, have been retained. These include the following: (1) raising the minimum legal age at marriage for girls to 18 and for boys to 21, (2) taking the population figure of 1971 till the year 2001, in all cases where population is a factor in the sharing of the Central resources with the States, as in allocation of the Central assistance to the State Plans, devolution of taxes and duties and grants-in-aid, (3) accepting the principle of linking 8 per cent of the central assistance to the State Plans with their performance and success in the family welfare programme, (4) including population education in the formal school education system, (5) plans to popularise the family welfare programme and use of all media for this purpose, (6) participation of voluntary organisations in the implementation of the programme, (7) improvement of women’s educational level, both through formal and non-formal channels. The Policy Statement also declared that the government would give special attention to the necessary research inputs in the field of reproductive biology and contraception.

b) National Population Policy 2000

India has framed a new National Population Policy in 2000. It enumerates certain socio-demographic goods to be achieved by 2010 which will lead to achieving population stabilisation by 2045. The policy has identified the immediate objectives as meeting the unmet needs for contraception, health care infrastructure and trained health personnel and to provide integrated service delivery with the following interventions:

i) Strengthen community health centres, primary health centres and sub-centres,

ii) Augment skills of health personnel and health care providers

iii) Bring about convergence in the implementation of related social sector programme to make Family Welfare Programme people centered.

iv) Integrate package of essential services at village and household levels by extending basic reproductive and child health care through mobile health clinics and counselling services; and explore the possibility of accrediting private medical practitioners and assigning them to defined beneficiary groups to provide these services (Govt. of India 2003)

4.7.2 Achievements of the Family Welfare Programme

As of March, 1989, the number of couples protected through some method of family planning was estimated to be 64.79 million, forming 46.7 per cent of the estimated 138.9 million eligible couples (with wife in the reproductive age
group 15-44) in the country. Taking into account the use-effectiveness of various methods, which is assumed to be 100 per cent for sterilisation and oral pills, 95 per cent for IUD and 50 per cent for conventional contraceptives like the condom, the number of couples effectively protected as of March, 1989, was 58.14 million, forming 41.9 per cent of the total eligible couples.

Sterilisation is the most widely accepted method, effectively protecting 29.8 per cent of the eligible couples. Of the total eligible couples, 5.9 per cent are effectively protected by IUD, 4.5 per cent by conventional contraceptives, 1.7 per cent by oral pills.

While terminal methods, like the male and female sterilisation, continue to be the major share, it is worth noting that the female sterilisation is more highly favoured than the male sterilisation; 86.8 per cent of the total sterilisations done in 1988-89 were female sterilisations.

The statistics for 1987-88 indicate that, on an average, the age of the wife for vasectomy acceptors is 32.4 years, for tubectomy acceptors it is 30.2 years and for IUD it is 27.4 years. These couples have, on an average, 3.6, 3.3 and 2.3 living children at the time of the acceptance of vasectomy, tubectomy and IUD respectively.

During 2001-2002, 47.27 lakh sterilisations were performed in the country. The number of Intra-Ulterine Device (IUD) insertions during the same period was 62.02 lakhs. Besides, there were 145.69 lakhs of condom users and 74.75 lakhs of Oral Pill (OP) users. The use of contraceptives has been increased from 40.06% in 1992-93 to 48.2% in 1998-1999. (Govt. of India 2003)

It can be observed that family planning is accepted generally after the most fertile period in a woman’s life (up to 29 years) is over, and when the couple has exceeded the norm of two children advocated by the government.

Inter-State variations in family planning performance are also observed. States like Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Union Territories like Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Delhi and Pondicherry have a higher percentage of effectively protected couples than the all-India average. All the other States have recorded a lower percentage of effectively protected couples than the all-India average, except for Andhra Pradesh, where this percentage is identical to the all-India average.

4.7.3 The Changing Trends

It is obvious that the family welfare programme slowly recovering from the setback it received after the Emergency, during which some coercive methods were used for achieving spectacular results.

The long-term goal to be achieved for the country is to reach a replacement level of unity (net reproduction rate of one, when each woman will be replaced by only one daughter). The demographic goals laid down as part of the National Health Policy are to achieve by 2000 A.D., a birth rate of 21 per thousand population and an effective protection rate of 60 per cent. The corresponding mid-term goals to be reached by the end of the Seventh Plan (1990) are: crude birth rate of 29.1 and effective couple protection rate of 42 per cent.

The Changing Trend in the population in India is shown in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Decadal Growth (per cent)</th>
<th>Average Exponential Growth (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>24.80</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>24.66</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>23.86</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>Current Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crude Birth Rate (per 1,000 population)</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>29.5*</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crude Death Rate (per 10,000 population)</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>9.8*</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Fertility Rate (per woman on average)</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.6*</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Mortality Rate (per 1,00,000 live birth)</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>80*</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple Protection Rate (per cent)</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>48.2 (NFHS-II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Expectancy at birth years (M)</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>63.87# (2001-02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Expectancy at birth years (F)</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>66.9# (2001-02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Excludes Jammu and Kashmir # Projected
SRS = Sample Registration System of Office of Registrar General India.

**Check Your Progress 5**

1) What are the major “Beyond Family Planning” measures included in the National Population Policy of India? Use seven lines to answer.

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2) On what factors does the future of India’s family welfare programme depend? Use six lines to answer.

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4.8 LET US SUM UP

This unit begins with defining demography and examines its scope: mortality, fertility, composition of population and migration. Techniques of measurement are mentioned and the need for highlighting their social and cultural aspects stressed. Then we described the size and growth of the population of India and examined their implications. The determinants and consequences of fertility and mortality in India are explained. The age and sex structure of the Indian population, their determinants and implications are classified. The concept of family planning and family welfare and the barriers to family planning are discussed. The Population Policy of India, its evolution and components, achievements of the family welfare programme and its future prospects enable us to see how social problems at the demographic level could be solved.

4.9 KEY WORDS

Fertility : Fertility refers to the actual reproductive performance, whether applied to an individual or to a group, measured in terms of the number of children born alive.

Life Expectancy/Average Expectation of Life at Birth : The average number of years of life which a cohort of new born babies (that is, those born in the same year) may be expected to live if they are subjected to the risks of death at each year according to the age specific mortality rates prevailing in the country at the time to which the measures refer.

Neonatal and Post-neonatal Mortality : When a baby dies within the first four weeks of life, it is known as neonatal mortality. When a baby dies after it has survived beyond four weeks, but before the first year is completed, it is known as post-neonatal mortality.

Population Growth Rate : One way of measuring population growth is to calculate the rate at which population grows. This is done by first finding out the difference in the population size of a
specified area at two points of time, and then by dividing the absolute change by the population at the earlier point of the time.

**Sex Ratio**

: The sex ratio of a population may either be expressed as the number of males per 100 females or the number of females per 100 males. The Indian Census has preferred to define the sex ratio as the number of females per 1000 males.

### 4.10 FURTHER READINGS


### 4.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

#### Check Your Progress 1

1) b) 844 million

2) The development programmes are not able to keep pace with the needs of the growing population. The country is facing shortages in housing, health and medical services and employment opportunities. The increase in the per capita production of food grain is only marginal, and the per capita income is low. These problems have arisen because of the large size of the population and the high rate of the population growth.

#### Check Your Progress 2

1) \[ \frac{\text{Total No. of live births during a year}}{\text{Total population in the middle of the year}} \times 1000 \]


3) Women are tied down to childbearing and childbearing for the best years of their productive lives. Excessive childbearing affects their health. The bread-winner is unable to provide for a large family and becomes frustrated. The children are often neglected. They may indulge in delinquent behaviour. They are often required to drop out of school, and to start working at an early age. The girl child is denied education and pushed into early marriage and early child-bearing.

#### Check Your Progress 3

i) The term “average expectation of life” or “life expectancy” represents the average number of years of life which babies born in the same year (cohort) may be expected to live according to the mortality conditions prevailing at that time.
ii) Neonatal mortality refers to deaths occurring in the first four weeks of the baby’s life.

iii) a) Mother below 18. b) Parity above 4. c) Interval between births less than one year. d) Low birth weight. e) Lack of ante-natal care. f) Home deliveries conducted in unhygienic conditions. g) Colostrum (first flow of breast milk) not given to the baby.

iv) a) Common childhood diseases not prevented through immunisation. b) Diarrhoea and dehydration. c) Nutritional deficiency.

Check Your Progress 4

i) India is an old country because its history goes back to several centuries. It has a young population in the sense that about 40 per cent of the population is below the age of 15. In a developed country like the United States of America this percentage is only about 22.

ii) The sex ratio in India is not favourable to women mainly because of the low status of women leading to their neglect. The death rates are higher for women than for men in most age groups.

Check Your Progress 5

i) a) Raising the minimum age at marriage. b) Population education in schools. c) Improving the status of women, specially through education. d) Freezing the population figure of 1971 till 2001 in all cases where population is a factor in the sharing of the Central resources with the States. e) Linking Central assistance to the State Plans with the performance of the family welfare programme.

ii) a) Widespread acceptance of family planning. b) Improved performance of the family welfare programme in low performing States, such as, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh etc.

iii) Acceptance of family planning at a lower age and limitation of the family size to two children, whatever the sex composition.
POVERTY AND ITS SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Structure

13.0 Objectives
13.1 Introduction
13.2 Poverty as a Social Problem
13.3 Definition and Approaches to Poverty
   13.3.1 Definition
   13.3.2 Approaches
13.4 Causes of Poverty
   13.4.1 Inequality and Poverty
   13.4.2 Vicious Circle Theory
   13.4.3 Geographical Factors
13.5 Consequences of Poverty
   13.5.1 Poverty and Its Consequences
   13.5.2 Culture of Poverty
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   13.5.4 Inequality of Income Distribution
13.6 Poverty Alleviation Programmes
   13.6.1 The IRDP and Employment Programmes
   13.6.2 Women and Youth and Area Development Programmes
13.7 Let US Sum Up
13.8 Key Words
13.9 Further Readings
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13.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit you should be able to:

● describe poverty as a social problem;
● define poverty;
● explain the causes of poverty;
● discuss poverty and its consequences; and
● explain some poverty alleviation programmes.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last block we talked about social problems pertaining to different types of labour, viz. industrial, rural, women and children. In this block we are going to talk about the problems related to patterns of deprivation and alienation. The first unit of this block has to do with poverty and its social dynamics. In
this unit we define poverty and indicate categories for its measurement. Next we look into the causes of poverty, the vicious circle theory and geographical factors. Next we deal with the consequences of poverty. This includes a coverage of the culture of poverty, poverty in India, and inequality of income distribution. Finally we deal with poverty alleviation programmes which include the IRDP, employment programmes, women and youth area development programmes and urban areas.

13.2 POVERTY AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

There has been poverty in all societies over a long period. However the ‘extent’ of poverty is more in some countries than others. Every society, however, affluent, has people who are poor. In the USA more than 25 million are said to live in poverty (12-15%). It was only in the 60s that there was recognition of the prevalence of poverty. A programme of ‘War on Poverty’ was then started in USA. In England, the Poor Law was passed in 1601 A.D. The law provided for the establishment of a work-house to provide work to those who were without any means to meet their basic needs. The conditions and the pay in the work-house were depressing. However, this an be said to be the beginning of the idea of public assistance to the poor. For example USA an affluent society has poverty too. But by and large these countries prosperous. In India however poverty is a major problem. Thus the concept of poverty is relative. It has been so much with us that not much attention has been paid to it. It was considered a normal aspect of any society. Till recently there has been little sense of social responsibility for dealing with poverty. On the other hand there has been a rationalisation of poverty. The poor were believed to be responsible for their own plight. Unemployment was considered a sign of laziness. The Karma theory suggested poverty was a consequence of wrongs or sins committed in earlier births. When poverty has been voluntary it has been praised by society. In such a case one cannot call it poverty per se because it is part of a saint’s life style. Mahatma Gandhi lived in ‘voluntary poverty’. So did the Buddha. This is different from involuntary poverty where the necessities of life are in very short supply.

In recent times there has been an acceptance of poverty as a social problem. India with the coming of independence has made some efforts to raise the level of income of people living in poverty. In 1960 the concept of poverty line was emphasised by Dandekar and Rath (1971). Specific programmes of poverty alleviation were initiated in the 4th plan.

Systematic study of the poverty is a recent phenomenon. It has been suggested that there were four questions that need to be answered to understand poverty.

i) What is poverty?

ii) What is the extent of poverty?

iii) What are the causes of poverty?

iv) What are the solutions?

To (iii) one may also add what are the consequences of poverty? This unit will look at poverty using these questions as a framework. The effort will be to look at the sociological aspects.
13.3 DEFINITION AND APPROACHES TO POVERTY

In this section we shall be discussing various definitions and approaches to poverty. Let us define poverty first.

13.3.1 Definition

The approach to defining poverty has usually been in economic term – the levels of income, property and living standards. People are said to be poor when their income is such that it does not enable them to meet the basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. The concept of “poverty line” used both in India and USA fixed an income. If people fall below this line, they are considered to be poor. The poverty line is arbitrarily fixed, hence there can be questions about it. Nevertheless, it does provide one way of determining who the poor are. Sometimes, the word “pauperism” is used to denote extreme poverty. It describes a category of people who are unable to maintain themselves. In recent times there are many dimensions that are considered in looking at poverty. It is no longer seen as purely an economic phenomenon. It is now realised that there are sociological, political, psychological and geographical reasons as well as attitudes or value systems that need to be considered to understand poverty.

We suggest that a minimum approach by government in any society which has significant inequality must provide for raising minimum levels not only of incomes but also self-respect and opportunities for social mobility and participation in many forms of decision-making. What is being stated here is that in dealing with poverty one is not only concerned with the income but also with the individual’s political role, opportunities for his children and self-respect. Poverty is not only a condition of economic insufficiency; it is also social and political exclusion. Poverty is therefore to be seen not only merely in economic terms but also in its social and political aspects. The concepts and approaches to poverty have been dealt with in detail in Unit 12 of ESO-02. There we have viewed poverty as a level of living that is so low that it inhibits the physical, mental and social development of human personality. There it has been pointed out that poverty has been with human culture and civilisation since ages. In the beginning of the development of human society human beings were at a low level of social organisation and technological development and that the state of poverty was general in nature, faced by all members of society. In the process of evolution of human society there have been enormous developments in social organisation and technology. However the fruits of this progress have not been equally shared by all sections of society. There have been the rich and there have been the poor.

Thus poverty has been related to the prevailing socio-economic structure of the society. Experts on poverty have broadly used two approaches. First the nutritional approach. Here poverty is measured on the basis of minimum food requirements. Second, the relative deprivation approach. Here poverty is seen in terms of relative deprivation of a section of population against the predeveloped sections. We shall be discussing these matters in detail in our section on the measurement of poverty.
13.3.2 Approaches

There are various approaches for the measurement of poverty. The major factor considered in measuring poverty is income. The question that is asked is, what resources can a particular income command? Does the income allow for obtaining the basic necessities? Consequently, it has also been suggested that the actual intake of food should be the criteria. If an adult person is unable to have a certain number of calories (2,250) a day, he is considered to be poor. The economic aspect usually involves the judgment of basic needs and is mentioned in terms of resources required to maintain health and physical efficiency. Such an approach is now being questioned. Among the basic needs are also include education, security, leisure, recreation. When the resources commanded by average individuals are so low that they are in effect excluded from living patterns, customs and activities of the society, they are said to be living in poverty. Among the ideas which have an objective and dependable measurement of poverty is a concept of PQLI — (Physical quality of live index). The three indicators used in PQLI are life expectancy at age one, infant mortality and literacy. An index number is to be calculated for all countries based on the performance of each country in these areas. The worst performance would be designated by the index number zero and the best performance by 100. In the 70s, the PQLI index for India was 43. Various important studies have been conducted in India for the measurement of poverty. For example, Ojha in his study has used the average calorie intake as the basis for defining poverty. To him, persons who are below the poverty line have an intake of less than 2,250 calories per capita per day. Dandekar and Rath (1971) have estimated the value of the calories (2,250) in terms of 1960-61 prices. They observe that there would be variation in the extent of rural and urban poverty in terms of financial index. Here they suggested that whereas the Planning Commission accepts Rs. 20/- per capita per month or Rs. 240/- per annum as the minimum desirable standard, it would not be fair to use this figure both for rural and urban areas. They suggested a lower minimum of rupees 180/- for the rural population and a higher amount of Rupees 270/- per annum at 1960-61 prices.

i) Absolute Poverty

Absolute poverty refers to the inability of a person or a household to provide even the basic necessities of life. It refers to conditions of acute physical wants, starvation, malnutrition, want of clothing, want of shelter, total lack of medical care. At times “absolute poverty” is also called “subsistence poverty”, since it is based on an assessment of minimum subsistence requirement. Nutrition is measured by intake of calories and proteins, shelter by quality of dwelling and degree of over-crowding, and the rate of infant mortality and the quality of medical facility. With the broadcasting of the definition of poverty it is also suggested that one should go beyond the physical need and also include cultural needs—education, security, leisure and recreation.

It is difficult to fully accept the argument. The nourishment needs of a farm labourer would be different from those of a clerk in an office. Similarly clothing requirements will also differ. If cultural needs are also included then measurements become more complex.
Box 13.01

The growth experienced after 1947 in India has been unparalleled in its own history. However compared to other developing countries it has been a slow and painful process. In the past 40 years mass poverty has also grown. It is not a question of pockets of poverty, but a very large number of people living below the poverty line throughout the country.

The poverty line is often defined as a minimum intake of calories (about 2400) to live and work per day. This measure therefore does not include other subsistence needs such as housing, clothing health and education. It is thus a real minimum.

ii) Relative Poverty

As there are difficulties in accepting “absolute poverty” fully, another term “relative poverty” has been developed. Poverty according to this concept is to be measured according to standards of life at a given time and place. The idea is that standards of society can be changing standards. Definition of poverty should therefore be related to the needs and demands of changing societies. In 1960 those who had a per capita income of Rs.20/- or less per month in rural areas were considered to be below the poverty line. In 1990 those who have an income of less than Rs.122/- per month are considered to be below the poverty line.

The term “relative poverty” also refers to the fact that different societies have different standards, hence it is not possible to have a universal measurement of poverty. Those who are considered poor in USA by their standards, may not be considered so in India.

Check Your Progress 1

i) How do we define poverty? Give your answer in 5-7 lines.

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ii) What is the minimum approach to poverty? Give your answer in 5-7 lines.

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13.4 CAUSES OF POVERTY

The Human Development in South Asia 1999 reveals situation of glaring poverty, inequality and deprivation in South Asia in general and India in particular. According to this report South Asia, with 23% of the world population is the planet’s poorest region. About 540 million people, or 45% of the region’s population, are living below poverty line, with daily income of less than one US dollar. India has the greatest number of the poor people with 53% people living below the poverty in 1999 (i.e. earning less than one US dollar a day. This report also points out that there are dramatic desperation and concentration of wealth and power among the richest members. The highest income earning layer of 20% own 40% of total income in the region while the lowest 20% owns only 10% In India the richest 10% earns 6 times higher than the poorest 10% earns 6 times higher than the poorest 10% of the country.

Poverty has direct linkages with social and economic deprivations. Some indicators of these deprivations are highlighted below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>South Asia</th>
<th>India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deprived to proper sanitary facilities</td>
<td>879 million</td>
<td>661 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deprived of safe drinking water</td>
<td>278 million</td>
<td>178 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Birth death rate per 1,00,000 live birth</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children under 5 years suffering from acute malnutrition</td>
<td>79 million</td>
<td>59 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children not enrolled in Primary Education</td>
<td>50 million</td>
<td>35 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are many causes of poverty and we intend to discuss these in this section and subsequent subsections. First is the nexus between inequality and poverty. Then the vicious circle theory and finally geographical factors.

13.4.1 Inequality and Poverty

Earlier the effort was to study poverty by itself, that is, not relating it to the total conditions of the society. It has been suggested by a British social welfare expert that poverty should not be defined as income insufficiency, but the focus ought to be on the degree in inequality in the distribution of wealth in a society. Inequality is generated by the capitalist economy where wealth is concentrated in the lands of a few according to Marx. These few gain control of the means of producing wealth such as slaves, land and capital. They are able to influence the political process, by which social inequality is managed. Essentially poverty boils down to this fact that some people are poor because others are rich. Since the rich have greater political power than the poor, the government policy tends to favour them. The rich therefore tend to remain rich and the poor tend to remain poor. Marx claimed that all history is a history of class conflict; hence the situation can change only when the poor have greater political influence.
There are others who believe that there are different roles to be performed by members of a society. Some roles required long training, (doctors, engineers, lawyers, physicists etc.) They get higher rewards from the society. Others like vegetable-sellers, sanitation workers, taxi-drivers, typists, receive lower rewards. There is inequality but as it happens to maintain the society, it is considered functional. All these jobs have to be performed to meet the needs of the society.

13.4.2 Vicious Circle Theory

This theory argues that the poor are trapped in circumstances which make it difficult for them to escape poverty. The poor have inadequate diet which makes for low energy and hence poor performance in school and at work. Poor diet also makes them vulnerable to illness. They have poor housing and often have to go long distances for their work. They cannot afford or are not allowed to stay near the place of work. The circumstances combine to make the poor continue to be in poverty. Discussing the problem of poverty in rural areas of India a leading authority in rural development asks the question: “Does the policy in rural development considers integrated rural poverty?” Aspects of which include poverty, physical weakness, vulnerability, isolation, powerlessness. As this theory suggests the poor cannot get over their poverty. But it is difficult to accept such a deterministic view, a view suggesting that they cannot escape poverty. Sometimes this explanation of poverty is called “Situational Theory” in the sense that poor find themselves in a particular situation and have great difficulties in getting out of it, if at all.

13.4.3 Geographical Factors

Poverty is explained at times by the geographical conditions in which people live. The resources are scarce and people are unable to overcome the problems of lack of resources. The desert areas, the hill areas are good examples. In India, certain areas have been designated as drought-prone areas. Survey in these areas indicate that not only that the conditions are poor but in spite of hard work they are unable to overcome the situation.

Neither of these theories by themselves can explain the totality of the phenomena of poverty. They do however provide some analysis and understanding as to why poverty exists.

13.5 CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY

As mentioned earlier the rich have influence to continue to be rich. In them there is a vested interest in the continuance of poverty. Poverty survives in part because it is useful to a number of groups in society. Poverty benefits the non-poor in general and rich and the powerful in particular. There are a number of functions of poverty:

i) Poverty ensures that ‘dirty work will get done, there are many menial jobs that have to be done in society. It is the poor who take up such jobs.

ii) Poverty provides a market for inferior goods and services-second-hand clothes, stale food material, poor houses, and services from unqualified persons.
iii) Poverty facilitates a life style of the affluent. The work done by the cooks, gardeners, washermen, house cleaners etc. enable the upper lasses to lead a life of comfort.

iv) Poverty provides a group that can be made to absorb the political and economic causes of change. Technological development means more unemployment for the unskilled. Building of dams displaces the areas where the canals are built. People with no land get no compensation. Policies which change, when there is a tight budget situation, are the welfare programmes. The rich and often the government itself has a vested interest in the continuation of poverty. As it tends to provide for the maintenance of the stability of the society.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What are the causes of poverty? Give your answer in 5-7 lines.

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2) What are the functions of poverty? Give your answer in 5-7 lines.

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13.5.1 Poverty and its Consequences

Poverty and its consequences are discussed in the subsection below. First there is the culture of poverty which is discussed. We specify this discussion with poverty in India. Finally there is the inequality of income distribution.

13.5.2 Culture of Poverty

In the previous paragraphs discussions has been with regard to the causes of poverty. The structural or the vicious circle theory suggests that poor find it almost impossible to get out of the situation. How do people in such sad conditions manage to live? One explanation is that poverty forces them to develop certain patterns of behaviour enabling them to survive the sordid conditions of poverty. This pattern has been termed ‘Culture of poverty’. The concept was developed by an anthropologist, Oscar Lewis, based on his studies in Mexico. He suggests that the poor develop a culture of their own, or rather
a subculture which is not part of the behaviour pattern or the value system of the society in which they live. Lewis says that the poor tend to be socially isolated. Apart from the family, no matter what other group they belong, their outlook remains narrow. They do not relate themselves to total society in which they live or to the poor in other parts of the country. The individual who grows up in this culture has strong feelings of fatalism, helplessness, dependence and inferiority. Their orientation is to living in present, they hardly think of the future. In brief it can be said that the culture of poverty is both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor in the marginal position. It is an effort to cope with the feeling of hopelessness and despair due to a realisation that it is almost impossible to achieve success according to values of the high societies. Their isolation also means lack of participation in the activities of the society-political, social and economic. There is also a suggestion that children are socialised into such a culture and hence are not willing to make use of opportunities to improve themselves they would feel insecure in a new situation.

There are many criticisms of this concept. One of the questions that is relevant is as to whether the culture of poverty applies to the rural conditions. Lewis develops the concept on the basis of his studies in slum areas. There is some evidence that the poor in rural areas also have developed a subculture, and defense mechanisms. Some feel that the poor do not participate not because of the culture that they have developed but because the larger society in a way prevents their full participation. Participation in social institutions requires certain levels of resources which the poor do not have (for example-participating in religious festivities). Another criticism is that the concept of culture of poverty tends to put the blame on the poor for being poor, rather than holding the social system responsible. Earlier there has been a discussion of how inequality is perpetuated in society. It also suggests that the culture of the poor is a consequence or a result of the poverty rather than the cause of poverty.

Activity 1

Visit the houses of a potter or a washerman or a dishwasher. Ask them regarding whether they have a social circle of friends. Try to find out all you can about the culture of poverty. Write down your findings in two pages and then discuss them with other students in the Study Center.

13.5.3 Poverty in India

There has been a substantial discussion of poverty in India since about 1960 when Dandekar and Rath focused the attention on the number of people who were below the poverty line. At that time they had calculated that if the income per capita per month was less than Rs.20/- the person was said to be below the poverty line. Separate figures are mentioned for rural and urban areas (For Bombay the amount indicated is Rs.200/- per month in 1960). The amount is based on what is needed to buy the required calories of 2400 per person per day. For rural areas, the figure was RS.122/- in 1988.

There are various estimates of the number of people below poverty line in rural areas. In 1977-78 it was estimated that 51% of the rural population (252 millions) were below the poverty line. In 1987-88 it was estimated that about 45% (261 millions) were below the poverty line. Although percentage-wise there is a fall, but in absolute numbers there is an increase as the population has increased. Although there are different estimates, it is generally accepted
that there are substantial number of people living in poverty. (In the urban areas the number of people living in poverty). In the urban areas the number of poor in 1987-88 was estimated 77 million (38%); in 1990, it is estimated that in rural and urban areas together about 350 millions are below the poverty line.

Table 1: Poverty prevalence Ratios by Rural-Urban Location: All India and 14 Major States (1993-4 to 1999-2000) (Percentage of Population Below the Poverty Line)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>39.36</td>
<td>36.35</td>
<td>30.37</td>
<td>28.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>27.97</td>
<td>25.48</td>
<td>35.44</td>
<td>32.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>58.25</td>
<td>61.78</td>
<td>10.13</td>
<td>12.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>64.41</td>
<td>58.85</td>
<td>45.03</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>30.52</td>
<td>14.86</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>13.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>37.73</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>32.41</td>
<td>24.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>33.95</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>31.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>36.93</td>
<td>39.35</td>
<td>46.02</td>
<td>46.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>50.21</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33.52</td>
<td>32.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>59.12</td>
<td>62.67</td>
<td>36.99</td>
<td>34.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>17.61</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>6.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>25.92</td>
<td>15.01</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>24.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>37.27</td>
<td>39.37</td>
<td>37.83</td>
<td>29.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>39.08</td>
<td>29.87</td>
<td>34.23</td>
<td>36.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>54.15</td>
<td>56.16</td>
<td>20.97</td>
<td>16.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: State specific poverty lines for 1993-94 have been adjusted for inflation by reference to the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Laborers (for rural population) and the Consumer Pries Index or Industrial Workers for the urban population.


In recent years there has been a decline in the proportion of people living below the poverty line at the all India level. However, those are several regional variations among the state. Again in some of the state while the extent urban poverty has declined the rural poverty has increased, for example the state of Karnataka, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. However in the case of Haryana, Kerala, while rural poverty has decline urban poverty has marginally increased. In the case of Assam and Madhya Pradesh extent of poverty has in creased both in the rural and in the urban areas.

13.5.4 Inequality of Income Distribution

Income distribution is very unequal. The share of the bottom 20% is 4% of the total income in rural areas whereas the share of the top 10% is 36%. Similarly in urban areas while the share of the bottom 20% is 9% that of the top 10% is
Poverty and its Social Dynamics

42%. The situation is indicative of the wide gap between the rich and the poor. The consumption expenditure also shows the same pattern. While the top 20% of the population accounts for 42% of the consumption, the bottom 20% accounts for about 10%. The pattern of land distribution confirms the wide difference between “haves” and “have not”. About 15% of the cultivators own nearly 50% of the cultivated land whereas 50% own less than 20%. There are questions about the exact figures—-but there is general agreement of the overall pattern of maldistribution of wealth, income and consumption pattern among the people.

The maldistribution of assets leaves at least one-third of the population without effective means of satisfying their basic needs. The net result is that a large number of people lie just below the poverty line or above the poverty line. And a few keep on accumulating assets. Because of such a phenomenon, one wonders whether the gap between the poor and the rich can be bridged. Poverty is the result of unequal distribution of production assets, entitlements and surpluses reinforced by a power structure of closely knit economic, political and bureaucratic forces and vested interests. When discussing the causes of poverty one of the major ones mentioned was inequality. Poverty is therefore not merely an economic phenomenon but also has political and social ramifications.

13.6 POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES

Planning in India has always had some concern about high levels of poverty. The approach in the earlier plan has tended to deal with the problem indirectly i.e. increasing of GNP, land reforms, provision of services, minimum needs programme etc. It is in the 6th plan that a specific poverty alleviation programme was initiated. However, there is recognition that the problem is too deep to be solved by a specific programme. The VIIth Plan documents says “Poverty alleviation programmes have to be viewed in the wider perspective of socio-economic transformation of the country. The present strategy of direct attack on poverty through specific poverty alleviation programmes is justified on account of insufficient percolation of benefits to the poor from overall economic growth. It should be appreciated that the strategy of direct attack on poverty cannot be sustained and would not yield the desired results if the growth of the economy itself is sow and the benefits of such growth are inequitably distributed. The economic betterment of the poorer section can’t be achieved without social transformation involving structural changes, educational development, growth in awareness and changes in outlook, motivation and attitude.

The specific programmes which are described here should therefore be understood in the perspective of the above statement. The programmes that are mentioned here were operative in the VIIth Plan.

13.6.1 The IRDP and Employment Programmes

The Integrated Rural Development Programme was introduced in the late 70s. The main objective of the IRD Programme was to evolve an operational integrated strategy for the purpose-on the one-hand of increasing production and productivity in agriculture and allied sectors based on better use of land, water and light, and on the other of the resources and income development of vulnerable section of the population in Blocks of the country.
The Integration is in terms of bringing various programmes which dealt with specific programmes or areas, together. For example: Small Farmers’ Development, Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers, Drought-Prone Area Programme. The programmes were to help the poorest of the poor i.e. whose household income was less than Rs.4,800/= per year. If the cut off point for the poverty line is Rs.240 p.a. how can this amount represent the poorest of the poor? The specific activities were target group oriented. The programmes of special rise programme, operation flood, programme for handloom, sericulture etc. Steps were to be taken to increase the industries, services and business. The financial assistance consisted of subsidies and loans.

Unemployment is a major factor in poverty. In rural areas, agricultural labour has work available only seasonally. The rate of unemployment has tended to increase. In 1971 about 31/2 million persons were unemployed. In 1983 it has risen to 4.5 million. About 30 million are registered in the Employment Exchange Centre all over the country. Employment Generation is therefore an important programme in meeting the problem of poverty.

Two programmes in these areas were initiated namely, National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGPG). In the later part of the 80s another programme Jawahar Rojgar Yojana was introduced. The NREP was expected to generate 300-400 million mandays per annum. The programme envisaged creation of durable assets such as irrigation canals, social forestry, soil conservation, roads, school buildings, panchayat ghars etc. The RLEGPG was introduced with the objective of improving and expanding employment opportunities for the rural landless. It aimed at providing guarantee of employment for at least one member of every landless household up to 100 days, and also to create durable assets. Housing, and social forestry, were among the activities to be undertaken in these programmes. In the Jawahar Rojgar Yojana the employment was to build community halls, panchayat ghars etc.

Activity 2

Visit a rural area or a slum and try to collect information on the poverty eradication programmes initiated in these areas. Based on your information write a short note of about 20 lines on the impact of poverty eradication programmes in rural/slum areas. If possible, discuss your note with your co-learners at the Study Center.

13.6.2 Women and Youth and Area Development Programmes

The Programme entitled Development of women and child in rural areas was initiated as a Pilot Project in the early 80s. The purpose was to increase their income and also to provide support, services, needed to enable them to take up income generating activities. Employment, education and improvement of health was the focus for improving the status of women. Training for rural youth for self employment was also launched in the beginning of the VIth Plan. The target group was youth between the age of 18-35 from families living below the poverty lines. The number to be trained was 40 per block per annum. Stipends to the selected youth were provided. Efforts were made to provide training relevant to the needs of the geographical areas.
There are areas which are affected adversely because nature has not been bountiful to them, viz. drought-prone areas, desert areas, hill areas etc. The incomes in these areas are subject to great fluctuations. Various programmes have been initiated to help the poverty-stricken people in these areas. In DPAP areas, for example, productive dry land farming, livestock development, sericulture, were among the activities introduced. In the desert areas, the activities included afforestation, animal husbandry, exploitation of ground water etc.

The major emphasis in the urban areas was the environmental improvement of the urban slums. Pre capita assistance of Rs.300/- per month was provided in the infrastructure, roads, payments, water supply etc.

The description of the programmes is very sketchy. The purpose is only to provide a general idea of the approach of the government to meet the problems of poverty. There have been many evaluation studies of these programmes. Most of these are of the view that while there is some improvement in the situation, target set are far from being achieved.

Check Your Progress 3
1) Discuss poverty and its consequences. Use 5-7 lines for your answer.

2) Discribe a poverty alleviation programme. Use 5-7 lines for your answer.

13.7 LET US SUM UP

The unit is divided into various section to provide a conceptual and also a pragmatic view of poverty. Definition of poverty includes how poverty is measured. The causes and consequences of poverty have been described. In the last section of the unit the extent of poverty in India and the policies and programmes to overcome poverty have been briefly mentioned. Solution to problems of poverty needs a multidimensional approach. These are also discussed here.
13.8 KEY WORDS

**Absolute Poverty**: Absolute poverty refers to the inability of a person or a household to provide even the basic necessities of life.

**Area Programme**: There are areas which are not bountiful by nature. Various programmes have been initiated to help poverty-stricken people in these areas.

**Poverty**: This has been defined in many ways—mainly by a poverty line falling below which a person is called poor. Now sociological, psychological and political dimensions are also taken into consideration.

**Relative Poverty**: Poverty according to this concept is to be measured according to the standards of life at a given time and place.

13.9 FURTHER READINGS


13.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Poverty is defined relative to a ‘poverty line’ and if people fall below this line they are considered to be poor. One drawback is that the poverty line is arbitrarily fixed, hence we can question it. However, it does provide a way of determining who the poor are.

2) The minimum approach to poverty is to try to raise to the minimum level all those who are poor. It is to try and raise the self-respect and opportunities for social mobility in many forms of decision-making.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) There are many causes of poverty. The first of these causes is inequality of distribution of wealth in a society. Next is the vicious circle theory where the poor remain poor due to lack of funds. Finally the geographical factors were the area where people are settled is unproductive and hence leads to poverty.

2) There are a number of function of poverty. These are that:
   
i) it ensures menial labour
   
ii) inferior goods and services and purchased and manned by the poor respectively.
   
iii) it facilitates the life cycle of the affluent
   
iv) it produces a group that is made to absorb the political and economic causes of change.
Check Your Progress 3

1) Poverty has several consequences. One of these consequences is the culture of poverty. In such a culture the poor learn to survive in solid conditions of poverty. This subculture is not the same as in the society they live. Further the poor tend to be socially located often living below the poverty line.

2) The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was introduced in the late 1970s. The main objective of the IRD Programme was to increase yields in agriculture and allied areas based on land. It was also to develop the resources and income of vulnerable sections of society.
6.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to explain the meaning of urbanisation and point out some of the major problems which have assumed a massive proportion due to unprecedented rate of urban growth in India. To be more specific, after reading this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning and social dimensions of urbanisation,
- describe “over-urbanisation” and its problems with special reference to the question whether India is really over-urbanised,
- discuss the problems of housing, water supply, transport and environment pollution in urban India,
- examine problem of slums in Indian cities,
In the earlier two units of this block we discussed the social demography and migration in the context of social problems in India. In this unit we shall deal with the important facets of the social problems of the urban areas.

This unit begins with a discussion on the various dimensions of urbanisation, viz., demographic and social. The demographic aspects cover the growth of urban population and cities and metropolitan towns and their recent trends. In the social aspects, we discuss urbanism as a way of life, the primary and secondary urbanisation and the changing social and economic institutions. The social problems of urban areas are discussed in great length in this unit with special reference to the problems of over-urbanisation, housing, water supply, transport, pollution and environmental decay. Problems of slums are also dealt with in this unit. There are various negative social consequences of urbanisation, viz., crime, isolation, maladjustment, etc. These undesirable consequences and measures undertaken to curb these consequences are discussed in this unit. Lastly, we discuss the state policy on urban housing, water supply and sanitation. In this section, we discuss social legislation relating to urban land and housing programmes of slum clearance and urban development in the Five Year Plans.

6.2 URBANISATION : DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

In Unit No.4, Block 1, of ESO-02, we introduced you to the patterns of urbanisation in India. In this unit we shall discuss the social problems associated with the process of urbanisation in contemporary India. Before discussing these problems, let us have an overview of the demographic and social dimensions of urbanisation in India.

6.2.1 Demographic Dimensions

In simple words, the process of urbanisation denotes population growth of the cities and towns. Sociologically, it also denotes the spread of urban way of life to the country-side. Thus, the process of urbanisation has demographic as well as social dimensions. In present times, with the spread of industrialisation, the process of urbanisation has received unprecedented momentum all over the world and more specifically in the third world countries. It is predicated, on the basis of the current rates of urbanisation, that within a few decades the urban population of the third world countries will grow twice that of the present industrialised societies.

i) Growth of Urban Population and Metropolitan Cities

Though India is known as a country of villages the size of her urban population is second largest in the world with 307 million (30.7 crores) of population living in the urban areas. According to 2001 census 30.5% of Indian population
live in the urban areas. Over the years there have been a steady increase in the urban population in India from 17.29% in 1951 to 30.05% in 2001. However, there have been variations in the decennial growth rate of urban population caused by various socio-economic and political factors. The broad picture of urbanisation in India is given in table 1 below:

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Towns (No.)</th>
<th>Cities (UAs with million+ population)</th>
<th>Urban population (million)</th>
<th>Urban population (%of total)</th>
<th>Decennial growth rate of urban population (%)</th>
<th>Decennial growth rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1827</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>228.9</td>
<td>10.84</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1815</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>10.29</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>251.3</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>2072</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>279.0</td>
<td>11.99</td>
<td>19.07</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>2250</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>318.7</td>
<td>13.86</td>
<td>32.04</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2843</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>361.1</td>
<td>17.29</td>
<td>41.34</td>
<td>28.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2365</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>437.2</td>
<td>17.97</td>
<td>25.84</td>
<td>40.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>2590</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>548.2</td>
<td>19.91</td>
<td>38.93</td>
<td>62.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>3378</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>683.3</td>
<td>23.34</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3768</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>844.3</td>
<td>25.72</td>
<td>36.16</td>
<td>141.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1027.0</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>44.25</td>
<td>213.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Census of India* (2001)

In ESO-2, Block 1, you have studied in details the patterns of urbanisation in India. However, for further clarification you would be interested to know that: (a) more than two-third of the urban population live in Urban- Agglomerations (UA), i.e., cities having a population greater than one million (see table 2); (b) the patterns of urbanisation have been very uneven in India (see table 3); (c) though there are several positive sides of urbanisation, the process has been accompanied by several urban problems.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>India/State/Union Territory</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>% of Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>92.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chandigarh</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>88.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>61.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andaman &amp; Nicobar Islands</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>52.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>51.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>43.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lakshadweep</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>43.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daman &amp; Diu</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.057</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>37.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>34.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>33.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.57</td>
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### Table 3

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<th>Name</th>
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<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>Decennial growth rate in 50s(%)</th>
<th>Decennial growth rate in 60s(%)</th>
<th>Decennial growth rate in 70s(%)</th>
<th>Decennial growth rate in 80s(%)</th>
<th>Decennial growth rate in 90s(%)</th>
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<td>Kolkata</td>
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<td>5.98</td>
<td>7.42</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>28.7</td>
<td>28.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agra</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data refers to the entire urban agglomeration around each city except for Jaipur, Ludhiana, Agra and Meerut.

Visakhapatnam has shown the highest rate of growth, i.e., 73.9 per cent followed by Hyderabad (67.9 per cent), Ludhiana (66.7 per cent), Surat (66.0 per cent), Lucknow (65.7 per cent) and Bhopal (55.8 per cent) during 1981-91.

iii) Recent Trends

In brief, the demographic trends reveal that although the proportion of urban population in India is relatively less, yet in terms of absolute numbers, India’s urban population is more than the total population of several developed countries. It is projected that at the beginning of the twenty-first century as many as 32 crores of people will be living in urban centres in India.

The rapid growth of urban population in the third world countries has led to the availability of public utilities becoming scarce. In India, such a situation in big cities has made it very difficult for the local administration to cope with the increasing population and arrive at any enduring solution. In social science, this has led to formulation of the controversial notion of over-urbanisation. In order to ameliorate the fast deteriorating conditions of urban living systematic urban policy and effective measures, urban renewal have become inevitable in India and all other third world countries.

6.2.2 Social Dimensions

The process of urbanisation has to be explained both in demographic and social contexts. In demographic sense, the term “urbanisation” is largely used to explain the process of urban growth. In this sense, it refers to the proportion of a total population living in cities and towns at a given point of time. In sociology, the term urbanisation is also used to denote a distinct way of life, which emerges in cities due to their large, dense and heterogeneous population. Such a life is distinct from the life and activities of the people living in villages. In this section, we shall discuss the social aspects of urbanisation. Let us begin with the formulation of Louis Wirth.

i) Urbanism as a Way of Life

Louis Wirth’s formulation of ‘urbanism as a way of life’ explains that the city, characterised by a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals, gives rise to various kinds of social relationships and patterns of behaviour among the city-dwellers. Further, Louis Wirth also argues that the city effects are wider than city itself. Thus, the city draws the surrounding villages and even remote communities into its orbit. In other words, urbanism as a way of life is not peculiar to city-dwellers alone as the influences of the city (i.e., impact of urbanisation) stretch far behind its administrative boundaries. In brief, urbanisation in its demographic sense refers to the trends of growth of the urban population. In societal context and in its sociological sense it also denotes a distinct way of life typically associated with living in the city and the process of transforming rural ways of life into urban ones.

ii) Primary and Secondary Urbanisation

Robert Redfield and Milton Singer elaborate the role of cities in the light of the impact of urban growth and urbanisation on a culture. They describe the city as a centre of cultural innovation, diffusion and progress. They have classified the process of urbanisation into two categories:
a) Primary urbanisation, and
b) Secondary urbanisation.

According to them, “the trend of primary urbanisation is to coordinate political, economic, educational, intellectual and aesthetic activities to the norms provided by Great Tradition. The process of secondary urbanisation works in the industrial phase of the city, and is characterised by heterogenetic development. Thus, the effects of secondary urbanisation are those of disintegration. They opine that: “the general consequence of secondary urbanisation is the weakening of suppression of the local and traditional cultures by states of mind that are incongruent with those local cultures.” The first type carries forward the regional tradition, and the city becomes its epi-centre, the second type bring external elements to the city.

iii) **Changing Social and Economic Institutions**

Urbanisation has its bearing on social relationships in community living. The relationships of community-living tend to become impersonal, formal, goal-oriented, contractual and transitory. With urbanisation, transformation of economic activities from the agricultural sector to the non-agricultural sector takes place, and the proportion of population engaged in secondary and tertiary sectors of activities increases with division of labour and specialisation of work. Further, the process of urbanisation also leads to breakdown in the functioning of traditional institutions and patterns of behaviour and of social control. It leads to a situation of continuity and change in the sense that the traditional forms often continue to persist, but their functions undergo major re-adaptations in the face of urbanisation. As pointed out by Yogendra Singh, “many new roles, often rational and modern in orientation, are added on to the traditional institutional forms.” In India, the traditional institutions like caste, joint family and neighbourhood, etc., offer ample evidence of such continuity and change in cities.

Urban growth coupled with industrial development induces rural-urban migration whereby the cities of bigger size, offering opportunities of improving life, tend to overflow with the rural migrants. On the one hand, such migration accelerates the pace of urbanisation and, on the other, it creates excessive population pressure on the existing public utilities with the result that cities suffer from the problems of slums, crime, unemployment, urban poverty, pollution, congestion, ill-health and several deviant social activities. In this context, it is essential to know the various facets of over-urbanisation and urban problems in India.

**Check Your Progress 1**

i) According to the 2001 Census, what percentage of the total population live in the urban areas?
   
   a) 17%
   
   b) 27%
   
   c) 30.5%
   
   d) 47%
ii) Who among the following sociologists formulated the concept of ‘urbanism as a way of life’?
   a) Emile Durkheim
   b) Karl Marx
   c) Max Weber
   d) Louis Wirth

iii) In the process of urbanisation, the relationships of community living tend to become ……….
   a) personalised
   b) informalised
   c) goal-oriented
   d) casual

6.3 PROBLEMS OF URBAN AREAS

Many scholars have tried to explain the social problems of urban India in terms of over-urbanisation. It would be interesting to know the meaning and dimensions of urbanisation and their applicability in the Indian context.

6.3.1 Over-urbanisation

Over-urbanisation in one sense implies excessive urbanisation in relation to employment growth. It also means that the urban population has grown to such a large size that the cities fail to ensure a decent way of life to the urban-dwellers on account of excessive population pressure on civic amenities, housing, etc. In the Indian context, the idea of over-urbanisation has been advanced on the grounds that (a) there is an imbalance between the levels of industrialisation and urbanisation in India, (b) the process of urbanisation takes away a lion’s share of resources and, thus, impinges upon the rate of economic growth of society, (c) the availability of civic amenities and facilities is so poor that these have now reached a point of break-down and become almost incapable of bearing further growing urban pressures.

Contrary to the idea of over-urbanisation, several scholars have stressed that India does not suffer from the problem of over-urbanisation. In order to support this argument, it has been pointed out that the trends of industrial-urban growth in India conform to similar trends in as many as 80 per cent of the developing societies. Secondly, it has also been argued that with the rise of urbanisation in India diversification of economy providing for new opportunities of employment have also considerably increased. This has also led to a rise in the levels of the income of the urban-dwellers.

The analysis offered by the Institute of Urban Affairs does not support the idea that rapid urbanisation in India is causing a distortion in the allocation of resources between urban and rural areas, and thereby negatively affecting the pace of economic development. In other words, the urban problems in India are not a result of over-urbanisation but are largely due to lack of effective urban policy governing the patterns of urbanisation. Let us now turn to some of the major problems of urbanisation in India.
6.3.2 Inadequate Housing

The rapid growth of population in cities has given rise to numerous social problems among which the problem of housing is the most distressing. In fact, a vast majority of urban population live under conditions of poor shelter and in highly congested spaces. It is estimated that nearly 70 per cent of population in big cities live in sub-standard houses, which they call their homes. Special mention may be made here of the old houses, which are deteriorating in the sense that they are unserved, overcrowded and dilapidated. Usually, such decaying houses are found in the middle of most of the cities. Similarly, there are hundreds of such people who are living in cities as pavement-dwellers, without any kind of shelter at all.

Problems of Urbanisation

The available statistics show that in India more than half of the urban households occupy a single room, with an average occupancy per room of 4.4 persons. In Greater Bombay, as many as 77 per cent of the households with an average of 5.3 persons live in one room, and many others are forced to sleep on the pavements at night. The conditions of other big cities and others are forced to sleep on the pavements at night. The conditions of other big cities and
industrially growing towns are believed to be equally disturbing. It is estimated that more than 3 lakh persons in Delhi are without a shelter of their own.

In order to solve the problem of urban housing, systematic efforts are being made through various programmes of urban development. Among these efforts, special mention may be made of the schemes of subsidised housing for economically weaker sections and the schemes of slum-clearance and improvement. These schemes are relevant and beneficial to the urban poor.

6.3.3 Unsafe and Insufficient Water Supply

Availability of water for domestic use constitutes one of the basic civic amenities. Unfortunately, in the cities of the third world countries including India there are only a few urban dwellers, who enjoy this amenity on a regular and satisfactory basis. Nearly 30 per cent of the urban population in India is deprived of safe drinking water facility. Largely, the municipal pipes and handpumps are the major sources of procuring water in towns and cities. But in most of the cities, specially the rapidly growing ones, the slum-dwellers have to suffer acute problems in procuring water for domestic use. Several systematic studies have brought out the plight of the slum-dwellers in this regard. Not only have they to wait for long hours at the water-tap but many a times fights and unpleasant disputes for the sake of drinking water arise owning to the heavy rush of the slum-dwellers to procure water before it stops running through the water tap every day. In some cases, it was found that more than a hundred families depended exclusively on one water tap. The problem of regular water supply in smaller cities and towns too is assuming an acute form with rapid and unmanageable stream of urbanisation.

6.3.4 Inefficient and Inadequate Transport

The lack of efficient transport facility is yet another major problem which has become, almost in all big cities, a headache for the local authorities. In fact, an efficient and well-knit network of transport facilities is essentially required for the movements of the city-dwellers between their residence and place of work and to the central business area. It also facilitates the movements of the daily commuters, who depend upon the city for their earning without living there permanently. The narrow roads and streets, their poor conditions, on the one hand, and, on the other, numerous vehicles, public-buses, rickshaws, two-wheelers, cars, bullock-carts, trucks and bicycles, all plying together create a unique scene of traffic congestion and traffic jams practically in every part of the city, more so in the central business area and other important zones of the city. The problem of transport in the wake of rapid urbanisation has become so serious that any effort to check it hardly yields a permanent solution. In the old and pre-industrial areas of the city, narrow roads and still narrower residential streets hardly offer any scope for efficient transport facilities. Moreover, whatever little transport network is seen in the cities, that too has become a major source of environmental pollution due to traffic jams and poor conditions of vehicles.

6.3.5 Pollution

The recent trends of industrial urban growth in India and several third world countries have created a very serious problem of pollution threatening the health and happiness of human beings. The problem of pollution is so different from many other problems that common people hardly comprehend its seriousness although everyone slowly and continuously becomes the victim of ill-effects.
Margaret Mead observed that pollution is one of the greatest problems by modern industrial urban civilisation.

The problem of pollution is becoming increasingly acute with the rise of urbanisation on account of the following reasons:

a) Indiscriminate growth of industrial and chemical plants in spite of the efforts through legal measures to check such growth.

b) Pre-industrial structure of cities with narrow streets and roads, which have become defective and inefficient in regulating traffic.

c) High-rise buildings, representing vertical growth of cities, ultimately causing high density of population, congestion on roads and pollution.

d) Lack of effective and systematic use pattern on account of scarce land and its commercial speculation.

Today, in India, Bombay (now Mumbai) and Calcutta (now Kolkata) belong to the category of world’s very densely populated cities. The situation of other class I cities is also equally worse. Some years ago, R.S. Kamat carried out a study in Bombay with a view to compare the health of 4000 persons living in the Chembur and Lalbaugh areas of pollution with posh areas of Khar. He found that the inhabitants of the Chembur and Lalbaugh areas had shown high incidence of diseases like asthma, allergy, T.B., burning of eyes and cancer, etc., whereas the inhabitants of the Khar area showed much less. Similarly, under the auspices of K.E.M. Hospital, Bombay, a study was conducted a few years ago. It revealed that nearly 16 per cent of the textile workers in Bombay were suffering from respiratory diseases. In Calcutta, it was found that almost 60 per cent of the population was suffering from respiratory problems due to polluted environment. One of the studies on slums in Kanpur has revealed that more than 55 per cent children were suffering from T.B., because of dirt, filth and pollution in and around slums. Laster Brown, Cristopher Flavin and their colleagues in the World Watch Institute, based in Washington D.C. and engaged in environmental research, have recently said that air pollution has assumed such alarming proportions in several cities and rural areas around the world that merely breathing the air in Bombay is now equivalent to smoking ten cigarettes a day.

One of the greatest sources of pollution in cities is ever-increasing traffic. The vehicles plying on the congested roads release smoke, carbondioxide, nitrogen oxide, hydrocarbon, aldehydes and leadoxide, etc. J.N. Dae of Jawaharlal Nehru University conducted a study in Bombay and Delhi, and found that the means of transportation plying in these metropolises released 70 per cent carbon monoxide, 40 per cent hydrocarbon and 30 to 40 per cent other pollutants along with smoke and fumes, causing serious environmental pollution affecting the health of the city-dwellers. According to the report of the National Policy Committee of the Planning Commission (1978), there were more than nine lakhs and 50 thousand vehicles in the four metropolises – Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Madras (now Chennai). This figure has possibly reached to over 20 lakh vehicles by now. In addition to all these vehicles, the industries, factories, slums, and the high density of population are equally responsible sources is also found as a major source of pollution. The availability of liquid petroleum gas has not yet reached a large section of the population, hence, a majority of people still depend upon traditional fuel for cooking purposes. It is estimated that till the end of 1988 the facility of LPG become available only in 805 urban centres covering about 11 million households.
Do You Know 1

Availability of Electricity, Safe Drinking Water, Sanitation and Health Infrastructure (1997-98)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of facility</th>
<th>Percentage of households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe drinking water</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity and safe drinking water</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe drinking water and toilet</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity and toilet</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the three facilities</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the three facilities</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beds per 10,000 population in Public hospitals</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Do You Know 2

Air Pollution Levels in various Cities 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Total suspended Particulates (Micro-grammes per cubic metre)</th>
<th>Sulfur dioxide (micro-grammes per cubic metre)</th>
<th>Nitrogen dioxide (micro-grammes per cubic metre)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmedabad</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangalore</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanpur</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucknow</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumbai</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagpur</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pune</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do You Know 3

Delhi Slums - the Reality

Delhi has seen a swelling of its population from 2 million in 1947 to over 13 million today. The government has been unable to meet the infrastructure and social challenges that have arisen from this growth, and shanty towns have emerged as a response. For those living in shanties the outlook is bleak. Record show:

1. 1500 shanty colonies in Delhi over 3 million people.
2. The average population density in a shanty town is 300,000 people per square kilometer.
3. An average dwelling houses 6-8 people, yet measures 6ft (2mt) 8ft (2.5 mt).
4. The under-five mortality rate is 149 per 1000 live births.
5. 1 water pump on average serves 1000 people.
6. Many slums have no facilities. Where latrines are provided, the average is 1 latrine per 27 households.
7. 40 per cent of children are severely malnourished in Delhi, about 40,000 children are labourers, 30,000 assist in shops, another 30,000 work in teashops and 20,000 in auto repair shops.
8. 100,000 children are part-time or full-time domestic helps.
9. 75 per cent of men and 90 per cent of women living in shanties are illiterate.

Source: <http://www.asha-india.org/slumsreality.asp>

6.3.6 Environmental Decay

Added to all these demographic and technological sources of pollution, the human factor involved in causing environmental decay needs attention. The apathy of the city-dwellers and industrialists towards cleanliness of the environment, lack of seriousness on the part of local civic authorities in maintaining environmental standards, stronghold of the vested interest groups on available land, poor maintenance of public utilities, such as, latrines, drainage, dustbins, water-taps and bathrooms, etc., contribute to the environmental pollution so much that many parts of the city become the living examples of dirt and filth. At times, it is seen that even the hospitals and gardens are also very poorly maintained from the standpoint of cleanliness. With the ever-increasing pace of urbanisation and resultant population pressure on the available land and public utilities the environmental pollution in cities has now become a great challenge to the health and happiness of the urban people. The fast deteriorating conditions of urban living can only be ameliorated through systematic programmes flowing from a well-conceived and effective rational policy on environment as well as emergence of a serious awareness among the city dwellers and commuters for pollution control.
Check Your Progress 3

i) What are the major features of over-urbanisation in India? Answer in about six lines.

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ii) Write a short note, in about six lines, on the housing problems in the Indian urban areas.

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iii) What are the main reasons for the increase in the pollution problems in urban areas?

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6.4 PROBLEMS OF SLUMS

In the wake of rapid urbanisation, slums in cities have become an almost inevitable and necessary evil.

6.4.1 Slum Population

The figures relating to urban population living in slums are not accurately available, nevertheless it is commonly accepted that nearly one-fifth of the total urban population in India lies in slums. According to the statistics provided by the Seventh Plan document, nearly 10 per cent (or 3 crore of the total 16 crore) of the urban population in India live in slums. The Task Force on Housing and Urban Development, appointed by the Planning Commission of India, estimated nearly 23 per cent or over 3 crore 60 lakh persons as the urban slum-
dwellers in India. The proportion of the slum-dwellers increase with the size of the urban population. Cities with less than one lakh population have 17.5 per cent; cities with the population between one lakh and ten lakhs have 21.5 per cent, and cities having more than ten lakhs of population have 35.5 per cent slum-dwellers in the total population. In the case of Calcutta and Bombay, it is estimated that 43.86 lakhs and 41.26 lakhs, respectively lived in slums, in the year 1990. The four metropolitan centres, Calcutta, Bombay Delhi and Madras, have around 50 per cent of the total population living in slums by now. A similar situation prevails in African and Latin American countries.

6.4.2 Emergence of Slums

The National Institute of Urban Affairs, New Delhi, has recorded that the emergence of slums is essentially the product of three forces:

a) demographic dynamism of a city attracting more people from the rural areas offering greater potential for employment;

b) its incapacity to meet the rising demand for housing; and

c) the existing urban land policies, which prohibit the access of the poor to the urban land market.

It is further observed that the urban poor are left with no choice but to make or take shelter illegally on any available piece of land. Sometimes a slum is the consequence of blight in the old parts of the city. At times, a slum is inherited in the form of an old village or a haphazardly growing locality within the extended territorial limits of a town.

The magnitude of the problem of slums is alarming. The Government of India, for purposes of the implementation of various schemes relating to urban development, has defined a slum area as follows: “A slum area means any area where such dwellings predominate, which by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement and design of buildings, narrowness and faulty arrangement of street, lack of ventilation, lack of sanitation facilities, inadequacy of open spaces and community facilities or any combination of these factors, are detrimental to safety, health or morale.” These slum areas are also referred to as the ‘blighted area’; ‘renewal area’; ‘deteriorated area’, ‘gray area’; ‘lower class neighbourhood’; ‘lower income area’; etc. In India, these areas are also known as ‘Jeropadpatti’; Juggi Jhounpadi’; ‘Bastee’; ‘Akatas’ and ‘Cherri’, in regional vocabularies.

Michael Harington says that in the face of rapid industrial-urban growth in the technologically advanced and capitalistic country like the United States of America also there are such slums, which at times are referred to as the ‘other America’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1: Characteristics of Slums</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The physical aspects and general conditions of the slums are by and large the same everywhere. The foremost characteristics of slums can be briefly enumerated in the following manner:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Dilapidated and poor houses in slums are made of poor design and scrap materials. These are often raised on unauthorised land.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2) High density of population and housing leads to over-crowding and congestion; one room is often used for all practical purposes of domesticating living. In Bombay and in many other big cities, it can be seen that in the slum areas one room tenement with 100 sq.f. to 150 sq.f. of space is occupied by more than 10 persons.

3) Lack of public utilities and facilities, such as, drainage, sanitation, water taps, electric light, health centres, common latrines and public parks, etc., are widely observable characteristics of slums.

4) The slum-dwellers are functionally integrated with the mainstream of the city life, yet the high incidence of deviant behaviour such as crime, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, drug use, beggary, illegitimacy, illicit distilling of liquor, gambling and other social evils are associated with slum areas. It does not mean that all those residing in slums are necessarily associated with such deviant behaviour. The slum areas, socially and physically provide greater opportunity for such kinds of deviant behaviour.

5) Slums have a culture of their own, which Marshall Clinard has termed as ‘a way of life’. It is said to be largely a synthesis of the culture of the lower class and of that which Lewis has referred to as the ‘culture of poverty’.

6) Though the slum-dwellers are functionally integrated to the city life, apathy and social isolation characterise a slum. It means that largely slums are subject to neglect and apathy of the larger community. These areas are looked down upon and considered inferior. Such a reaction from the larger community renders slums into social isolation, detached from the city as a whole. Under these circumstances, the slum-dwellers find it almost impossible to improve these conditions through their own efforts.

Slums are dilapidated and overcrowded areas with lack of adequate public utilities, yet their existence in the city does serve a purpose, especially for the urban poor and migrants coming for some job opportunities in the city. It is in slums that poor people like industrial workers, casual labourers, hawkers, petty shopkeepers, vegetable-sellers and several others offering useful services to the city find a place to stay. These poor people belonging to different castes, religions, regions and languages live together even amidst extreme poor conditions. At times, these slums play a very vital role in orienting the new migrants to the city environment. In other words, the slum-dwellers, by providing social comfort and support to the new migrants, help them to adjust to the conditions of city-living and finally integrate themselves with the mainstream of city life.

In India, the slums are usually classified into the following three categories: (1) the old building which have become dilapidated and deteriorated in course of time; (2) the slums which are characterised by poor and inadequate housing conditions, constructed legally around mills and factories, (3) the slums which illegally come up in different parts of the city through unauthorised occupation of open land.

Activity 1
Visit a slum area, preferably of your home town. Try to find out, either through observation or through interaction, the major problems faced by these slum-dwellers. After the collection of information is over, try to develop a note on the ‘Problems of Slum-dwellers in My Home Town’ in about two pages. If possible, discuss your note with the coordinator and the co-learners of your Study Centre.
6.5 SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES – CRIME, ISOLATION AND MALADJUSTMENT

The rapid urbanisation over the last few decades in India (and elsewhere in the third world countries) has latently led to rise in several problems. In fact, in the modern developed societies, these problems came into existence since the emergence of industrialisation during the 18th century. Today, the developing societies are acquiring the characteristics of the developed societies even in crime, juvenile delinquency, rape, murder, prostitution, gambling, suicide and alcoholism. Moreover, the unprecedented pace of urbanization, causing high density of population and conditions of urban anonymity, have given rise to socio-psychological problems of adjustment, especially in the case of the migrants to the city of their destination. Here, we shall briefly look into the problems of crime, isolation and maladjustment.

6.5.1 Crime

The metropolises and the big cities provide greater environmental opportunities for committing crimes and acts of juvenile delinquency. The rate of crime is very high in cities compared to the rural and tribal areas. With the rise of urbanisation, the rate of crime gets further accentuated as the opportunities of success through socially legitimate means remain scarce as against the number of aspirants. Moreover, urban anonymity in a way encourages resorting to unlawful activities, as the traditional agencies of social control and law and order become noticeably weak. Under these conditions of urban living, crimes such as theft, burglary, kidnapping and abduction, murder, rape, cheating, criminal breach of trust, gambling, prostitution, alcoholism and counterfeiting, etc., have become almost routine affairs in most cities, especially the “million” cities. Further, in all big cities the criminal gangs indulging in organised crimes have become a grave social problem. These criminal gangs have their network stretching beyond a given city, spread over more than one city. At times, these gangs are so resourceful that, even when caught by the police, they easily succeed in escaping punishment.

Modern research points out that the great amount of crime in modern urban centers reflects the inability of the urban community to integrate all its members and to control those who resist integration. Crime and city are thus casually connected. Scholars pointed out that the urbanisation of rural areas and an increase in crime go hand in hand. Several years ago it was found that among the rural areas and an increase in crime go hand in hand. Several years ago it was found that among the rural inmates in an Iowa performatory in the USA characteristics associated with an urban way of life played a significant role in their criminal behaviour.

Compared to western societies, the rate of crime in urban India is low; nevertheless, the problem of crime is becoming grave in all big cities in India. The most significant reasons for this deteriorating situation lie in an unprecedented rate of population growth of these cities, widespread economic insecurities, and decline in the management of law and order. In 1974, out of the total crimes reported all over the country, more than 12 per cent crimes were committed in eight big cities – Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Kanpur, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Bangalore. The accompanying table shows some
details about the crimes reported under the Indian Penal Code in the eight major cities, in 1979.

**The Crime reported in eight Indian cities under IPC in 1979**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Number of Crimes</th>
<th>Rate of crime per lakh &amp; population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmedabad</td>
<td>7,178</td>
<td>345.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangalore</td>
<td>24,693</td>
<td>1240.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>36,417</td>
<td>447.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>13,103</td>
<td>391.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>41,516</td>
<td>784.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>7,359</td>
<td>336.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanpur</td>
<td>7,192</td>
<td>496.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>8,843</td>
<td>264.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,46,301</strong></td>
<td><strong>526.1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The national capital, Delhi, continued to be the crime capital of the country, recording a crime rate that is more than double the national average among the metropolitan cities. During 2002, Delhi’s crime rate was put at 385.8 per lakh of population, much higher than the national average of 172.3.

While the crime rate of Chennai stood at 113.5 per lakh of population, Kolkata reported at an even lower rate of 90.6 and Mumbai at 177 was slightly above the national average.

The highest crime rate among large urban centres was reported in Bhopal (740.9), followed by Vijayawada at 666, Indore 626 and Jaipur 524.

**Activity 2**

Read any national daily for at least 30 days to classify the crimes reported from various cities in India.

In Western societies, the unskilled labour is identified with the ‘blue collar’ shirts and the office-going people with the ‘white collar’. Generally, people think that the ‘blue collar’ has close links with crime. It has, however, been found that wrong behaviour is not limited to this group, and even persons associated with clean dress commit objectionable behaviour that at times goes unnoticed. The white-collar crimes, which are committed largely by violating the rules and regulations of trade, business or profession during the conduct of these activities also become widespread, especially in cities which are the victims of rapid urbanisation. Usually, individuals and groups resorting to the white-collar crimes enjoy power, prestige and clandestine relations with the authorities due to their professional or business activities. On account of such social connections, many among them find it easier to escape punishment even if the consequences of their unlawful activities are grave in the larger interests of society.
6.5.2 Isolation

Social interaction with others is a basis of all forms of social relationships and social groupings. It plays a very vital and meaningful role in all forms of social life: rural, urban or tribal. In smaller communities, such interactions in different aspects of life provide for personal and intimate social relationships, whereas in the cities due to the large, and heterogeneous population, the possibilities of such relationships are considerably minimised. With the rise of urbanisation, a city-dweller, while living amidst a sea of fellow city-dwellers, is detached from them socially. In other words, a city-dweller is physically in proximity with others in different walks of life, but socially he is under conditions of relative isolation, if not absolute isolation. Socially, isolated persons are rarely found in village communities. In the city, people are usually unable to make intimate and emotionally strong relationships. This tendency goes on increasing as the city grows in the face of rapid population growth. Older people, the migrants who are still strangers in the city, people who are unable to get along with others, socially rejected persons and persons who do not find people of their liking often feel acute isolation even amidst thousands of the urban-dwellers.

The rapid growth of urban population leads to greater divisions of labour and specialisation of work which, in turn, creates interdependence among individuals participating in a given economic activity. Such an interdependence is partial and restricted only up to the fulfillment of a given fraction or a portion of the total activity. Thus, there is extremely limited scope for sharing a totality of experiences and social life. The heterogeneity of population, especially in matters of social status, caste, class, religion, income, occupation, etc., creates partial isolation under which, as K. Dais says, integrity of particular groups is reinforced by maintaining social distance (avoidance) toward other groups. Residential segregation is one of the manifestations of partial isolation in cities.

In a broad perspective, Kingsley Davis observes that partial isolation, whatever its specific form, tends to be associated with the individuals positions and to be expressed in the rights and duties of these positions. It implies that between individuals of different status there is a difference of ends. It is, therefore, one of the means by which societies are organised. Some mutual avoidance, social distance, and ethnocentrism emerge. A similar, by and large, prevails in the face of rapid urbanisation.

6.5.3 Maladjustment

The process of urbanisation adds to the complexities of city-life. It generates and strengthens the forces of social change, leading to new social reality and inevitable pressures of conformity. As the process of urbanisation accelerates, the city life tends to be rapidly characterised by cultural diversities, socio-economic inequalities, competition, conflict and several other manifestations of complexities of social reality. The fact of social mobility also affects the life of the city-dwellers. In a way, all these social forces impose a functional adjustment on the part of the city-dwellers to lead a peaceful and fuller life. However, all the city-dwellers are not fortunate enough to satisfactorily adjust to the diverse challenges of a growing city. For example, in the field of economic activities, even in a rapidly growing city, the number of opportunities for successful adjustment are smaller than the number of competitors. In such a
situation, several among those, who are the losers, fail to suitably adjust to the reality, and become victims of frustration, inferiority complex and loss of a meaningful integration with the totality of city-life. All such failures give rise to the problem of maladjustment. Similarly, even among the successful ones, many fail to conform to the new situations, and become maladjusted.

The problem of maladjustment becomes all the more acute in the case of those city-dwellers, who are relatively recent migrants. They, in fact, present cases of “Marginal Man” – a concept developed by Robert E. Park and later elaborated upon by Everett V. Stonequist. The marginal-man, in simple words, is said to be one who is in the process of changing from one culture to another. Some scholars have also used the term “transitional man” in the sense that the individual in question is in the process of assimilation with the culture of the place of his destination. Further, a marginal man suffers from the problems of maladjustment precisely because he feels lost amidst the pressures of two cultures, as he cannot completely change from one cultural system to another. On the one hand, he tends to retain some traits of his cultural past and, at the same time, he is forced to acquire the traits of new culture. In such a situation, he experiences internal conflicts, intense anxiety and socio-psychological tensions, which often tend to enhance the incidence of maladjustment.

Apart from these adverse consequences of urbanisation, it is also found that various forms of social disorganisation are associated with the rapid growth of cities. Special mention may be made here of family, kinship and community disorganisation endangering the cohesive and integrated social life. These forms of social disorganisation are reflected through the disruption of mutually expected roles and obligations in the wake of unequal rates of social change in different aspects of city-life. In the case of the family, the increasing rate of divorce and break down of jointness in the joint-family are indicative of dissociative and break down of jointness in the joint-family are indicative of dissociative implications of urbanisation. The withering away of kinship obligations provide similar examples. In like manner, the enormous expansion of the city area and the increasing pressure of its heterogeneous population raise several problems and lessens the normative integration of the city. The net result, as observed by William Foot Whyte, is that a large, heterogeneous, and widely dispersed population faces many new problems for which solutions do not exist in the culture of that society.

6.5.4 Efforts to Curb Undesirable Consequences

The increasing proportion of these evil consequences of urbanisation has led to some systematic efforts for effectively curbing their incidence. These efforts include legislative measures for the removal of urban poverty and unemployment as well as measures of slum clearance and urban community development programmes. From the Sixth Five Year Plan onwards, special attention is being paid to the socio-economic development of small towns and cities to divert the flow of the rural migrants. It is hoped that, with the rise of new opportunities of employment in towns and small cities, the metropolitan centres will be relieved of further increase in the pressure of excessive population, which has by now made it almost impossible for the civic authorities to ensure efficient and adequate supply of public utilities to the citizens.

In addition to these planned efforts, social legislation relating to suppression of immoral traffic in women and girls, prevention of beggary, prevention of
alcoholism and drug abuses, correctional programmes for criminals and juvenile delinquents, and rehabilitation schemes for deviant persons under the programmes of social defence are equally significant steps taken towards the amelioration of these problems of urban living. In Section 6.7, you will come to know about the policy of the State specifically addressed to the solution of several urban problems so as to make urban living a decent way of life.

Check Your Progress 3

Tick the correct answer.

i) Crime is usually
   a) Higher in rural than in urban areas
   b) Higher in big cities than in rural areas
   c) Similar in rural and urban areas
   d) Lower in metropolitan cities than in small towns

ii) Compared to the Western societies, the crime rate in urban India is
   a) high
   b) low
   c) no different

iii) Tick the correct statements
   a) A city-dweller is usually socially far detached from his fellow city-dwellers while living in the sea of humanity.
   b) Socially isolated persons are often found in villages.
   c) A city-dweller is usually unable to make intimate and emotionally strong relationship with his fellow dwellers.
   d) Rapid growth of urban population leads to greater division of labour.

iv) The concept of the marginal-man is developed by
   a) Robert E. Park
   b) Robert Redfield.
   c) Louis Wirth.
   d) Louis Dumont

6.6 STATE POLICY ON URBAN PROBLEMS

In India, it is now recognised that urbanisation is not a trivial aspect of the processes of economic development and social change. This has led to a demand that there ought to be a national policy statement on urbanisation, as it is true in matters of industrial development, population growth, and education. Several reasons account for the lack of national policy on urbanisation, foremost among which have been the issues of overwhelming concern for self-sufficiency of villages and the inclusion of urbanisation in the state subjects of our Constitution. However, in our efforts of planned development, the five year plans do reflect the general policies being followed for the management of the urban problems, which are assuming massive proportion due to unprecedented rise in the rate of urbanisation. It should be noted here that, by and large, the
emphasis of these efforts has been towards the amelioration of the conditions of the poor and the lower income groups. A brief appraisal of the efforts to solve the problem of housing, sanitation and water supply, along with several other problems of urban development, is presented here.

We have seen that one of the grave problems of urbanisation has been acute shortage of housing facilities in cities. This problem has reached almost a breaking point in the case of the metropolitan cities. In order to meet this problem, planned efforts are made in the following two directions:

- Social legislations relating to urban land and housing;
- Programmes of slum clearance and construction of new houses.

Let us see what has been done under these heads to solve the problem of urban housing.

### 6.6.1 Social Legislation Relating to Urban Land and Housing

The Constitution gives the fundamental right of the freedom of movement to every citizen of India, but does not guarantee the right of housing to either the urban-dwellers or the village people. In our Constitution the responsibility of urban development and related welfare programmes has been assigned to the state governments. The social legislation governing rent and sale of land and houses include the following two important enactments:

1. Rent Control Act (RCA), 1948, and

#### i) The Rent Control Act, 1948

The Rent Control Act was enacted with a view to control and regulate the rent of the houses. It was first enacted in the then Bombay State, in 1948, and later on in several other states. The Rent Control Act also protects the tenants from the atrocities of the house-owner, especially in the sense that the owner of a house can neither force the tenant to vacate house, nor can he raise the rent of the house at his own will. Further, the Rent Control Act also imposes the responsibility of repairs of the house on the owner rather than on the tenant living in it.

Systematic studies evaluating the impact of the Rent Control Act have revealed that the Act has not been able to bring about a solution to the problem of urban housing in the desired direction. Kiran Wadhava’s study reveals that the said Act has hardly been able to make any noticeable progress in solving the problem of urban housing, and its need continues to be equally significant even today. In fact, there have been some latent consequences of this Act, adding to the already acute problem of housing. The owners are now not eager to rent out the house, as it will never come back in their possession due to the conditions of the Rent Control Act. Similarly, now people do not like to build houses with a view to earn rent. All such calculations ultimately add to the scarcity of houses. It is also observed that the owners hardly show any interest in the repair of houses, which have already been rented out, simply because all such expenses are finally going to be a burden on them alone, without any possibility of raising the rent. Owing to such apathetic attitude of the owners towards
timely repairs, a large number of buildings in cities have deteriorated and become dangerous for living.

The ill-effects of the Rent Control Act are not systematically recognised and in order to put a curb on such effects the Ministry of Urban Development has taken some serious steps. In 1987, The National Commission on Urbanisation was appointed under the auspices of the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India. The Commission also went into the details of the Rent Control Act, and recognised the seriousness of the adverse effects of the Act. In its interim report, the National Commission on Urbanisation made several recommendations relating to the amendments in the terms and conditions of the existing Rent Control Act relating (1) the continuation of the protection of the interests of the existing tenants, (2) the inclusion of the possibility of raising rent, (3) the separation of the rules the regulations of renting houses for commercial purposes from houses to be rented for residential purposes, (4) the provisions of providing incentives to build new houses, etc. It is believed that the inclusion of these amendments, while not necessarily solving the acute problem that has been growing over the years, will certainly lessen the adverse effects of the existing Rent Control Act.

ii) Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act , 1976

The second important step relating to the management of urban land is the enactment of the Urban Land Ceiling Act of 1976. This Act has the following three fundamental objectives:

a) Redistribution of land,

b) Prevention of speculation in land, and

c) Regulation of construction on vacant land.

Under the provisions of this Act, the excess land, i.e., land excluding the prescribed size of the available plot, can be procured by the local authorities or the state government for wider public interests. Usually, the excess land under this Act is procured for the construction of houses for the urban poor and the low income groups. Moreover, this Act imposes restrictions on the sale of excess land so as to curb speculation in urban land.

Critics have pointed out that despite the existence of this Act the prices of land in every city have reached far beyond the capacity of common-man and speculation in land is flourishing almost unchecked. Moreover, the land procured for construction of houses for the urban poor and other public utilities is also negligible in size. In several cases, the owners of excess land have been successful in escaping the demands of the Land Ceiling Act through corrupt practices and use of their political connections.

6.6.2 Programmes of Slum Clearance and Construction of New Houses

We have seen that, in the face of rapid urban growth, a large section of urban population is living in slums and suffering from acute shortage of houses, water-supply, sanitation and other public facilities. These urban problems have assumed massive proportion, warranting social legislation and special attention in our national planning. Following from these efforts, one of significant
programmes is the slum clearance scheme and programme of construction of new houses for the urban poor and the low income groups. Under this scheme, low cost houses, equipped with latrine, bathroom, water-tap, sanitation and drainage facilities, are made available to the poor people, who can afford to pay a token amount as rent from their meagre earnings. Moreover, under the scheme of slum clearance an entire area inhabited by economically and socially weaker sections is provided with these common utilities to be shared by all. These programmes under the slum clearance scheme are subsidised to provide assistance to the state governments for construction of one crore and 40 lakh new houses at the rate of Rs.5000 per house for the benefit of the urban poor and the low and middle income groups. In addition, the state governments and the local bodies of the cities also provide necessary funds for execution of such projects. It should, however, be noted that the voluntary agencies have still lagged behind in taking up the activities of slum clearance and construction of houses for the poor people.

The following schemes have been executed in several cities with financial and other support from the state governments and local bodies for the construction of new houses:

a) In 1952, a scheme for the construction of houses for the industrial workers came into existence.

b) A scheme was introduced, in 1954, for the construction of houses for the low income groups.

c) Since the implementation of the Second Five Year Plan (1956), the scheme of slum clearance and improvement came into existence on a regular basis.

d) The Life Insurance Corporation of India started giving loans since the Second Five Year Plan to the middle-income groups for the construction of houses.

e) Since the Fifth Five Year Plan, the programme of building houses for the higher-income groups were taken on hand with the objective that profit earned through such projects will be diverted for the construction of houses for the urban poor and the low-income groups. Special instructions were issued to the Housing Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) in this respect.

However, systematic studies have revealed that most of the advantages of these schemes have been taken away by the middle and high income groups. The plight of the urban-poor has more or less remained the same.

One of the greatest obstacles in effective implementation of the slum-clearance programme has been lack of adequate funds. The issue received significant attention in the Seventh Five Year Plan. It led to the establishment of a National Housing Bank (NHB) with an assistance of Rs.100 crores from the Central government. It is proposed that the following shall be the objective of the National Housing Bank:

1) To provide a national body for financing the programmes only for the construction of houses.

2) To raise the sources for procuring finance for the construction of houses and make effective use of all such sources.
3) To raise financial institutions at local and regional levels for advancing loans for construction of houses and institutions giving loans for other purposes.

4) To establish meaningful links between financial institutions advancing loans for construction of houses and institutions giving loans for other purposes.

All these efforts are made with a hope that conditions of the slum-dwellers and the urban poor can be suitably improved so that they can also lead a fuller urban life free from dirt, disease and pollution.

6.6.3 The Five-Year Plans

The policy of decentralisation in our national planning has lately been found useful in matters of urban development also. In the First Five Year Plan no special attention was paid to the solution of urban problems. Yet, it did recognise the acute shortage of housing and steep rise in land prices in big cities. By the end of the First Five Year Plan several institutional set-ups to ease this problem came into existence. For example, a new ministry of works and housing was first established and later renamed as the Ministry of Urban Affairs. The National Building Organisation was established to design low cost housing.

Steps were taken to train personnel in town planning. The Second Five Year Plan emphasised the need for planned development of cities and towns, and advocated an integrated approach to rural and urban planning in a regional framework. During this plan, The Urban Development Authority came into existence, and a master plan was prepared for the first time for the development of Delhi. This was a major step in urban planning and its implementation, which was later followed in the case of other big cities in several states.

The Third and Fourth Five Year Plans laid emphasis on town planning for which the responsibility was shifted from the Centre to the states. A model town-planning Act was prepared in 1957 by the Town and Country Planning Organisation in Delhi, and this led to the enactment of laws in other states. The Third Five Year Plan extended financial support for the preparation of master plans for the development of cities and towns in the states. As a result of such efforts, nearly 400 master plans were prepared. Moreover, the Third Plan also initiated urban community development schemes in selected cities as an experimental scheme to solve social and human problems associated with urban slums. The Fourth Plan recognised the need of financing urban development schemes. It was during this plan period that an agency – Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) – came into existence to provide funds for the metropolitan authorities, State Housing Boards and other urban institutions for the construction of houses in urban areas. The Fifth Plan document, in a separate chapter on urban and regional planning, laid down the following objectives of its urbanisation policy: (a) to augment civic services in the urban centres, (b) to tackle the problems of the metropolitan cities on a regional basis, (c) to promote the development of small towns and new urban centres, (d) to assist inter-state projects for the metropolitan projects, and (e) to support industrial townships under government undertakings.

The Sixth Plan also had a special chapter on urban problems but greater emphasis was given to the problem of housing both urban and rural areas. In this plan, necessary attention was drawn, for the first time, to regional variations
in the levels of urban development. It should also be mentioned here that, during the Sixth Plan, provisions were made to develop adequate infrastructural and other facilities at the small, medium and intermediate towns so as to make them ‘growth centres’ in promoting rural development. Further, 200 towns were to be identified for integrated development of water supply schemes in 550 towns, and sewerage projects in 110 towns in the country.

Thus, the Sixth Plan recognised the problems of basic needs of the urban-dwellers and took some concrete steps towards amelioration of their conditions.

The Seventh Plan, on the one hand, stressed the need for integrated development of small and medium towns and, on the other, minimising the growth of the metropolitan cities. To attain this objective, special incentives are offered for the establishment of industries in small and medium towns. It also advocates for greater financial support to local bodies by the state governments. In terms of institutional set up, the Seventh Plan recommended the establishment of the National Urban Infrastructure Development Finance Corporation, to provide capital for the development of infrastructure in small and medium towns. Apart from these steps, the emphasis on housing for the urban poor and the low income groups, integrated development and provisions for promotion of basic amenities for the urban-dwellers are continued in the Seventh Plan and proposed draft of the Eighth Five Year Plan.

In brief, although the Five Year Plans do not as yet exhibit any comprehensive policy on India’s urbanisation and urban problem, there are obviously certain aspects which have received greater attention to ameliorate the conditions of the urban-dwellers. Special mention may be made of (a) finance for housing, (b) slum clearance and improvement, (c) town water supply and sewerage, (d) urban transportation, and (e) the preparation of master plans for the development of cities, especially bigger ones.

Check Your Progress 4

i) What are the major objectives of the Rent Control Act, 1948? Answer in about five lines.

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ii) Write a short note on the social legislation on the urban land in India. Use about six lines to answer.

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iv) What are the major features of the Slum Clearance Programme in India? Answer in about seven lines.

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6.7 LET US SUM UP

Urbanisation refers to a social process. In demographic sense, it exhibits the proportion of the urban population to the total population of a society. In sociological sense, it also refers to a way of life typically associated with the city. The haphazard and steep rise in the population of big cities has led to the notion of over-urbanisation in India, which, in the societal context, is not true. Even today only less than one-third of the total population of India lives in towns and cities.

The industrial-urban India has given birth to several social problems among which the problems of slums, crimes, housing, pollution and inadequate public utilities have become grave. In the absence of a national policy on urbanisation, the matters of urban planning and development remain largely confined to the efforts of the state governments. The schemes of slum clearance and housing for the urban poor and the low-income groups are in a way addressed to the solution of these problems. The five year plans have also made significant efforts through making provisions of financial support to several programmes of urban renewal.

6.8 KEY WORDS

**Marginal man**: A marginal man is one, who has not been able to give up the traits of his cultural past, nor has been able to assimilate with the new culture. Thus, he is a man in transition, placed between two cultures.

**Million city**: A city with a population over ten lakhs.

**Over-urbanisation**: A term describing the process of excessive growth population in cities (mainly through migration) in relation to employment and other facilities available in them.

**Primary urbanisation**: A process of coordinating the activities of local tradition to the norms provided by the Great Tradition.
Slum: Broadly speaking, it is a locality characterised by inadequate and deteriorated housing, deficient public utilities, overcrowding and congestion and usually inhabited by the poor and socially heterogeneous people.

Urbanisation: A process in demographic sense, which refers to the proportion of a total population living in towns and cities. In sociological sense, it refers to a way of life associated with living in the city.

White-collar crime: It refers to malpractices employed during the conduct of any profession, business or trade.

Secondary urbanisation: A process of heterogenetic development associated with the industrial phase of the city.

6.9 FURTHER READINGS


6.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1
i) b)
ii) d)
iii) c)

Check Your Progress 2
i) The main features of over-urbanisation in India are as follows:
   a) There is a seeming imbalance between the levels of industrialisation and urbanisation in India. (b) The process of urbanisation takes away a large share of national resources and, thus, impinges upon the rate of economic growth in society. (c) There has been excessive population pressure on the civic amenities and housing.

   ii) It is estimated that nearly 70% of the urban population in India live in sub-standard houses. Here, more than half of the urban households occupy only a single room with an average occupancy per room of 4.4 persons. Besides, there are a large number of homeless persons. Only in Delhi there are more than three lakh homeless persons.

   iii) (a) Indiscriminate growth of industrial and chemical plants. (b) Pre-industrial structure of cities with narrow streets of roads. (c) High-rise of buildings with high density of population, congestion on roads and pollution. (d) Lack of effective measure for systematic use of land.
Check Your Progress 3

i)  b)

ii)  b)

iii)  a), c), d)

iv)  a)

Check Your Progress 4

i)  The main objectives of this law are to (a) regulate the rent of the house, (b) protect the tenant from the atrocities of the houseowners, (c) make the landlord responsible to undertake the repair of the house regularly.

ii)  The Urban Land Ceiling Act, 1976, covers on broad aspect of urban land management. This Act has three fundamental objectives: (a) distribution of surplus land, (b) prevention of speculation in land, (c) Regulation of construction on vacant land. However, despite the provisions of this Act, the price of urban land has gone beyond the reach of the common man, and speculation in land is also flourishing without being checked.

iii)  Under this scheme, low cost houses equipped with latrine, bathroom, water tap, sanitation and drainage facilities are made available to the poor people, who can pay a token amount as rent from their income. These schemes are subsidised by the government. However, one of the greatest obstacles for the speedy implementation of this programme has been that of adequate funds. The Seventh Five Year Plan has given emphasis on the issue of slum clearance.
In this unit our emphasis is on migration as a demographic process and as an agent of social change in society. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- describe what migration is;
- examine the importance of migration as an agent of social change;
- explain the various reasons of migration;
- discuss the consequences of such migration in the national and international situation; and
- analyse the migration policy.

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Migration is usually defined as a geographical movement of people involving a change from their usual place of residence. But it is distinguished from temporary and very short distance moves. Migration can be internal (within the national boundaries) or international (across the international borders). After discussing the sociological significance and the definition and concepts of migration in Section 5.4, we discuss the major determinants of migration in terms of social,
economic, psychological, political and religious factors. Types of migration, like rural and urban, as well as voluntary or involuntary migration are explained in Section 5.5. What consequences follow when people move to different places within the national boundaries or across the national boundaries are discussed in Section 5.6. Section 5.7 highlights the problems of the refugees and displaced persons in national and international situations. Section 5.8 of the unit deals with national and international policy on migration and future trends in migration.

5.2 MIGRATION : SIGNIFICANCE, CONCEPT, FORMS AND CHARACTERISTICS

In this section, we shall be introducing to you the various aspects of sociological significance and characteristics of migration. Let us begin with its significance.

5.2.1 Sociological Significance

Migration is the third component of population change, the other two being mortality and fertility, studied in Unit 4 of this block. However, migration is different from the other two processes, namely, mortality and fertility in the sense that it is not a biological factor like the other two, which operate in a biological framework, though influenced by social, cultural and economic factors. Migration is influenced by the wishes of persons involved. Usually each migratory movement is deliberately made, though in exceptional cases this may not hold true. Thus migration is a response of human organisms to economic, social and demographic forces in the environment.

The study of migration occupies an important place in population studies, because, along with fertility and mortality, it determines the size and rate of population growth as well as its structure and characteristics. Migration also plays an important role in the distribution of the population of any country, and determines the growth of labour force in any area. Migration is thus an important symptom of social change in society.

5.2.2 Concepts

In a layman’s language, the world ‘migration’ refers to the movements of the people from one place to another. According to Demographic Dictionary, “migration is a form of geographical mobility or spatial mobility between one geographical unit and another, generally involving a change in residence from the place of origin or place of departure to the place of destination or place of arrival.” Such migration is called permanent migration, and should be distinguished from other forms of movement, which do not involve a permanent change of residence. Everett Lee, a well known demographer, defines migration broadly “as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence”. No restriction is placed upon the distance of the move or upon the voluntary and involuntary nature of the act. Migration, according to Eisenstadt, refers to “the physical transition of an individual or a group from one society to another. This transition usually involves abandoning one social-setting and entering another and different one.” Mangalam also stresses the permanent shifting of people in his definition and considers migration as a relatively permanent moving away of a collectivity, called the migrants, from one geographical location to another.
It is preceded by decision-making on the part of the migrants. They weigh and consider sets of values in two comparative situations, resulting in changes in the interactional system of the migrants. Holiday trips or sailor’s occupations are not included in it. Mehta, in his study of Rajasthan, treats migration as an act of movement or spatial mobility.

A perusal of all these definitions indicates that almost all scholars emphasise time and space, and define migration as a movement from one place to another, permanently or semi-permanently. In brief, when a person leaves his native place or village, comes to an urban area, takes up a job, and starts living there, he is known as a migrant and his move is referred to as migration.

5.2.3 Forms

People may move within a country between different states or between different districts of the same state or they may move between different countries. Therefore, different terms are used for internal and external migration. Internal migration refers to migration from one place to another with a country, while external migration or international migration refers to migration from one country to another.

a) Immigration and Emigration: ‘Immigration’ refers to migration into a country from another country and ‘emigration’ refers to migration out of the country. These terms are used only in connection with international migration. For example, migrants leaving India to settle down in the United States or Canada are immigrants to the United States or Canada and emigrants from India.

b) Inmigration and Outmigration: These are used only in connection with internal migration. ‘Inmigration’ refers to migration into a particular area while ‘outmigration’ refers to movements out of a particular area. Thus, migrants who come from Bihar or Uttar Pradesh to Punjab are considered to be immigrants for Punjab and outmigrants for Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The term ‘inmigration’ is used with reference to the area of destination of the migrants and the term ‘outmigration’ is used with reference to the area of origin or place of departure of the migrant.

The main forms of migration can be summarised in a chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIGRATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERNAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INMIGRATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTERNAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTMIGRATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMMIGRATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMIGRATION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are three important sources of information on internal migration in a country. These are national census, population registers and sample surveys. In India, the most important sources of data on internal migration are national census and sample surveys.

c) Forms of Internal Migration in India: Information on migration for India, as a whole, and its different parts is obtained through the use of the Census. Better and more detailed questions have been asked in recent census counts. They show improvements in the studies on migration.
Indian census gives information regarding migration streams made from ‘birth place’ statistics from 1872 onwards. However, in 1961, the birth place was classified as rural or urban, and put into four categories of space migration (i) within the district of enumeration, (ii) outside the district but within the state of enumeration, (iii) outside the state of enumeration, i.e., inter-state, and (iv) outside India. The 1971 Census defined these statistics by including a question on place of last residence, and 1981 Census included a question on reasons for migration.

In India, the migrants are classified into four migration streams, namely, **rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban and urban to rural**. Rural to rural migration has formed the dominant migration stream since 1961. There have been substantial increases in the proportion of rural to urban, and urban to urban migration with the passage of time. Another important point is that the proportion of the females is much higher in rural to rural migration, while in the other three streams the proportion of the males is comparatively much higher. This is simply because the females change their residence on getting married, and new places could be in the neighbouring districts.

Researchers have, from time to time, suggested various types of migration while taking into account space, time, volume and direction. On the basis of space, there are four important streams of internal migration. These are:

i) Rural to rural  
ii) Rural to urban  
iii) Urban to urban  
iv) Urban to rural

Indian census gives this fourfold typology. However, in some developed and highly urbanised countries there have also been migrations from cities to the suburbs.

The relative size and importance of these migration streams may vary from country to country. In some countries, rural to rural migration is the dominant type of migration, while in others it is rural to urban and yet in many others the highest proportion of migrants are found in urban to urban migration. In India, as stated earlier, rural to rural migration formed the dominant migration stream in the 1961, 1971, 1991 and 2001 Census. However, there have been substantial increases in the proportion of rural to urban and urban to urban migration with the passage of time, the increase being much more during the decades of 1970s, 1980s and 1990s than of the 1960s. However the dominant form of internal migration in the country is rural to rural. In all other streams (rural to urban, urban to urban and urban to rural) there is dominance of rural to urban migration. Rural to urban migration among the males could be due to better developed agriculture in certain states and districts, which may attract migrants from other parts of the country. Development of industries in certain states or cities may be another important factor in rural to urban migration. Rural to rural migration is mostly dominated by the females. The female migration is largely sequential to marriage, because it is a Hindu custom to take brides from another village (village exogamy). According to the National Sample Survey, more than 46 per cent migration to urban areas is also caused by marriage. The custom of women returning to urban areas is also caused by marriage. The custom of women returning to her
Typology based on time classified migration into long range migration and short range or seasonal migration. When a move is made for a longer period, it is called long range migration. However, when there is permanent shift of population from one region to another, it is known as permanent migration. But when people shift to the sites of temporary work and residence for some or several months, it is known as periodic or seasonal migration. For example, during peak agricultural season excess labour is required, and people from the neighbouring areas is also caused by marriage. The custom of women returning to her parents to deliver her first child also accounts for significant internal migration.

Apart from these two important types, migration could be voluntary or involuntary or forced, brain drain (migration of young skilled persons) and migration of refugees and displaced persons.

5.2.4 Characteristics

There are some important characteristics of the migrants and migration. An important characteristic is the age selectivity of the migrants. Generally, young people are more mobile. Most migration studies, especially in developing countries, have found that rural-urban migrants are predominantly young adults and relatively better educated than those who remain at the place of origin. It is obvious that migration for employment takes place mostly at the young adult ages. Also a major part of the female migration consequential to marriage occurs at the young adult ages. Thus people have a tendency to move when they are between their teens and their mid-thirties (15-35 years) than at other ages.

Another important characteristic is that the migrants have a tendency to move to those places where they have contracts and where the previous migrants serve as links for the new migrants, and this chain is thus formed in the process, and is usually called chain migration. Various studies show that people do not blindly go to a new place. They usually have kinship chains and networks of relatives and friends who help them in different ways. In some cases, the migrants not only tend to have the same destination but also tend to have the same occupation. For example, research reveals that in certain hotels in Jaipur almost all the workers belong to one particular sub-region of Kumaon. The agricultural labourers in Punjab and Haryana are mainly from Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Check Your Progress 1

i) What is the sociological significance of migration? Use six lines to answer.
ii) What are the important variables taken into consideration in defining migration? Use four lines to answer.

iii) Classify the following types of migration:
   a) From Kerala to the Gulf-countries.
   b) From Kerala to Delhi.
   c) From Bihar to the West Indies.
   d) Arrival of people from Bangladesh to India.
   e) Arrival of people to Rajasthan from Karnataka.

5.3 REASONS FOR MIGRATION

It is important to know why some migrate while others do not. The important factors, therefore, which cause migration or which motivate people to move may broadly be classified into four categories: economic factors, demographic factors, socio-cultural factors, and political factors.

5.3.1 Economic Factors

The major reason of voluntary migration is economic. In most of the developing countries, low agricultural income, agricultural unemployment and underemployment are the major factors pushing the migrants towards areas with greater job opportunities. Even the pressure of population resulting in a high man-land ratio has been widely recognised as one of the important causes of poverty and rural outmigration. Thus, almost all studies indicate that most of the migrants have moved in search of better economic opportunities. This is true of both internal as well as international migration.

The most important economic factors that motivate migration may be termed as ‘Push Factors’ and ‘Pull Factors’. In other words it is to see whether people migrate because of the compelling circumstances at the place of origin which pushed them out, or whether they are lured by the attractive conditions in the new place. Now we shall discuss these factors.
i) **Push Factors**

The push factors are those that compel or force a person, due to various reasons, to leave that place and go to some other place. For example, adverse economic conditions caused by poverty, low productivity, unemployment, exhaustion of natural resources and natural calamities may compel people to leave their native place in search of better economic opportunities. An ILO study reveals that the main push factor causing the worker to leave agriculture is the lower levels of income, as income in agriculture is generally lower than the other sectors of the economy. According to the estimates of the Planning Commission over one-third of the rural population is below the poverty line. Due to rapid increase in population, the per capita availability of cultivable land has declined, and the numbers of the unemployed and the underemployed in the rural areas have significantly increased with the result that the rural people are being pushed to the urban areas. The non-availability of alternative sources of income in the rural area is also another factor for migration. In addition to this, the existence of the joint family system and laws of inheritance, which do not permit the division of property, may also cause many young men to migrate to cities in search of jobs. Even sub division of holdings leads to migration, as the holdings become too small to support a family.

ii) **Pull Factors**

Pull factors refer to those factors which attract the migrants to an area, such as, opportunities for better employment, higher wages, better working conditions and better amenities of life, etc. There is generally cityward migration, when rapid expansion of industry, commerce and business takes place. In recent years, the high rate of movement of people from India as well as from other developing countries to the USA, Canada and now to the Middle-East is due to the better employment opportunities, higher wages and better amenities of life, variety of occupations to choose from and the possibility of attaining higher standard of living. Sometimes the migrants are also attracted to cities in search of better cultural and entertainment activities or bright city lights. However, pull factors operate not only in the rural-urban migration, but also in other types of internal as well as international migration.

Sometimes a question is asked which factors are more important, push or pull? Some argue that the push factor is stronger than the pull factor as they feel that it is the rural problems rather than the urban attractions that play a crucial role in the shift of the population. On the other hand, those who consider the pull factors as more important emphasise high rates of investment in urban areas leading to more employment and business opportunities and greater attraction for the city way of life.

This classification of motives for migration into push and pull factors is very useful in analysing determinants of migration, but all migratory movements cannot be explained by these factors alone. Moreover, sometimes migration may occur not by push or pull factors alone but as a result of the combined effect of both.
iv) **Push Back Factors**

In India, and in some other developing countries also, another important factor which plays crucial role in migration is ‘push back factor’. In India, according to Asish Bose, the urban labour force is sizeable, and the urban unemployment rates are high, and there also exist pools of underemployed persons. All these factors acts in combination as deterrents to the fresh flow of migration from the rural to urban areas. He calls this as a ‘push back factor’. He further adds that if new employment opportunities are created in the urban areas, the first persons to offer themselves for employment are the marginally employed already residing in those areas, unless of course special skills are required.

### 5.3.2 Socio-Cultural and Political Factors

Besides these push and pull factors, social and cultural factors also play an important role in migration. Sometimes family conflicts also cause migration. Improved communication facilities, such as, transportation, impact of the radio and the television, the cinema, the urban-oriented education and resultant change in attitudes and values also promote migration.

Sometimes even political factors encourage or discourage migration. For instance, in our country, the adoption of the jobs for ‘sons of the soil policy’ by the State governments will certainly affect the migration from other states. The rise of Shiv Sena in Bombay, with its hatred for the migrants and the occasional eruption of violence in the name of local parochial patriotism, is a significant phenomena. Even in Calcutta, the Bengali-Marwari conflict will have far-reaching implications. And now Assam and Tamil Nadu are other such examples. Thus the political attitudes and outlook of the people also influence migration
to a great extent. There have also been migrations from Kashmir and Punjab because of the terrorist activities.

**Box 1. Reasons of Migration**

**An Analysis of Census Data**

In the Indian Census, data on reasons for migration were collected for the first time in the 1981 Census. These reasons are given in the following table.

**Table 1: Per cent distribution of life-time migrants of each sex by reasons for migration, India 1981**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Reasons for migration</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rural to Rural</th>
<th>Rural to Urban</th>
<th>Rural to Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>30.79</td>
<td>19.49</td>
<td>47.49</td>
<td>41.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>8.07</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associational</td>
<td>30.57</td>
<td>33.74</td>
<td>23.54</td>
<td>31.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>30.44</td>
<td>37.12</td>
<td>19.73</td>
<td>21.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Female | Employment            | 1.92  | 1.13           | 4.20           | 4.46           | 3.34           |
|        | Education             | 0.88  | 0.43           | 2.58           | 2.21           | 1.00           |
|        | Associational         | 14.72 | 8.64           | 29.27          | 35.89          | 21.23          |
|        | Marriage              | 72.34 | 81.73          | 51.53          | 43.56          | 59.33          |
|        | Others                | 10.14 | 8.07           | 12.42          | 13.88          | 15.10          |

100.00 100.00 100.00 100.00 100.00

It is clear from the data that among the male migrants from rural to urban and urban to urban, employment was the most important reason. Education accounted only for about 3 to 8 per cent of migration according to these migration streams. Among women, as expected, marriage was the most important reason for migration, followed by associational migration. Employment and education accounted for a very small proportion of females.

Besides economic factors, sometimes lack of educational opportunities, medical facilities and many other facilities including the desire to break away from the traditional constraints of rural social structure may push people out of the rural areas. However, all migration caused by push factors are not confined to the rural areas only as there are also migration flows between rural areas and urban areas, indicating movement of people out of comparatively poor areas to areas with relatively better opportunities.

**Activity 1**

Find out if any of the members in two neighbouring families were born outside your city, when they come, and what reasons they had in mind for coming there? Then try to illustrate the types of migration and causes of migration from these cases. Compare your note if possible with other students of the study centre.

**Check Your Progress 2**

Tick mark the correct answer:

i) One of the important reasons for the out migration of the rural people is:
   - a) growing pressure of population,
   - b) rural poverty
c) rural unemployment  
d) all of the above.

ii) Factors which attract the migrants for migration are known as:

a) Push factors,  
b) Pull factors,  
c) Push back factors,  
d) All of the above.

iii) Which one of the following is not a type of migration:

a) Rural to Rural.  
b) Rural to Urban  
c) Urban to urban  
d) None of the above.

5.4 CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION

The consequences of migration are diverse. However, some of the important consequences discussed in this unit are economic, demographic, social and psychological. These consequences are both positive as well as negative. Some of these affect the place of departure while others influence the place of destination.

5.4.1 Economic

Migration from a region characterised by labour surplus helps to increase the average productivity of labour in that region, as this encourages labour-saving devices and/or greater work participation by the remaining family workers. On the other hand, there is a view that migration negatively affects the emigrating region and favours the immigrating region, and that migration would widen the development disparity between the regions, because of the drain of the resourceful persons from the relatively underdeveloped region to the more developed region. But the exodus of the more enterprising members of a community cannot be considered a loss, if there is lack of alternative opportunities in the rural areas. As long as migration draws upon the surplus labour, it would help the emigrating region. It will have adverse effects only if human resources are drained away at the cost of the development of the region. Another important point is that when migration draws away the unemployed or underemployed, it would enable the remaining population of the region to improve their living conditions as this would enable the remaining population to increase the per capita consumption, since the total number of mouths to be fed into is reduced as a result of emigration.

However, the labour-sending regions may gain economically by the money brought in by the emigrants. In India, the influx of the rural migrants to cities and towns has resulted in a steady outflow of cash from the urban to rural areas. Most migrants are single males, who after securing urban employment generally send a portion of their income to their village homes to supplement the meagre incomes of their families. At the same time, it also affects the savings of the family as sometimes the migrants take money (family savings) with them, which is necessary for their travel and stay in a new place. In recent
times, a sudden increase in migration to the Middle East has resulted in steep rise in the remittances of foreign money in our country. In 1979, it was found that the annual remittances to the tiny state of Kerala were estimated to Rs.4000 million.

The rising inflow of money from the Gulf countries has resulted in the building of houses and buying of agricultural land, and even investments in business and industry. This has also resulted in the rise in the levels of consumption in the family. Money is also being spent on children’s education. On the other hand, the outflow of men has caused labour shortages and has pushed wages upwards.

5.4.2 Demographic

Migration has a direct impact on age, sex and occupational composition of the sending and receiving regions. Migration of the unmarried males of young working age results in imbalances in sex ratio. The absence of many young men from the villages increases the proportion of other groups, such as, women, children and old people. This tends to reduce the birth rate in the rural areas. Further the separation of the rural male migrants from their wives for long durations also tends to reduce the birth rate.

5.4.3 Social and Psychological

Urban life usually brings about certain social changes in the migrants. Those migrants who return occasionally or remain in direct or indirect contact with the households of their origin are also likely to transmit some new ideas back to the areas of origin. Several studies attribute technological change to the dynamism of the return migrants, who bring money as well as knowledge and experience of different production techniques, and this may lead to mechanisation and commercialisation of agricultural activity. A number of ex-servicemen, on retirement go back to their native areas and promote such practices in the villages. Contact with the urban and different cultures also brings attitudinal change in the migrants, and helps them to develop more modern orientation, including even the consumerist culture in their own areas.

On the other hand, migration which results in the absence of the adult males for long periods of time may cause dislocation of the family, and, under such circumstances, women and children often have to take over more and different types of work and other more important roles in household decision-making. Studies have revealed very disturbing effects of the male migration from Kerala. Neurosis, hysteria and depression are said to be on the increase among the emigrant workers’ wives in Kerala. The gulf boom has also taken a toll of mental health of the families.

Check Your Progress 3

i) How is the labour-sending region benefited by the process of migration? 
Answer in about seven lines. 

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

39
ii) Write in about seven lines the socio-psychological consequences of migration.

iii) Tick mark the correct answer.

Large exodus of refugees may______.

a) create no problem for the countries of destination,

b) create only economic problems for the countries of destination,

c) create only health and ecological problems for the countries of destination,

d) create social, economic and political problems depending on the dimensions of the exodus of refugees.

5.5 PROBLEMS OF REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

Sometimes forced movements of people take place due to political and religious disturbances or wars. Such movements shift people to the neighbouring countries as refugees. The United Nations defines “a refugee as every person, who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.” (U.N. 1984)

Thus many international movements of population involving very large numbers have occurred due to compelling reasons of political, religious or racial character. Perhaps the largest movement of people in this century has occurred in the Indian sub-continent. The partition of the country in 1947 into the Indian Union and Pakistan led to large exodus of the refugees into each nation from the other. Estimates indicate that not less than 7 million persons went to Pakistan from India and more than 8 million people came to India from Pakistan. Indo-Pakistan war in 1971 also caused a large number of people from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to move into the north-eastern states of India as refugees, and this became a permanent problem for the region, as much as “Bihari” Muslims continue to be problematic for Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Some of the largest forced international migrations in history have occurred in
recent times in Asia. For example, in the 12 years following 1975 more than 1.7 million refugees have left Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos. Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, in 1979, produced a flow of refugees which has led to some 2.7 million being temporarily settled in Pakistan and 1.5 million in Iran. Most of these refugees are still in the camps in the neighbouring countries. Recently, due to political disturbances in Sri Lanka, large numbers of Tamilians have entered India, and are staying in Tamil Nadu.

It is found that on humanitarian grounds the refugees are often given shelter by the governments of various countries. However, the sudden influx of the refugees creates enormous pressure on the native society. It leads to short supply of essential commodities, ecological imbalances and health hazards in the countries of asylum. The large magnitude and the various economic, political and social dimensions of the exodus of the refugees create many problems, particularly for the countries of destination. Sometimes they cause political complications in the receiving countries. They organise themselves by forming groups, and pressurise the governments for some concessions. For example the United Kingdom, Canada and Sri Lanka are facing political and racial crises due to migration. Sometimes this causes clashes between the natives and migrants. Sri Lanka is a recent example of this.

But, in some instances, the refugees do make a positive contribution to the development of the host country, when settled in sparsely populated areas, by clearing and cultivating land.

### 5.6 MIGRATION POLICY

In India, little attention has been paid at the policy level to control the pattern of either international or internal migration. At the international level, the country does not have even up to date statistics of the immigrants and the emigrants although most of the international migration is controlled by passports and visa permits, etc. Questions have been raised about the brain drain from India in various forums, but nothing has been done to stop it as there are considerable numbers of educated unemployment in the country. It is only recently that the ministry of labour established a cell to protect the interests of the Indian emigrants, who are working as skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers in other countries, especially in the Middle East.

At the national level, the government has not shown any concern for the problems relating to internal migration, and has, therefore, not formulated any policy. Although rural to rural migration, as indicated earlier, constituted the dominant migration stream among both the males and the females, very little is known about the factors that govern this migration except through the 1981 Census. Since major part of rural to rural migration is associational or for unspecified reasons, it is necessary to understand it more clearly.

There has been significant seasonal migration of agricultural labourers in different parts of the country, especially those parts which are experiencing the green revolution. Not much information is available about the volume of this stream of the migrants or their duration of stay.

As rural to urban migration is next only to rural to rural migration, and is quite sizeable, it is influenced by the urbanisation policies and programmes. In the Fourth and Fifth Five Year Plans, the need for a balanced spatial distribution
of economic activities was emphasised, and stress was laid on the need to prevent the unrestricted growth of big cities.

Recognising the problems associated with the rapid growth of big cities (million plus), the government is now trying to adopt policies which would help in controlling migration to big cities and metropolises. During the 1980s, emphasis was on the provision of adequate infrastructural and other facilities in the small, medium and intermediate towns so that they could serve as growth and service centers for the rural region. The Planning Commission emphasised the needs for positive inducements to establish new industries and other commercial and professional establishments in small and medium towns. In the next unit (Unit 6) of this block, we shall take note of these problems in a detailed manner.

Thus, in the absence of any specific migration policy, it is difficult to predict the major directions of future migration flows. However, considering government’s emphasis on developing small, medium and intermediate cities, it is expected that intermediate cities and medium towns will attract more migrants in the future. Although industrial cities, with expanding industries, will continue to attract new migrants, the young educated males and females may have a greater tendency to seek white collar employment in small towns and cities.

Check Your Progress 4

Tick mark the correct answer.

i) In recent years, the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, has established a cell to protect the interest of the Indian emigrants who are working ________.
   a) only as skilled workers in other countries,
   b) only as unskilled workers in other countries,
   c) only as semi-skilled workers in other countries,
   d) All of the above are correct.

ii) Considering the government’s emphasis on developing small, medium and intermediate cities, it is expected that
   a) intermediate cities will attract more migrants in future and big cities will reduce their importance.
   b) Although big cities will continue to attract the migrants, the young educated migrants may have greater tendency to seek white collar employment in small towns and cities.
   c) Rural to urban migration will stop in future.
   d) All are correct.

5.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have explained that migration, which refers to the movements of people from one place to another, is an important demographic process, which affects the spatial distribution of the population in a country. Then we have highlighted the factors which motivate people to move from one area to another. Related to this are the types of moves which people make in terms of
direction and duration of move, and whether the move are voluntary or involuntary. Then we came to the consequences of migration. In other words, what happens to the place from where the migrants move and to the place where they arrive. We have discussed the problems created by the refugees and displaced persons. Lastly, we have highlighted the Migration Policy.

5.8 **KEY WORDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fertility</td>
<td>Biological potentiality of reproduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>A process of movement of the population from one place to another for a considerable period of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortality</td>
<td>It is the proportion of death to the total population of the country in a particular period of time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.9 **FURTHER READINGS**


5.10 **ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Check Your Progress 1**

i) Migration is a response of the human beings to the economic, social and political and demographic forces operating in the environment. It determines the size and rate of population growth of the labour force in that area. It is an important symptom of social change.

ii) Scholars emphasise time and space as the important variables, and define migration as a movement from one place to another permanently or semi-permanently.

iii) a) Emigration
    b) Out-migration
    c) Emigration
    d) Immigration
    e) Immigration

**Check Your Progress 2**

i) d)
ii) b)
iii) d)

**Check Your Progress 3**

i) It helps increase the average productivity of the labour in that region, since migration encourages the labour-saving devices and greater work participation by the remaining labourers. This region also gains
economically by the money brought in by the emigrants. It results in the level of rise in the levels of consumption, education, technology of production as well.

ii) Many times migration results in the absence of the adult males for long periods of time. This causes dislocation of the family. Under these circumstances, women and children often have to undertake more responsibility. They may have to work harder than before. Studies show that neurosis, hysteria and depression have increased among the migrant workers’ wives in Kerala.

iii) d)

Check Your Progress 4

i) d)

ii) b)
21.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the discrimination faced by the Scheduled Castes;
- discuss various reasons as to how they were scheduled by the Government for the purpose of reservation or constitutional benefits and to what extent they have benefited from the Government’s development programmes; and
- analyse how the Scheduled Castes have organised themselves socially and politically vis-a-vis the upper castes.

21.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall analyse the Scheduled Castes as a separate and socially stratified category. We shall look at their historical background and examine the problems faced by them vis-a-vis the other upper castes. Following this we shall deal with Scheduled Castes and their social mobility. Then we shall examine the various constitutional measures and development programmes which have been adopted for the Scheduled Castes. Finally, we shall wind up this discussion by examining the working of the reservation policy and the position of the Scheduled Castes in the contemporary India.

21.2 SCHEDULED CASTE AS A COMMUNITY—THEIR STRENGTH AND THE BACKGROUND

You must have come across the term Scheduled Caste and untouchables several times. I am sure you must have wondered what the term meant or who these people are? You must be having an idea that these people are from the lowest
strata most of them working as menial labour. But do you know exactly who the Scheduled Caste are and how they came to be, what their composition is? In the sections to follow you will get to know who Scheduled Caste are, their strength and occupation. You will also familiarise yourself with explanations on the origins and the historical background of the Scheduled Caste.

21.2.1 Scheduled Castes: Social Backgrounds

Caste system forms the essential component of stratification system in India. The Varna system, constitutes a status-hierarchy with the Brahmins on the top followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. The scheduled fall out of the fourfold Varna System.

The Scheduled Caste is a politico-legal-term. It was first coined by the Simon Commission and then Government of India, Act, 1935. When India became independent this term was adopted by the Constitution for the purpose of providing them some special facilities and the constitutional guarantees.

Yet Untouchables or the Scheduled Castes do not constitute a homogeneous group. They are internally differentiated in terms of occupation, numerical segregated on the criteria of untouchability.

Another term used for the Scheduled Castes or Untouchables is “Harijans” (the children of God). This term was first used by Mahatma Gandhi, which refers to an aggregate of castes which may differ from each other and which have been reduced to the lowest ritual and social status in the caste hierarchy. Another term which comes into currency almost at the same time is depressed class or classes. This term was used by Dr. Ambedkar and it refered to those classes of categories or people who were poor, exploited and socially and ritually or religiously degraded. They were treated as pariah or socially defiled.

In term which is currently popular and is preferred by the scheduled caste is the term dalit. The word dalit is inclusive, in the sense that it includes also those communities groups of people, who are marginalised and subjugated it is used in a generic sense to the untouchable or the scheduled caste.

21.2.2 Strength of the Scheduled Castes

Each Indian state has its own list of Scheduled Castes many of their names are synonymous. Some of the castes number several million members each.

The total population of the Scheduled Castes according to 1991 census was 138.22 million which constituted 16.5% of total population of the country. The largest of these castes are the Chamars who form – one quarter of the number of Scheduled Caste – Banghi, the Adi-Dravida, Pasi, Madiga, Dusadhi Mali, Parayan, Koli Mahas, Adi-Karnataka, Namashudra etc. almost half of the total number of Scheduled Caste people live in the five states of Hindi belt in U.P., Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana. In the south they are concentrated mainly in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. In the East in West Bengal. The highest ratio of the Scheduled Caste is in Punjab 28.3. About 84% of the scheduled castes live in rural areas and are working as agricultural laborers, share-croppers, tenants and marginal farmers. Among the, Harijan the ratio of agricultural workers is particularly high in Bihar, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Kerala. More, than one-third of the agricultural workers of India belong to the untouchable castes. A vast majority of the scheduled caste do not possess land, 32.2% have less than 1 hectare.
Almost all persons engaged in jobs like sweeping, scavenging and tanning are from Scheduled Castes. About 2/3rd of the bonded labour are from Scheduled Castes. Literacy among the Scheduled Castes is extremely low. Most of the Scheduled Castes live below the poverty line and are victims of social and economic exploitation. Let us see what the justifications are for the origins of this exploitation.

**Distribution of Scheduled Caste Population (1991 Census) in 15 States which Account for 97.2% of Their Total Population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total population in 1991</th>
<th>SC population in 1991</th>
<th>SC population as % of State population</th>
<th>SC as % of total population</th>
<th>Cumulative SC population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>838,583,988</td>
<td>138,223,277</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 most populous states</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>139,112,287</td>
<td>29,276,455</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>68,077,965</td>
<td>16,080,611</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>86374,465</td>
<td>12,571,700</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>55,858,946</td>
<td>10,712,266</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>66,508,008</td>
<td>10,592,066</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>66,181,170</td>
<td>9,626,679</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>78,937,187</td>
<td>8,757,842</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>44,005,990</td>
<td>7,607,820</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>44,977,201</td>
<td>7,369,279</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>20,281,969</td>
<td>5,724,528</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>85.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>31,659,736</td>
<td>5,129,314</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>89.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>16,463,648</td>
<td>3,250,933</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>41,309,582</td>
<td>3,060,358</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>29,098,518</td>
<td>2,886,522</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>22,414,322</td>
<td>1,652,412</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total for 15 major states</strong></td>
<td>811,260,994</td>
<td>134,323,785</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other smaller states</strong></td>
<td>27,322,994</td>
<td>3,899,492</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>India</strong></td>
<td>838,583,988</td>
<td>138,223,277</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source**: Census of India 1991

**21.2.3 The Untouchable Castes and their Origins**

The term Scheduled Castes signifies those groups of people who were out of the caste system or the varna hierarchy. They comprise the bulk of “untouchables” or untouchable castes. These groups or castes have been discriminated against by the superior castes through the ages and they have never had any kind of social acceptance from the majority of the people who belong to the upper castes. The Scheduled Caste were deemed untouchable and polluting by the upper caste due to their so called polluting activities like
scavenging, cremation, skinning and hiding, etc. Not only because of their unclean occupations, but also due to their so called ‘dark complexion’ they were placed at the bottom of the ritual and social hierarchies of the caste and varna system. Since the *Varna ashram darma* – the philosophy and the religious duty demanded that each *jati* was to follow one’s traditional occupation – like priest’s son becomes a priest and a shoe-maker or tanner’s son or a becoming a shoe maker or a heriditory tanner. It was impossible for the untouchable castes to better their position by changing their occupation. The association of occupation with caste became inseperable, so much so, that the very fact of being born into a community, whether you engaged in clean or unclean activity had become irrelevant. Thus untouchables are those castes which were outside the pale of varna system. They were said to be polluting and marginalised and consigned to the lowest rung in society. Several ideological justifications existed for the sustanance of these hierarchical system, which kept everybody in their place.

**Projected Scheduled Caste Population in 2001**
(assuming same proportion of states’ population as in 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total population in 2001</th>
<th>SC population in 2001</th>
<th>SC population as % of State population</th>
<th>SC as % of total population</th>
<th>Cumulative SC population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>15 most populous states</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>175,626,000</td>
<td>36,960,838</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>80,312,000</td>
<td>18,970,397</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>102,423,000</td>
<td>14,907,545</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>62,400,000</td>
<td>11,966,667</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>76,773,000</td>
<td>12,226,896</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>81,666,000</td>
<td>11,879,094</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>92,314,000</td>
<td>10,241,959</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>54,816,000</td>
<td>9,476,670</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>52,922,000</td>
<td>8,670,993</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>23,858,000</td>
<td>6,755,026</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>36,284,000</td>
<td>5,878,509</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>20,204,000</td>
<td>3,989,508</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>49,194,000</td>
<td>3,644,463</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>32,605,000</td>
<td>3,234,359</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>26,589,000</td>
<td>1,968,478</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total for 15 major states</strong></td>
<td>967,968,000</td>
<td>160,771,375</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other smaller states</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49,558,000</td>
<td>7,036,794</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>India</strong></td>
<td>1,017,544,000</td>
<td>167,858,169</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Population estimates for 2001 are official estimates based on projections by the Expert Committee.
The untouchables had no share in the social, political and judiciary powers and their position was almost like that of a slave. Various scholars have given different viewpoints and explained why untouchability was practised in the Hindu caste society.

G. Hanumantha Rao in his book *Caste and Poverty* says that low social status attached to certain occupations is the cause of untouchability. It relates to impure occupations such as removal of carcass, spinning, tanning, scavenging etc. While analysing the origin of caste, system J.H. Hutton suggests that ideas of ceremonial purity were first applied to aboriginals in connection with sacrificial, ritual and certain occupational activities. Max Weber, also has described certain occupations as ritually impure. He states, that the lowest caste structure was considered to be absolutely defiling and contaminating. Thus, the ideas of purity, whether occupational or ceremonial, is found to have been the factor contributing to the genesis and evolution of caste and the practise of untouchability. The Vedic literature has referred to the Dharmashutras that declare *Chandalas* (cremators) as a progeny of the most hated people of the reverse order of mixed unions, that is of a Brahmin female with a Shudra male. Kautilya agrees with the Dharmashutra writers and he says that people born out of mixed unions were separate castes. He recommends that marriage between different castes should not be allowed and people of such unions should be treated as Shudra.

Manu, the earliest law giver, has very explicitly talked about a caste called *svapathas*, who were grouped with Chandalas and were prescribed to live outside the villages, use of shrouds of corpses as their clothing, broken pot-for meal, iron for ornaments and dogs and donkeys for their wealth. *Mritapas* were also another type of Shudras. The food vessels of *Chandalas* and *Mritapas* could not be used by others because no known method of cleaning pots was regarded as adequate to purify them.

Patanjali, who lived before Manu the great grammarian, had said that both the *Chandalas* and the *Mritapas* resided like other Shudras such as carpenters, blacksmiths, washermen or weavers, within the limits of the towns and villages of the Aryans. In the days of Manu they were not only excluded from the village but were assigned duties of cremators or hangmen which were totally unclean.

In about 1020 AD the *Doms* and Chandalas were two groups not reckoned among any caste or guild. They were occupied with works like cleaning of the villages and similar other services. They were considered as one sole class and were distinguished by their occupations. The first group of the *Antyajas* who had further sub-divisions following certain crafts were totally eight in number. They lived near villages, they were jugglers, basket and rope makers, sailors, fishermen, and hunters of wild animals and birds. They could freely intermarry though they belonged to separate caste groups. They could not marry with the shoemakers and the weavers however. The shoemakers and weaver were another group of *Antyajas* who could marry only among themselves. In the past the untouchable castes as a whole were barred from any of the rituals. They did not have any sanctity to perform or participate in any religious or sacred ritual.

It was thought, that the untouchable is unclean by birth; he is born into a caste every member of which, irrespective of birth or occupation, is an untouchable.
Hinduism does not provide any means to him to become clean by the performance of any ritual. They were assigned to their unclean task and never allowed to come out of it. The main condition of their survival was the strict observance of a code of conduct established for them. The bounds of which they were not permitted to cross. Not only did they not have access to public places, but they were not allowed any physical contact by their breath and glance as well. The use of force occupied a main place in keeping the untouchables in their place. Punishment for any breach of rule was mutilation and even taking away life.

Another important explanation to the origins of untouchable caste has been that of the materialists. According to the materialist untouchability grew out of a social class who are in the lowest rung who did not possess the right of holding and usage of land. These landless workers were semi-slaves and were in debt bondage, who not only toiled on other people's land but were forced to carry on unclean occupations. They were secured by the social bondage and by the concept of destiny or karma where they were ordained to be doomed to sub-human living.

These castes are referred even today in different regions according to the dialects and languages, which they speak. These people have occupied a very low social and economic position in the caste and class hierarchies.

Besides, they were subjected to various types of social disabilities. For instance, they were not allowed to enter the house of the higher castes. However, they were allowed to work as labourers during construction or repair, stoning the grain, etc. But later the houses so constructed were purified by sprinkling cow urine or cow dungs. In the event of their touching the utensils and other non-inflammables, these things were to be put on fire and then purified by sprinkling cow urine. They were also not allowed to walk on streets or public roads, or enter the temples, or heard in the court of justice. These practices have remained an inherent part of the Hindu caste society. Such disabilities of the Scheduled Castes have posed tremendous obstacles for their progress as well as of the society as a whole.

The segregation based on occupation has slowly narrowed down and instead it is primarily based on birth in the low castes. Even if the person is not engaged in the traditional occupations but since he/she is born into the caste, it became his/her status and position in the society. On the basis of their birth in the low castes, untouchables were always pushed into the background and their socio-economic contribution was never recognised in the history. Manu had always proclaimed superiority of the Brahmins which closed the channels of upward social mobility for any other castes and the worst affected groups were the untouchables. Even today the Scheduled Castes lag behind the upper castes in almost all fields and they undergo hardships, sufferings and oppression by the upper castes.

It can be seen from the preceding discussion that various justifications, reasons have gone into placing the Scheduled Castes in a exploitative situation and that this exploitation has gone on for centuries. Modern India realised a need to redress this marginalised state of the Scheduled Caste. In our next section, we will examine the various measures, which are institutionally provided to improve the status of Scheduled Castes.
Check Your Progress 1

1) When was the term Scheduled Caste first used?
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2) What are the various names used to address the Scheduled Caste?
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3) What explanation is given by materialist class analyst to explain the origin of untouchable caste?
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21.3 CONSTITUTION AND THE SCHEDULED CASTES

Before being scheduled and embodied in the Government of India Act 1935 and later in the constitution of free India in 1950, these castes were classified as “exterior” or “depressed” castes or classes. A caste was classified exterior or depressed if it was found subjected to a set of social disabilities or restrictions. According to the 1931 census, these disabilities or restrictions were: (1) inability to be served by clean-Brahmins; (2) inability to be served by the barbers, water carriers, tailors, etc. who served the caste Hindus; (3) inability to serve water to caste Hindus; (4) inability to enter Hindu temples; (5) inability to use public convenience such as roads, ferries, wells or schools; and (6) inability to dissociate oneself from despised occupation.

Ambedkar played key role in the fight to give Scheduled Caste a dignity and their rights. He among others championed the cause of Scheduled Caste. During independent India certain reforms were undertaken to remove the discriminatory practices of intouchability.

With the coming into force of the Constitution of India the Scheduled Castes were guaranted certain essential rights and benefits. Under Article 341(l), the Constitution after consultation with the governor of a State may specify,
“The castes, races, tribes or, parts of groups within castes or races, tribes which shall be deemed to be scheduled castes for the purpose of the constitution.”

However, according to the Article 341 (2) the Parliament of India, can include or exclude any group from the list of Scheduled Castes through an enactment of law.

The Scheduled Castes are socially and economically backward groups and, therefore, the constitution gives special protection to them. Under Article 46 of the constitution, it is the responsibility of the State to promote with special care the educational and -economic interests of the weaker sections of people and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in particular, and to protect them from social injustices and all forms of exploitation. The Preamble reflects the basic philosophy of the Indian constitution which stands by the Scheduled Castes.

There are a number of articles included in Part-III of the constitution which provides fundamental rights to the citizens, Article 14, 15, 16 and 17 provide rights to equality. Article 14 of the constitution provides right to equality before law that means, every citizen in the country is equal before law. Article 15 prohibits social and educational discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. This article provides that no citizen shall be prevented from access to shops, public restaurants, hotels, place of entertainment, use of public facilities like wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads, places of public resort, etc. This also empowers the State to make special provision for advancement of the socially and educationally backward classes of the citizens.

Article 16 prescribes the equality of opportunity in matters of public appointment. It provides that the State can reserve posts in public services for members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Then, finally Article 17 of this part of Constitution legally abolishes the practice of untouchability in any form against the Scheduled Castes. This article treats practice of untouchability as a legal offence and the offender is to be punished in accordance with the law. The offender may be imprisoned and or be subjected to fine. Later the provisions made under this article of the Constitution were strengthened and made more stringent under the Untouchability Offences Act in 1955.

Article 46 mentions specifically that the State must endeavour to promote the educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes among the weaker sections of the society.

More precisely, the State shall reserve the public jobs for the members of the Scheduled Caste and Tribes. Two Articles, 330 and 332, lay down that there shall be reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha (Article 330) and State Legislative Assembly (Article 332) in proportion to the number of the Scheduled Castes in various states. And finally, according to Article 340, the President can appoint a commission to investigate the difficulties of the socially and educationally backward classes of the citizens and to make recommendations to remove such difficulties. The commission is also empowered to take stock of the progress made by these classes of citizens due to provisions made under various articles for their welfare, protection and development.
21.3.1 Reservation Policy for the Scheduled Castes

We have mentioned various articles enshrined in the Constitution for welfare, protection and development of the Scheduled Castes. Here, we shall discuss some articles which specifically provide reservation to these castes.

The aim of the reservation policy is to help Scheduled Castes to come up, within specified time, at par with others in the society. The reservation policy has three major components.

These are:

1) reservation in government appointments,
2) reservation in admission to educational institutions and
3) reservation of seats in the House of People (Lok Sabha) and the Legislative Assemblies of the States.

There are other progressive measures to boost employment and steps are taken to eliminate poverty. Further, 15% and 7.5% posts are reserved for the Scheduled Caste and Tribe candidates in government jobs. Such reservations of posts are applicable in all the categories of jobs both in the Central and State Government services. In the recent years, such reservation has been extended to the services in the public undertaking units.

In addition to these, the State Governments have also adopted other measures for school children of the Scheduled Castes. These are:

a) provision of books;
b) provision of educational equipment;
c) provision of mid-day meals;
d) provision of stipends;
e) provision of school uniforms etc.

Besides, 15% seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and 7.5% for tribes’ in admission in public schools. Similar provisions are also available for the SC/ST students in their admission to colleges, universities and other educational institutions. Then equal percentage of hostel seats are also reserved for them. There are post-matric scholarship by the various state governments to the students belonging to these castes and tribes.

Out of 542 Lok Sabha seats 79 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes. Similarly, out of 3997 seats 541 seats in the State Legislatures are reserved for Scheduled Castes.

The bulk of the Scheduled Caste constituencies contain 10 to 30% of the Scheduled Castes population, and around 75% of the Scheduled Castes population live in scattered fashion outside the constituencies reserved for them. This means, the elections of the Scheduled Caste candidates even from the reserved constituencies are largely dependent on the non-Scheduled Castes. Besides, the Scheduled Castes in rural areas are politically less conscious and are influenced by caste politics. Many of them do not exercise their franchise or they are absent during the time of voting due to reasons of migration for employment. In the urban areas, the Scheduled Castes are relatively in a better position. But in spite of the reservation and other developmental measures the deprived sections who are less in number and who are uneducated continue to
remain backward. The caste class nexus works strongly and allows only a few castes to be politically or socially mobile. This has defeated the very purpose of the reservation and the intention of the constitutional measures for development of the Scheduled Castes.

21.3.2 Developmental Programmes

Besides the above mentioned provisions and measures, a number of other developmental schemes have been adopted for the people in general and the Scheduled Castes in particular in the rural areas. Some of these are: integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), the new 20 point programme etc. But incidentally these programmes have not properly been implemented at the block level. A comprehensive strategy was worked out during the -6th Five Year Plan which had 3 aspects:

1) Special Component Plans (SCP) for the Central and the State Governments for monitoring various programmes for development of the Scheduled Castes.

2) Special Central Assistance (SCA) for Special Component Plans for the Scheduled Castes in the different states.

3) Scheduled Caste Development Corporations (SCDC) in the States.

The SCP identifies schemes for welfare and development of the Scheduled Castes and provides financial assistance to the State Governments to various programmes under these schemes, it acts as an interface between the Scheduled Caste families and financial institutions in respect of bankable schemes of economic development. The corporation provides subsidy loans and other kinds of assistance to these families, and thereby, helps to increase the flow of funds from financial institutions to the Scheduled Caste families. In the Seventh and Eighth Five Year Plans also the Central and State Governments have set up a large portions of the plan outlays for the welfare and development of the Scheduled Castes under the special component programmes.

While the constitution emphasises on social and educational backwardness of certain castes and tribes for their being eligible for the benefits of the constitutional provisions, the present controversy centres around the definition of backwardness itself. According to this, the criteria for identifying those deprived sections of population who are eligible for the Government’s privileges and concessions have not been clearly identified in the present reservation policy. There are many socially backward castes who are economically forward and are reaping the fruits of reservation while the majority of the needy population have no access whatsoever to these constitutional measures. The experience in the last fifty years or so has shown that the reservation policy has not delivered the desired results to the right people. The policy has generated conflicts and tensions between those who are beneficiaries of reservation and those who are out of the purview of the policy. We have to accept the fact that the opposition of the weaker sections by the stronger sections of the society has not ended. The benefits of development in every aspects of life have been appropriated by about 20% of the population who are at the top and are drawn more from the nonscheduled and less from the scheduled castes.

The intended benefits of the reservation policy as well as of the other developmental programmes are not, made available to those people who rightly
Scheduled Castes

deserve them. There are various infrastructural levels at which these benefits are appropriated as the caste and class politics works very strongly given the existing social circumstances. At the operational level, there are innumerable barriers, which have to be removed. Against this backdrop, it is realised that the Scheduled Castes have to organise themselves socially and politically in order to get their due share and rights and to fight against the dominant castes or class and remove the caste differences among themselves.

The attitudes of the upper castes towards the reservation policy and other developmental measures have also to be positively directed so that the goal of social progress, social justice and social equality can be achieved. The Government and the power elite have to understand the socio-economic factors which seem to make reservation necessary for those people who have been victims of social discrimination and social injustice for over centuries. Their attitudes and perception towards the lower castes have to undergo radical change for getting the above goals realised.

The analogy of footrace here is applied for minorities facing disadvantaged and the need for affirmative action therefor. This analogy was used in the United States to reassert the need for affirmative action. The analogy can also apply to Scheduled Castes who are saddled with all kinds of disadvantages. The minority female that the box talks about could well be a Scheduled Caste woman or man who has been wearing the weights of discrimination for centuries.

What Makes a Fair Foot-race?

Imagine two runners in a 20 mile race. One of the runners must start with a 10-pound weight on each of her feet. As a result, she cannot run as fast, tires more quickly, and falls far behind. Almost anyone would agree that this is not a fair race. So, halfway through the race, the judges decide that she can take off the weights. Is this enough to make the race fair? Does she have any realistic change to win from her present position? Would it not be fairer to allow her to move ahead to the position of the other runner to compensate for the disadvantage of wearing the weights for the first half of the race?

This analogy had been used to illustrate the reasoning behind affirmative action (Farley, 1988, pp. 265, 336). The runner represents a minority of female individual seeking a good job or entry into graduate or professional school. The weights represent the effects of both past discrimination and the institutional discrimination she encountered in her elementary and secondary education. Examples of such discrimination, which may or many not be intentional, include low teacher expectations, tracking, biased tests and classroom materials, lack of minority and female role models, and under funded and segregated schools. Just as the runner is disadvantaged by the weights, the minority applicant is disadvantaged by poverty and institutional discrimination. Just as the other runner was not encumbered by weights in the first half of the race, the white male applicant was not burdened by these disadvantaged in early life. Most people would agree that is would not be fair to expect the runner to catch up after having to run half the race with weights. Could the same argument be made in the case of the minority or female applicant who often has to run the first half of the “race” of life with the “weight” of poverty and educational disadvantage? Is it fair, when that minority person applied for college or employment, to say “Now the weights are gone, so it’s a fair race?”

21.4 IDENTITY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY AMONG THE SCHEDULED CASTE

From our discussion in the preceding pages it is very clear that Scheduled Caste or the dalits have always been kept at the fringes of society, treated as untouchables they have been exploited for centuries. To improve their conditions the constitution has not only banned untouchability but gave various provisions which have offered an avenue for a mobility and new identity among the Scheduled Caste. Besides this, the Scheduled Caste as a community have tried to forge a new identity and also, found ways of moving upwards both at socio-cultural as well as political level. In the section to follow we will talk about social mobility and identity among the Scheduled Caste.

21.4.1 Scheduled Castes and Social Mobility

Besides, the various constitutional provisions and welfare and developmental measures for socio-economic progress of the Scheduled Castes after independence, the dalits and their sympathisers have carried out a number of social movements. In the modern times some major movements were led by Gandhi and Ambedkar. Here, we shall examine the movements led by Ambedkar and Gandhi as well as constitutional provisions and measures which have been able to bring a direct influence on the status or positional uplift of the Scheduled Castes.

Yogendra Singh, in his book *Social Stratification and Change* in India has argued that there are two kinds of social movements. One is with the integrative orientation and the other is with the alienating orientation. The efforts made by the lower castes to sanskritise themselves may be called a movement with an integrative orientation because it does not renounce caste as a system of social stratification. The motive force for the backward and the Scheduled Castes to sanskritise was just to ventilate their deprived feelings of status and position which were denied to them for centuries. By imitating the higher castes they tried to find a position as that of the upper castes. But they have not always succeeded in their efforts, as there is no legitimate acceptance by the upper castes.

The movements of the Scheduled Castes with integrative orientation have changed the emphasis in the present time. From imitating the upper castes, the Scheduled Castes have started looking at them (upper castes) with disdain. This has led to a horizontal level caste consolidation. The evidence is provided by many sociological studies. The sub-castes within the scheduled castes have started coming together to form a ‘homogeneous’ caste group and exploring a new identity. There is change from sanskritisation to consolidation of power and to acquire a positive identity. The consolidation of power is also seen in the increasing presence of dalit based parties, especially BSP in the Indian political arena. In turn, this has contributed to independent identity for Scheduled Castes and has made them less dependent on the upper castes.

Ambedkar has led another movement which was a move from the caste affiliations to embracing Buddhism. In 1956, he launched the drive for mass conversion of the Scheduled Castes to Buddhism, within a few months after his death, his followers organised the political wing of the Scheduled Castes in the name of the Republican Party of India. Both these reflected the alternate
religio-political orientation of the scheduled caste movement with respect to caste based social stratification and political mobilisation. In this regard, Yogendra Singh concludes that Scheduled Caste movements for social mobility has oscillated, on a tendency of integration to sanskritisation and of alienation, conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism or Christianity to Islam.

Undoubtedly, there is relative improvement in terms of upward mobility of certain Scheduled Caste families and individuals. There are also favourable shifts in the political and social awakening among the Scheduled Castes. But the constitutional measures have helped only those Scheduled Castes who have a dominant minority position in a particular region. An analysis of the enforcement of the Untouchability (Offences) Act in various courts indicate that most cases are not against individuals or specific castes but only against institutions. It is also revealed that the enforcement of various measures under the Act is more effective only in those places where the Scheduled Castes are politically more conscious of their rights or have high literacy rates. Relatively speaking there has been a considerable improvement in the social and economic status of the Scheduled Castes but they still lag behind, in many ways, in relation to the upper castes.

Activity 1
Visit the nearest settlement around your house which has predominant Scheduled Caste population and ask them their problems and write them down. Compare your note with others at the Study Centre.

21.4.2 Scheduled Castes Seeking a New Identity

Untouchability is a cultural problem related to the Hindu religion and the caste system. Many social movements were launched by social reformers and religious leaders against untouchability. A number of such movements launched by the dalits or the Scheduled Castes under the leadership of B.R. Ambedkar gained strong momentum. This was, reflected in the growing self consciousness of the Scheduled Castes which continues even today. However, the spontaneous revolts and organised struggles launched in different parts of the country against the practice of untouchability and their economic exploitation are not recent phenomena. There had always been anti-untouchability movements throughout the history. But their numbers had increased since the British rule in India and especially during the freedom struggle.

a) Anti-untouchability in Bhakti and Arya Samaj movements

The anti-untouchability movements may be classified into two categories: (1) reformative movements and (2) alternative movements. The reformative movements aim to reform the caste system in order to put an end to the problem of untouchability. The alternative movements aim to create ‘an alternative cultural environment by conversion to’ another religion. The reformative movements arrived out during different periods in India are broadly of three types: (1) bhakti movement (2) neovedantic movement (3) sanskratisation movement. Bhakti movement was popular during the medieval period in India when there was a succession of foreign invaders like the Mughals, Turks, Arabs and the Afghans. The bhakti movement tried to bring some sort of cultural and emotional integration between the upper castes and the lower castes. Kabir, Ramanand, Chaitanya, Tukaram and Ramanujam were the noted saints, of that
period who spread the spirit of brotherhood among all human beings. They preached that every caste member could attain salvation through Bhakti to God. In spite of all this, the socio-economic position of the Sudra/untouchable castes remained unchanged. Even the temples constructed by the members of the bhakti movement did not allow the untouchables to enter their premises.

Neo-vedantic movement assumed two forms namely neo-vedantism and sanskritisation. Vivekanand, Dayanand and Gandhi emphasised on secularisation of profession. Dayanand Saraswati the founder of the Arya Samaj believed that the caste system was a political institution created by the rulers’ for the common good of society and not a natural or religious distinction.

b) Gandhi and the Movements of Untouchables

Gandhi also said that all the four varnas were equal in status but not equal in opportunity and occupational division. For him, the varna system was not a hierarchical order. A scavenger had the same status as a Brahmin. As stated earlier in this unit, he symbolically called untouchables as “Harijans”, that is “the people of God”. Gandhi believed in the unity of various social groups. This was reflected in all his actions like his adoption of a harijan girl as his own daughter. He voluntarily decided to live with the untouchables to become one with them in appearance and in the standard of living. He even opposed separate electorate for the untouchables because, in his opinion, it could intensify the social division, which already existed in Hinduism. Gandhi had organised the Harijan Sevak Sangh for improving the life of the Harijans. The Sangh started hostels for the school untouchable children and improved work conditions of Harijans.

c) Sanskritisation: Anti Untouchability Movements in South India

Further, there were quite a few movements launched by the untouchable castes in different parts of the country which successfully mobilised the people of these castes to forego their traditional way of life, food habits and even name of the castes. These were very much in tune to sanskritisation. In some cases sanskritisation encouraged upward status mobility to honour castes. By abandoning their traditional occupations many of the lower castes had struggled for a higher status in the caste hierarchy. They followed Sanskritic norms and rituals and justified their claims to a higher status by creating their own mythologies according to the local traditions. However, how far their claims for equality with the upper castes was accepted in a particular region was always a question. Those castes who have tried to seek a new identity by identifying with and imitating certain customs and practices of upper castes are still treated as untouchables in their places of residence. But there are a few caste groups like the Nadars in Tamil Nadu, Ezhavas in Kerala and the Jatavs of Agra in Uttar Pradesh who have somehow been able to organise themselves to fight against the oppression meted out to them.

Hardgrave has studied the Nadar community in Tamil Nadu. The Nadars who were traditionally engaged in toddy-tapping were treated as untouchables. They rejected their title or surname of Shanan and shavar to adopt a new title or surname of Nadar. This attempt was mainly to dissociate themselves from the traditional occupation of the community. They followed Sanskritic rituals and made attempts to enter temples as early as in 1970. A section of Nadars in some villages and towns also converted to Christianity and formed organisations to strengthen unity among them. Many of their attempts to enter temples were
not fulfilled in the beginning because there were lot of restrictions and resentment posed by the caste Hindus or the upper castes. Some cases were taken to the court which delivered the judgement against the Nadar community and they were asked to pay Rs. 500/- for purification of the temples in which they attempted to enter. Despite all these failures, the Nadars continued their efforts for status elevation and undertook many secular activities. They formed the Nadar Mahajan Sangham which carried out literacy programmes and campaigned against toddy-tapping within the community. They also participated in political activities and even obtained political positions. In the 1921 census they got themselves registered as Nadar Kshatriyas. M.N. Srinivas has noted that the census operations introduced by the British made every caste self-conscious of its rights and status. This activated the process of sanskritisation.

Similar to Nadar, the Ezhavas in Kerala also tried to achieve upward social mobility. The Ezhavas were also traditionally toddy-tappers. They were led by Shri Narayanan Guru and the S.N.D.P. Yogam, forming an association called Shri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalayan. In the latter part of the 19th century the association launched activities for sanskritising the norms and customs of Ezhavas. It undertook secular programmes such as establishing schools and co-operative societies. The Ezhavas also joined hands with Christians and Muslims for achieving their aims.

d) **Anti-untouchability movement in U.P.**

The Jatavs of Uttar Pradesh also tried to sanskritise themselves by giving up their traditional occupation which were directly linked with the Jajmani system, that is, hereditary occupational services to the upper castes by the lower castes. The Jatavs of Agra were urban dwellers and the majority of them were also engaged in the leather work (shoe making). So, many of the Jatavs could improve their social and economic conditions once the shoe industry developed in and around Agra. Like the Nadars and Ezhavas the Jatavs and Mahars also formed organisation to spread sanskritic norms and customs among their caste members. They started schools and distributed scholarships to deserving students of their jatis, in order to identify themselves as a higher caste, like the Nadars, the Jatavs also claimed for a new and separate identity (from the rest of the Scheduled Castes). O.M. Lynch in his book “Politics of Untouchability” has shown that the Jatavs claim to be recognised as a separate caste among the scheduled castes without being amalgamated with other castes under the list of scheduled castes which the Jatavs claim not to have any connection.

e) **Anti-untouchability movement in Maharashtra**

The Mahars in Maharashtra under the leadership of Ambedkar demanded, in 1919, separate electorate for the depressed classes.

Many of the militant Mahars also got extremely frustrated with their abortive attempts towards sanskritisation and even gave up Hindu religion completely. Many Jatavs also followed this example later. In the early fifties, Ambedkar found that Buddhism was appropriate as an alternative religion. He preferred Buddhism primarily because in his opinion, it is an indigenous Indian religion of equality, a religion which was anti-caste and anti-Brahmin. Consequently, along with him a large Mahars of Maharashtra converted to Buddhism. The Militant Mahar youth organised the Dalit Panther Movement
in 1942 because the religious conversion did not make any significant change in their socio-economic condition. Now, the scheduled castes are involved in civil rights movements, students movements in the university and college campuses, and also in the ecological movements in many regions. Thus, they are collectivity endorsing their identity in various ways to pave a brighter future for themselves. The new identities of the scheduled castes are being accepted by others. Because of their educational development and the westernisation the practices of untouchability and discrimination against them are slowly becoming less. The welfare and developmental measures undertaken for the improvement in their economic position and upliftment of their social status have been responsible for opening new vistas for the depressed classes. In spite of all these, we cannot say for certain that the Scheduled Castes are enjoying an equal status at par with the others. Their present generation has just set the stage for development and we can hope that the Scheduled Castes would acquire a new and a positive identity vis-a-vis rest of the castes and communities in years to come.

A few more untouchable castes left Hinduism and developed their own separate religion. The Chamars and Chuhars of Punjab formed the Adi Dharm which believed that they were not part of the Hindu caste system. Later, the followers of Adi Dharm were politically aligned and absorbed in Ambedkar’s Scheduled Caste Federation in the late 1940s. Some Untouchables followed Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, and all those who were converted to Christianity or Islam did not make any attempts to sanskritise them. The classic case is of the Nadars of Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu who converted to Christianity. However, all those who have become Christians have not ceased to be untouchables. Caste differentiation has permeated itself even within the Church. The economic differentiation between the Pulaya Christian (traditional untouchables) and the Syrian Christians in Kerala still persists. Earlier, the Syrian Christians considered themselves to be more superior to Pulaya Christians in terms of education and employment. But now their situation is gradually improving. K.C. Alexander who has made a noteworthy study of social mobility among the Pulaya Christians has observed the Pulayas who now are university graduates and who are employed in white collar jobs are rarely treated as untouchables.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) The scheduled castes are:
   a) Kshatriyas
   b) Brahmins
   c) Shudras
   d) Untouchables outside the four-fold division of various systems or the caste system.

2) Antyajas was referred in the Writing of .................

3) Which of the statements is right? Put a (✓)mark in front of the correct statement:
   i) Untouchables do not constitute a homogeneous group.
   ii) Ambedkar called the untouchables Harijans.
   iii) Sanskritisation is process of alienation.
21.5 LET US SUM UP

We have analysed the problems of the Scheduled Castes from the very early times till date. We have seen how untouchability as a phenomenon is inherent in the caste-ridden Hindu society and social mobility for the untouchables is hampered because of their low caste status.

The Scheduled Castes are slowly trying to recover from their disabilities of untouchability of and discrimination. We have seen that there are a number of constitutional provisions made for them in the independent India. We have looked at the operational inconsistencies of the governmental measures adopted for enhancement of the status of the Scheduled Caste. We have also the possible measures to be adopted and properly implemented for a better future of the depressed sections of the people in India.

21.6 KEY WORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheduled Castes</th>
<th>The untouchable castes listed in the Schedule for the purpose of constitutional measures and concessions for their welfare, protection and development.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chandalas, Mritapas</td>
<td>Particular categories of untouchable castes who performed unclean occupations in the past and were regarded the most down-graded people in the Hindu society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antyajas</td>
<td>Another term used for untouchables who live outside the habitations of the caste Hindus in the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alienation-orientation</td>
<td>The untouchable castes getting out of caste system and converting to Buddhism, Christianity or Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative-orientation</td>
<td>Assimilation into the upper castes through sanskritisation process, i.e. imitating the culture, behaviour of the styles of life and upper castes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogeneous</td>
<td>United whole, without differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>The facilities available in the existing structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reservation</td>
<td>Special concessions and privileges granted by the constitution for the socially and educationally backward sections of the society. Reservation is applicable in admission to educational institutions, hostels, fee concessions etc. for recruitment in government services; and in representation in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislatures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21.7 FURTHER READINGS


21.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) The term Scheduled Caste was first used by the Simon Commission.

2) Some of the terms used to address the Scheduled Caste are Untouchables, Harijans, Chandalas and Dalits.

3) According to the materialist class analysis Untouchability grew out of a social class who did not possess the right of holding and usage of land. These landless workers were semi-slaves and were in debt bondage. They toiled for other peoples land but were forced to carry on unclean occupations. They were secured by the social bondage and by the concept of destiny or Karma.

Check Your Progress 2

1) The scheduled castes are:
   a) Kshatriyas
   d) Untouchables outside the four-fold division of various systems or the caste system.

2) “Antyajas” was referred in the Writings of Alberuni.

3) The correct statement is:
   i) Untouchables do not constitute a homogeneous group.
22.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- Explain who are tribes and what makes them different from non-tribes;
- Relate the occupation of tribes within the environment that they live;
- Understand the problems of tribes within the environment that they live; and
- Analysis the various ways in which their problems are being tackled.
22.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit of this block you have acquainted yourself with the problems of Scheduled Castes. In this unit we shall be talking about the problems of Scheduled Tribes.

To understand the problems of Scheduled Tribe we think it necessary to define tribes in terms of their general characteristics and to explain what is meant by Scheduled Tribes. We shall also describe the constitutional safeguards which are provided to them. The unit also discusses their demographic profile with regard to geographical area, racial and linguistic affinities. Next we will try to understand their economic pursuits and their relationships with regard to land and forest. We will also discuss their educational status and show how the low rate of literacy is contributory factor for their exploitation. Tribal struggles and movements are manifestations and vent to their frustration. In the end, the unit presents the various opinions as to what should be the proper approach to their development.

22.2 DEFINITION OF TRIBE AND SCHEDULED TRIBE

In this section we shall be dealing with the definitions of tribes and the Scheduled Tribes. Let us begin with the definition of tribe.

22.2.1 The Tribe

A universally acceptable or applicable definition is lacking. However the word tribe is widely used. Purely for the sake of classification, the British Government used the word tribe, along with prefixes like jungle and hill, aboriginal, indigenous to describe, the people who seemed to have little contact with the main culture. The word tribe has been used by European historians to refer to distinct groups like the Gauls and Anglo-Saxons and autonomous political groups such as Lichchhavi, Mulla, Khasa, etc. in ancient India. British social anthropologists like Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard,. Fortes and Nadel have used the word tribe to refer to autonomous political unit which lives in its own territory and possesses its own distinctive way of life.

Efforts have been made to look for some generalisation and common denominators if not a proper definition. In the Indian context the Commissioner for, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in his report for the year 1952 has listed such common features. These are that the tribes: (i) live away from the civilised world in the inaccessible parts lying in the forest hills, (ii) they belong to either one of the three stocks—Negrito, Australoid or Mongoloids, (iii) they speak the same tribal dialect, (iv) they profess ‘primitive’ religion known as ‘Animism’ in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element, (v) they follow ‘primitive’ occupations such as gleaning, hunting and gathering of forest products; and (vi) they are largely meat eaters. The list also includes their love for food and drink.

A.R. Desai commenting on the above features, says that of 25 million people described as tribal only 5 millions possess these features. D.N. Majumdar states that, except for the tribes of Eastern India, everywhere else ethnic strains have crisscrossed in the sub-continent. Thus, it is very difficult to say with certainty
what is tribal. Yet, in spite of the social and cultural differences that exist among the tribal people dispersed over India. In their social life kinship is the principal unit of organisation. They are often the units for land ownership, economic production and consumption. In spite of the differences some common features do exist.

In the subsistence economy very few tribal groups are still hunters and food gatherer but many of them practise shifting agriculture or cultivation. And still others are pastoral nomads. Tribes do not usually take to trading or financial transactions. Thus, the society is more or less homogeneous with little sense of hierarchy and subordination.

Politically, tribal societies are relatively simple and egalitarian. Lineage, clan and kinship tend to overlap with their political organisations. Tribal religion tends to be less systematised, less specialised and elaborated.

These above mentioned characteristics are very general and preliminary and are often shared by non-tribals also. Keeping in mind the problem of definition, F.G. Bailey thus suggests that the definition of tribe should be seen in a continuum: the tribe at one end and caste at the other end.

We have discussed so far about the problem of conceptualising the tribe. It still leaves us with the question as who are Scheduled Tribe?

### 22.2.2 The Scheduled Tribes

For ages, the tribes had little more than a casual contact with so called civilised or advanced cultures and societies. When the British consolidated their position in India, their expansionist operations necessitated the opening up of the entire country through an effective communication system. The British consolidated the money economy, acquired lands and introduced cash-cropping, land tenure, a new legal system, administration etc. All these measures opened the tribal land to outside influences. Though all these changes brought relief to the tribes these systems gradually became exploitative. Along with these the Christian missionaries in India exposed these communities of people to much quicker tempo of modern life by providing them formal, education, making them conscious about health and so forth.

The social, cultural and economic exploitations, of the tribals prompted them to go on wars and agitations. With increasing feeling of deprivation their agitations, struggles and movements also increased. In the wake of tribal upheavals and for variety of other reasons, the British thought of protecting the tribes by having regulated areas for which normal rules were not applicable. Along with the distinct and special arrangements made for areas populated by tribals, there also emerged the concept of tribe as a social category to differentiate them from the Hindus, Muslims and other distinct religious groups. The Government of India Act 1933 incorporated some provisions and the policy of reservation for the tribes notified in the Schedule.

The concept of Scheduled Tribe emerged henceforth and was included in the Constitution of independent India. A list of tribes was incorporated in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution. In 1971, the list contained names of 527 tribes. The reservation policy or the policy of protecting discrimination for the notified or Scheduled Tribes has been made a constitutional obligation.
Box 1  
Constitutional Safeguards

Under Article 15(4) special provisions are made for educational advancement of the Scheduled Tribes. These provisions are like reservation of seats and relaxation in marks in admission to educational institutions, scholarships, etc.

Under Article 46 the State is enjoined upon to promote with special care to education and economic interests of SC and ST and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Articles 330 and 332 seats are reserved for SC and ST in Lok Sabha State Vidhan Sabhas.

Under Article 339(1) the President may at anytime appoint a Commission to report on the administration of the Scheduled Area and the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the State.

22.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE TRIBES

Scheduled Tribe population, according to 1991 census was about 3.7 million and comprised 8.1% of the country’s total population. They are spread over the various regions of India and we find various races represented among them.

22.3.1 Geographical Zone

The tribal population can be demarcated in the following three geographical zones:

i) North-North-Eastern Zone: It includes the tribal areas of Ladakh (Jammu & Kashmir), Himachal Pradesh, Northern Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim and the North East comprising seven states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura).

ii) Central or Middle Zone: It includes West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Southern Uttar Pradesh, Southern Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra.

iii) Southern Zone: It includes Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and the two Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep.

The Middle zone has the largest tribal population and the tribal communities residing therein are better known than those in the other zones.

22.3.2 Racial Affinities

On the basis of racial affinities the Indian people are classified into various groups. The ancestry of the present tribal population is traced chiefly to the following three races:

i) The Negrito: This shorter version of the Negro is found in the Andaman islands. There are four Scheduled Tribes in this area, viz., the Andamanese (now settled in Strait Island, the Onge in Little Andaman Island, the Jarawa on the western coast of Middle and South Andaman Islands and the Sentinelese in the two Sentinel Islands.
ii) The Proto-Australoid: The tribes of the Middle and the Southern zones are generally assigned to this race and they form the bulk of the tribal population in India.

iii) The Mongoloid: The tribes of the North and North-Eastern zones generally belong to this race which is divided into two sub-types, viz., Palaeo-Mongoloids (long-headed and broad-headed) and Tibeto-Mongoloids.

Besides these three main racial groups, some tribal communities trace their ancestry to the Palaeo-Mediterranean stock also.
22.3.3 Linguistic Affinities

On the basis of linguistic affinities, the Indian people are classified into four speech families, viz., the Indo-European (Aryan), the Dravidian, The Austric (Kol or Munda) and Tibeto-Chinese. The Scheduled Tribes speak about 105 languages and 225 subsidiary languages, or dialects. The linguistic classification of the Indian tribal population is as follows:

i) Sino-Tibetan: In the North and North-Eastern zones most of the tribal speak some form or the other of Sino-Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman. In certain north eastern areas there is an admixture of the Mon-Khmer (Austric) speech, e.g., among the Khasi. In Nagaland, sixteen languages apart from numerous dialects are spoken.

ii) Kol or Munda: In the Central zone the Austric family of languages is dominant. The Munda languages lack the verb and gender differentiation. The only classificatory device is the differentiation between animate and inanimate. Some of the important Munda languages are Santhali, Mundari, Ho, Kharia, Korwa, Korku and Gadaba.

iii) Dravidian: The tribal people of the Southern zone speak some form or the other of the Dravidian languages, viz., Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Tulu. The Kedar, one of the oldest inhabitants of India, speak a Malayalam dialect. There has been Dravidianisation of significant South Indian tribes like the Chenchu and the Yenadi. Some of the important Dravidian tribes are Gond, Oraon, Maler, Kandh, Saora, Parja, Koya, Kolam, Paniyan, Irula, Malser and Malaryan.
Thus, the geographical zones described earlier correspond roughly to the three linguistic zones. But there is no correlation between race and language. People belonging to one race may speak different languages. Likewise, people speaking one language, or languages of one speech-family, may belong to different races. The Aryan languages are spoken by some tribal communities as a result of cultural contact. In the Middle zone most of the tribes have become bilingual, speaking their own dialect as also some form of Hindi, Oriya or Bangali as spoken by the neighbouring rural population. The Baigas have completely lost their original language and they speak Chhattisgarhi, though culturally they continue to maintain certain distinctive traits of their tribes.

Activity 1

Try and see if you can identify the racial and linguistic origins of some of the tribal people who you happen to know.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Name some of the important Dravidian Tribes.

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2) List out the three racial groups to whose ancestry the present tribal population is traced to.

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3) Name a few tribes from the Central Tribal zone.

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22.4 TRIBAL ECONOMY

The tribal communities are engaged in hunting and food gathering. They are also pastoral people and nomads, shifting cultivators, settled agriculturists, artisans and plantation, mining and industrial labourers. In Koraput District of Orissa we find the spectacle of co-existence of primitive groups like Bondas and Didavais. Also, there are tribals from two different communities who work in the HAL factory at Sunabad manufacturing supersonic MIG engines. Thus, there is wide divergence in the economic status of the tribes from region to region and within a region.

22.4.1 Hunting and Food Gathering Tribes

These tribes depend for their livelihood on gathering food (edible roots, tubers, fruits, nuts, flowers, leaves, honey) from the forest, hunting and fishing.
important tribes in this category include: *Jarawa, Onge, Chenchu, Birhor, Kadar, Maria, Kuki, Bonda, JuAng, Palliyan, Raji* among others.

They use poor indigenous tools like digging sticks, iron jungle knives, earthen, wooden or bamboo pots and vessels, bamboo baskets and sticks for food gathering. For hunting purposes they possess different types of traps like rope nets used by Birhors to catch monkeys and hares. Pit traps are used to catch big animals like wild boar. Three types of weapons are used: hand missiles like *bhala, barchhi, labeda* (thick wooden ends), *qulel* and hand operated implements like axe and knife. Dogs are used by *Kadars* and *Chenchus* for hunting. For fishing they have a variety of traps made of rope, yarn and bamboo. Harpoons, *bhala* and sticks are also used. Fishing by hand is also common. In food gathering, hunting or trapping and fishing operations tribals may take part individually as well as in groups.

### 22.4.2 Pastoral and Cattle Herding Tribes

The classic pastoral tribes include *Todas* of the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu, *Gujjars* and *Bakarwals* of Jammu & Kashmir, and *Gaddis* and *Gujjars* of Himachal Pradesh. In middle India *Kisans* or *Nagesia* of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh are considered to be pastoral to a certain extent. *Bharwad* or *Maldhari* and *Raisipotra* of Gujarat and *Rabaris* of Gujarastan and Rajasthan are the cattle herders of western India. *Gollas*, *Kurubas*, and *Labadas* are the herders in south India. *Bhotias* of the U.P. hills depend on cattle rearing. Some tribals are loosely called ‘pastoralists’ and they treat the occupation as a subsidiary one. Todas of the Nilgiris have attracted world-wide attention on account of their economy and religion being centred around the buffalo and their practice of polyandry. Pastoralists have adopted themselves in many ways in different parts of India. Some earn out their living by selling items like milk and its products, wool, hair and so on and others rear livestock and earn their livelihood by selling animals. They also consume milk and milk products themselves. The livestock provides them food usually not so much in meat as in milk, dung for fuel, hides for leather and utensils and wool or hides for clothing.

### 22.4.3 Cultivators

Agriculture among the tribes is of simple and poor nature. They do cultivation at subsistence level and are unable to meet their minimum daily needs. In the low-lying land, raising paddy crops is easy as artificial irrigation is not needed. In the uplands only coarser varieties of rice as well as pulses, millets and other products of minor value are grown. Their agricultural implements are indigenous and made by local ironsmiths. A few tribes use cow dung manure as well.

An important characteristic of tribal agriculture is cooperation seen at the time of transplanting of paddy and on other occasions. Help is rendered among the relatives or among the villagers or among the people of an area reciprocal basis. Some prominent agriculturist tribes are *Khasis* and *Jaintias* of Meghalaya; *Khasas* (Jaunsaris) and *Tharus* of Uttar Pradesh; *Kinnuars, Pangwals* and *Swanglas* of Himachal Pradesh; *Bhumij*, *Koras*, *Bhuiyas*, *Santhals*, *Mundas*, *Oraons*, *Hos*, *Kharwars*, *Baigas*, *Gonds*, etc., in middle India; *Bhils*, *Meenas*, *Garasias*, *Damarias*, *Koli Mahadevs*, *Varlis*, *Thakurs*, *Korkus*, *Dublas*, etc., in western India; *Koyas* of Andhra Pradesh; *Malayalis* of Tamil Nadu and so on.
Besides these plain cultivators, there are the hill cultivators who are engaged in shifting cultivation. Hill cultivation is a seasonally regulated sequence of procedure designed to open up and bring under cultivation a patch of forest land. After one or two seasons of staple cropping the plot is left fallow for years together with a view to restoring fertility of the soil through forest growth. Following this the plot is again cleared and vegetations are burnt and another cycle of cultivation begins. Hill cultivation goes under a variety of names: Jhum in North-East, Kurwa or Khallu in Santhar Paraganas, Bewara in Ranchi and Palamau in Bihar, Podu, Rema, Dahi, Kaman, Bringa, Gudia, Dongarchas in Orissa, Penda, Dahitya, Biwar, iguahar, Farhha, Dippa, Marhan or Erka in Madhya Pradesh, Kondapady in Andhra Pradesh.

Approximately more than 6 lakh Scheduled Tribe families are engaged in shifting cultivation covering about 10 million hectares of land. Tribal people inhabiting in the hill forests of all the seven states in the North-East, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh are dependent on hill cultivation for their livelihood. These tribes include Garos, Tripuris, Noatias., a few Halams and Riangs, Chakmas, Mags and Nagas with their different nomenclatures in the North-East, Malers or Sauria Paharias of Santhal Paraganas, Hill Kharias and a few Korwas, Parhaiyas and Birjias in Bihar, Saoras and Kutia Kandhs in Orissa, Kamars, Baigas and Maria Gonds in Madhya Pradesh, Konda Dhoras and Nooka or Mukha Dhoras and a few Bagatas in Andhra Pradesh and Malaikudis in Karnataka.

22.4.4 Simple Artisans

Most of the tribal people know matting, basketry, bamboo work, spinning, etc., which serve as subsidiary occupations for them. But a number of tribes subsist on crafts and cottage industries like basket making, tool making (iron and wooden). Other tribes use, spinning and weaving, metal work, ironsmithy, etc. They visit the periodical markets (haats) with their finished goods and dispose them off by barter or on cash.

Some of the tribes whose primary occupation is craft are mentioned below. Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu & Kashmir and Gaddis, Gujjars and Kinnaurs of Himachal Pradesh produce wool products. In Bihar Lohras, Karmafis, Chick-Balks and Mahalis are artisans. Lohras and Karmalis fulfil the needs of agricultural tribes or other people by making and repairing their agricultural implements and other tools. Chick-Balks supply hand-woven cloth to Mundas, Oraons, etc. Mahatis make baskets and other bamboo products to earn their livelihood. Asurs of Bihar and Agarias of Madhya Pradesh were traditionally ironsmiths. Now, they have adopted agriculture and hunting. Kolams of Maharashtra were formerly engaged in basket and mat making from bamboo strips and also from paratyia (remnants of cotton). This traditional occupation is still practised though they have adopted agriculture. Vitilias of Maharashtra are engaged in making bamboo mats, baskets and winnowing fans. Irulas of Tamil Nadu and Thotis of Andhra Pradesh make bamboo mats and baskets and subsist on this. Kotas of the Nilgiris depend on carpentry, tool making and pottery.

22.4.5 Labour: Agricultural and Non-agricultural

Traditional agriculturists or artisans amongst tribals have adopted an economic life of casual labour. Agricultural work is mostly available in the locality itself.
within a radius of a few kilometres. Non-agricultural work potentialities are situated in the local as well as at distant places in different states. Non-agricultural labourers are mostly engaged in different industries. Tribals have taken to such work on account of pressure on land due to population growth and opening of mines and industries in tribal areas. They go out as seasonal migrants to nearby or distant towns, mines, mills and tea gardens to work as labourers. They work in railway and road construction, forestry, construction work like civil work in emerging factories, houses, dams, bridges, etc. Their men and women move to the working places in bands. The proportion of tribals is progressively increasing in categories like factory workers, plantation workers, trade, commerce, business, transport, mining, construction, political or social work, Government service, municipal service, teaching, priesthood, entertainment art, etc. The core of industrial India falls in middle India and the tribals of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh from the bulk of industrial labour in this zone. The tribals of Chhota Nagpur also work in the tea garden of Assam and West Bengal and at the same time are engaged in forestry and other works of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Santhals are said to be good pick miners and coal cutters. Half of the labour force in the manganese industry of Madhya Pradesh tribal.

Santhals and Hos dominate in iron mines and industry in Bihar. Most of the tribals are unskilled labourers in quarries, mines and industries. Landless labourers have accepted this work as their main occupation while for others it is a subsidiary occupation. Occupational changes are obvious among village artisans. There is gradual disappearance of village craft due to the impact of industrialisation. Along with occupational changes there is considerable increase in income and expenditure patterns of the families of industrial labourers. Material culture has undergone much change.

22.4.6 The Skilled White-collar Job Holders and Traders

Some individuals or families of tribal communities of all the regions are working for their livelihood in offices, hospitals, factories, and business enterprises. Some of them are engaged in commercial trade of their own. The reservation for the Scheduled Tribes in services and post in Government offices and Public Sector Undertakings as laid down in the Constitution has helped a lot in creating this type of economic life among tribals. It is observed that mostly the educated and the converted Christian tribals are engaged in offices, hospitals, administrative ‘jobs, etc. The representative tribes of traders are Bhotias of the Indo-Tibetan border and Valmikis of Andhra Pradesh.

22.5 TRIBE, LAND AND FOREST

It is evident from our discussion on the tribal economy that the majority of the tribes depend on land and forest to make a living. Their social life is also interwoven around the land they live on. They have thus a physical and emotional attachment and dependence on land and forest. Most problems faced by these people arise out of their relation to land and forest. Let’s have a look at the land and agrarian situation to understand their problem better.

22.5.1 Land and Agrarian Situation

According to the agricultural census of operational holdings held in 1981, the
holdings of the Scheduled Tribes amount to 167.04 lakhs hectares forming 10.2% of the total holdings. Their share in the total number of operational holdings is low in proportion to their population. The decreasing per capita landholdings has resulted in scarcity of land and displacement of tribals from their land. Land scarcity and backwardness is, thus, one of the central aspects of the agrarian situation.

The process of land alienation among the tribals has been going on for a long time. After the advent of British rule, with opening up of means of communication and increased expansion of British dominion there was infiltration by non-tribals into tribal areas. The tribals increasingly came into contact with non-tribals. Some of the effects of their contacts were healthier but the tribals were invariably exploited because of their ignorance and innocence. Frequent needs for cash in lean times and famines forced the tribals to get into the clutches of money lenders. Inadequate credit facilities led to unscrupulous money-lending. Loans were advanced to them in cash at exorbitant interests. The tribals being ignorant and illiterate didn’t maintain records of such transactions and were not aware of the malpractices of the money lenders. Often they parted with practically all they produced to payback debts and interests or gain their land in lieu of payment. The money-lenders invariably got the land transferred to their name. This exploitation was sought to be checked by various Acts adopted by the Government. But because of the cunningness of the money-lenders and their collusions with politicians, bureaucrats and police administration the provisions of the acts proved to be ineffective and the exploitation of tribal steadily continued.

Land of the tribals has also increasingly been taken over by the Government for mining and industries. The tribals are uprooted and displaced from their land. They have also not benefited from industrialisation. As the tribals have remained mostly unskilled, their claims for getting government jobs have been overlooked. Those few who are employed are invariably in menial jobs. Industrialisation, thus, hasn’t provided an alternative employment to the tribals.

In the matter of agricultural practice, the tribals are still lagging behind as stated earlier. The majority of the tribes practise shifting agriculture. They clean patches of forests and slopes of hills by burning the trees and bushes and then dibbling the seed in ash-covered soil. For the first few years, good crops are produced but the fertility of the soil is soon lost out. Cultivators then shift to other areas and the cycle continues. It is generally agreed that this is not an ideal method. Experts have described this practice as being wasteful and primitive causing soil erosion and floods and thus causing ecological imbalance. A lot has been said about the improvement of shifting cultivation and weaning people away from it. But it is so not easy for shifting cultivation is a way of life of the tribals. Their social and physical climate, terrain habits, customs, etc. are interwoven with this system of cultivation. Any improvement or replacement of shifting cultivation must therefore take into account the socio-economic conditions of the people. Attempts were made to bring the shifting cultivators or Jhumias down to the flat regions in Tripura. They were provided with, subsidies to arrange the basic requirements for a settled agriculture.

This arrangement had proved to be a failure. However, the people who practised subsistence economy were placed in direct competition with largely monetised economy. Thus, the Renuka Ray Committee has been very critical of this. The
Dhebhar Commission visited some such areas and remarked some of these attempts as ‘absurd’. Thus, weaning people away from it does appear to be not the only solution. The problem in case is to be understood in the backdrop of the peoples’ sociocultural and economic relations.

Another problem which accentuates the situation of land scarcity and land alienation among the tribals is their growing population.

As in other matters of agriculture the tribals also suffer from terrible inadequacies. They do not have access to credit facilities, irrigation works, etc.. On the whole, in matter of planned development the tribals have been neglected.

The situation of tribals is also worsened by the fact that their fields have low productivity. Talking about the poor yield of land, especially in central India, ‘Stephan Fuchs (1972) has pointed out various reasons. ‘Poor stony soil, paucity of irrigation facilities and employment of very crude techniques and implements of cultivation are some of the main reasons for the poor quality of productivity.

22.5.2 Forest and Forest Produces

Most of the tribal areas is covered with forest. The tribals are very heavily dependent on forest not only on account of the geographical configuration but because of unproductive agriculture. Despite the popular cliche that “tribals are forests” and the symbiotic relationship between them and forest, there is almost constant friction between tribals and the Government (Forest Departments). There is a basic difference in the perceptions of the tribal people and the Government in respect of forests. The tribals regard forest as their mother. Those forests produces which are important for the tribal people may have little value in the eyes of the Government. On the other hand, the tribal may not have much concern about timber or such other items which the Government may consider as the main produce of forests. After reservation of forests the tribal people had to seek permission of Government officials even for the use of those resources which were a part of their long tradition. Then there was competition for their use from outsiders. Restrictions were imposed on tribals even on use of bamboo forests and collection of firewood.

In the new forest policy the needs of the local people have received some appreciation. Yet certain provisions therein cast a heavy burden on tribal economy. The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 brought a basic change in the management of forest. Earlier, after clearing natural forests, the plantation of single species like teak, for meeting the needs of outside economy for timber, was accepted as scientific management of forests. But now forest is taken to mean natural forests comprising all sorts of trees, plants, creepers, etc. This new perception serves the interests of tribals. In a bid to convert ordinary forests into full-bloom natural forests and protect environment, the entry of the people has still been banned and they are being denied even their ordinary requirements from the forest. The Government gives contract to others of minor forest produces like bamboo, tendu leaves, mahua, kusum, karamy and sal seeds etc. This contributes to the state revenues. This is meant in away to eliminate the middle-men who exploit the tribals. But the take over has adversely affected the customary practises of Tribals like their weekly market. Earlier, this weekly market was a place of tribal collective activity which has been disrupted. The takeover of forests by Government has affected the tribals in other ways too.
In times of famine, scarcity and lack of returns from agriculture the tribals used to arrange items for their basic survival from the forest. They killed small game, gathered tubes, leaves berries, etc. which helped them tide over the period of stress. The ecological link between tribal, and nature has suffered a great deal with rapid destruction of forest and by Government controls.

In many cases due processes of law have not been followed for notifying reserved forests. This has led to serious problems in Sonbhadra (U.P.), Garhchiroli (Maharashtra) and Singhbhum (Bihar). There are also disputes regarding demarcation not only between the people and the Forest Department but also between the Forest Department and the Revenue Department. In some states the problem of Forest Villages has still not been solved. At present, there is direct confrontation between the Government and the tribal people in some areas like Adilabad, Khammam and Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh, South Bastar in Madhya Pradesh, Garhchiroli, Chandrapur and Nasik in Maharashtra and Singhbhum in Bihar. In many areas the forests are not out of effective control of the Forest Department. In the light of these it seems necessary to consider justifiable demands of the people and avoid superimposition of laws unilaterally as well as to check authoritarian and oppressive behaviour of the departmental officials.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) Describe in few words the relationship the tribals have with the forest.

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2) Name the tribes whose primary occupation is craft.

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3) Hill cultivation goes under a variety of names what are those names?

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4) Who are the pastoralists?

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22.6 TRIBES AND EDUCATION

Education is considered not only one of the important inputs or factors for social change but an index of social change. Thus education was one of the means sought to uplift the tribes from their deplorable conditions. Articles 46 of our Constitution is looking after the educational development of Scheduled Tribes as stated earlier. It states “The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

Accordingly special assistance has been given to promote education among the Scheduled Tribes. A number of schools and hostels have been opened in tribal areas. Free education, tuition fees, hostel fees, distribution of text books, reservation of seats in schools, colleges and universities, etc. are some of the facilities made available to them. In spite of the specific constitutional provisions made and the various grants and facilities available for the promotion of education among the tribes we do not get a satisfactory picture. The statistics show us how dismal the literacy rate is among the Scheduled Tribes over the years.

22.6.1 Literacy Rates

We find that the Scheduled Tribes have doubled their literacy level in the previous two decades (1961-1981). Yet, their achievement in literacy is not comfortable when we compare it to the rates of literacy among other communities.

The gap between tribals and non-tribals in the field of education has not decreased. Instead, it has widened in some areas. This is so in spite of the promotional scheme of tribal development adopted by the Government. Now, the question is why is this so? We shall discuss this in the following section.

22.6.2 Problems of Education

The problems of education among the Scheduled-Tribes have been studied by various committees, institutions, organisation and many individuals. They all could find some basic problems of education among the tribes. One of the basic problems plaguing the tribes is their economic, deprivation and backwardness. A large number of tribals are living below the poverty level. To them, education is a luxury. Moreover, in the case of those people who are engaged in agriculture their minor children are also engaged in it. This is one of the reasons for the few enrolments of children from the families of the tribal cultivators. A very few tribal parents are educated. The illiterate parents do
Scheduled Tribes

not realise the value of education. They feel little urge to educate their children. Many tribals like – Gujjars, Bhotia, Gaddi etc. are nomads who move from place to place. There are others who migrate from one place to the other in search of employment. It is inevitable under the circumstances that education in both the cases is neglected.

The medium of instruction is another hindrance for promotion of education among the tribes. The medium of instruction in schools in tribal areas is not the mother tongue of the tribals inhabiting there. Many a times it is found that tribal languages do not have a script of their own. In almost all the schools in tribal areas there is lack of sufficient number of tribal teachers. The curriculum of education is another important problem. The existing curriculum as experts rightly feel, is not suited and has little relevance to the tribal people.

These and many other such problems haven’t really been kept in mind when various schemes for tribal development have been adopted. There is often neutral formalism in bureaucracy about many welfare and development schemes formulated for them. The tribals are still at fringe and the various types of development have hardly touched them. They remain discontented to a large extent. A number of agitations and struggles among the tribes are expression of their discontent.

22.7 TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

Numerous uprisings and movements among the tribes especially in Bihar had occurred as early as in 1772. Some of the important movements among the tribes in British India were Mizos (1810), Kols (1795 & 1831), Mundas (1889), Santhals (1853), Muria Gonds (1886) and so forth.

When the British came to India and expanded their rule, they came into clash with the tribes also. The British interfered in many of their customs which was resented by the tribes. But more than anything, the oppressive and exploitative landlords, middlemen, money-lenders, forest officials and princely chiefs contributed much to tribals rise in a revolt. They were eventually subdued, disarmed and or many a times appeased.

The tribes who were in close proximity to Hindus and who were influenced by the Hindu customs and traditions had their own preoccupations, their movements were directed to raising their social mobility. Their movements have been compared to the status mobility movements among the lower castes. The tribes like Bhumij, Kond, Juang and number of other tribes were influenced by caste associations of Hindus. In Madhva Pradesh, for instance, there were movements among the Gonds claiming Kshatriya status. The sought to purify and cleanse their social and religious institutions in tune with the practice of high caste Hindus.

After Independence the Scheduled tribes, whether Hinduised or Christianised, were granted certain economic, educational, political and administrative privileges. This made them aware of themselves as unified groups who could hold on their own against all sorts of oppressions. They also could claim higher status because of education, economic benefits, political power etc. There are instances of movements among tribes seeking their ties not only with fellow tribes but also with the other oppressed sections of people.
As we can see, coming together for collective actions among tribes has found range of variations. But when we examine a social movement in all its aspects, we find that a tribal movement does not fit neatly into a type. A movement tends to serve several interests at the same time, apparently political movement has social, economic and cultural even if its such objectives are not formulated. For instance, the Jharkhand Movement was a political movement fighting for a homeland – a federal state. But it has an ideological base like a cultural reawakening, attempts to common religion, habits, traditions, etc. which supply the infrastructures for the political grouping of tribals in South Bihar.

For the purpose of study, the tribal movements have often been classified into 3 types on the basis of their orientation. These are: (1) Movements for political autonomy, the Jharkhand Movement is a good example of this (2) the agrarian and forest based movements, the naxalite movements others involving tribes of Bihar, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh are fighting for their customary rights of land and forest. It can be are the results of oppression, discrimination, neglect and backwardness of the tribal people. (3) The third kind is socio-cultural movement.

While it is true that tribals are fighting to have their access to the fruits of development, there is also a growing realisation among them to preserve their cultures, customs, traditions etc. Thus there are revivalistic, nativistic and millenarial trends of movements among the tribes in India. This brings us to the questions as whether the tribals should be assimilated into the mainstream or whether they should be protected? And in what way they will benefit from the development taking place in the country? Let us see what various scholars have to say on this.

### 22.8 APPROACHES TO THE TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT

Under the British rule the policy of maintaining the status quo was followed. Hutton and others condemned too much of isolation as also of complete assimilation of tribals. V. Elwin wanted a revivalist policy to be adopted. His scheme of "National parks" pleaded for the complete non-interference of the British rule and its withdrawal from the tribal areas. In reaction to these conservative or revivalist views, G.S. Ghurye, a senior sociologist, made a case for the complete assimilation of tribals with the rest of the people in India. He said that it was misleading to call the tribes aborigines as they were actually only backward Hindus and the solution of all their problems cultural as well as economic and social, lay in their complete assimilation into the Hindu society. In fact, the tribal folks have distinct cultures and their complete assimilation with Hindus may not be possible without disruption to their culture, customs, traditions etc. Tribal culture has many happy and useful facets and the same must be preserved.

D.N. Majumdar opines that the best policy for tribes would be for their controlled (planned) and limited assimilation. By limited assimilation he implied; the need and desirability of preserving their useful institutions, customs, practices etc. though these are to be tribal in origin and character. The transcultural borrowing should be encouraged. For example, instead of forcing child marriage upon the tribal folk Hindus should adopt the tribal
Scheduled Tribes

practice of marrying late. It would not only improve average health but also put a check on the alarming rise in India’s population.

A plan for tribal development must be holistic. It should tackle all cultural, social, economic and political, problems of the tribals. Priorities must be fixed in terms of quick results. At the outset, the tribal support for planning has to be enlisted by demonstrating to them that an attempt is being made to change their life for the better and not at destroying whatever they have. The first focal point on which to concentrate is to their health any hygiene besides their economic life. No plans for change can succeed without their proper education. Instructions should be imparted in such knowledge as helps a person to be a better number of his / her own community much as possible the traditional system of imparting instruction should be retained. It is a human problem of immense magnitude for the solution of which administrators, social workers and social scientists must pool their resources together.

The informal approach towards development was laid down by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India. In his foreword to the second edition of ‘A Philosophy of NEFA’ by Dr. Verrier Elwin, Nehru wrote on 9th October, 1958:

“We cannot allow matters to drift in the tribal areas or just not take interest in them. In the world of today that is not possible or desirable. At the same time, we should avoid over-administering these areas and, in particular, sending too many outsiders into tribal territory. It is between these two extreme positions that we have to function. There has to be such developments as communication, medical facilities, education and better agriculture.”

Nehru added that these avenues of development should be pursued within the broad framework of the following five fundamental principles:

1) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and cultures.

2) Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected.

3) We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.

4) We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.

5) We should judge results not by statistics or the amount of money spent but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

These five principles have since come to be known as Tribal Panchsheel.

It is often stated that the objective of tribal development is to enable the tribals to join the mainstream of national life. The word mainstream, however, is a nebulous expression. Similarly, the other commonly used expression of ‘integration’ is open to different interpretations. What is desirable on the part of non-tribals is not to make any conscious or deliberate efforts to assimilate
or even acculturate the tribals. Let the non tribals acquire some of the good and healthy traits of the tribals cultures as relations is not possible in a system based on exploitation. The processes of socio-economic transformation have got to be duly regulated.

The tribal society has largely been egalitarian and democratic. The tribal elite today have the only model of larger national life comprising socially and economically structured society where there are the poor and the rich. In the tribal areas we still have an opportunity of strengthening an egalitarian society. Development in the tribal areas should be so guided that deprivation processes do not set in. B.D. Sharma, the former Commissioner for the SC/ST has observed that the entire question of tribal development boils down to two basic issues: (i) whether the traditional command of the community over resources can be preserved, and (ii) whether the egalitarian structure of the tribal communities can be retained and their social milieu can be taken advantage of to initiate a process so that their socio-economic transformation can be negotiated without deprivation. This process cannot be superimposed but has to be stimulated by the tribal community itself which has a tradition of self-governance.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Enumerate in few lines the problems faced by tribals in the area of education.

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<tr>
<td>4) Swanglas</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) List out some of the main provisions provided in the constitution for the upliftment of tribes.

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........................................................................................................................................
22.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to define the term tribe and have enumerated some of their characteristic so as to understand who really constitute the tribe. We have also talked about the term Scheduled Tribe and how it came to be. To have a better understanding of the problems of tribes, we have thought it necessary to discuss their demographic profile and describe their economic pattern. Besides, we have analysed the land and forest, the important components of the tribal economy. We have mentioned the problems that the tribal face in regard to their relationship to land and forest. In the section on land and agrarian and forest situations we have attempted to look at the roots of alienation, backwardness and exploitation of the tribals in India.

Besides analysing some problems relating to tribal education, we have mentioned about their repeated upheavals, revolts, struggles and movements which are expressions of their discontent, oppression and exploitation from all levels. As much as the tribals are fighting for their economic and political rights for their participation in the developmental process, they are also fighting for their cultural and social rights. We have seen the rise of many revivalist movements too. In spite of all these, the question that still remains is ‘what kind of development is best suitable for the tribals’.

22.10 KEY WORDS

Aborigines : The original inhabitants of a country or of a region or a place.

Assimilation : In the sociological context, it means the ethnic process of being similar or the process of being absorbed into the system. For instance, we can say that the Parsis, who came from Iran centuries ago, have got assimilated into the Indian culture though they still maintain their distinctiveness in some of the customs, traditions, dress, etc.

Gleaning : An agricultural practice specially among the tribes where they pick up the grain with patient labour after the reaping.

22.11 FURTHER READINGS


Check Your Progress 1

1) Some of the important Dravidian Tribes are Goud, Oran, Malas, Kaudh, Saora, Parja, Koya, Kolam Paniyan, Irula, Mauses and Malaryan.

2) The ancestry of the present tribal population is traced chiefly to the following three races: (1) Negrito—the tribes of Andaman belong to this racial stock (2) the Proto–Austrloid—the tribes of middle and southern zone are assigned. to this tribe (3) the Mongoloid—the tribes of the North and North-Eastern Zones generally belong to this race.

3) The Mundas, Santhals, Ho, Kharia, Kol are some of the tribes from that central tribal zone.

Check Your Progress 2

1) The tribal way of life—social, cultural and physical is interwoven with the forest. A majority of tribes depend on the forest for their livelihood, not only because of geographical configuration but because of unproductive agriculture. This depends on forest has a made forest an important face their life, they regard forest as their mother. Lately this relationship of theirs with forest has got disturbed because of governmental restrictions on the use of forest resources.

2) Some of the tribes whose primary occupation is craft are: Gujjars and Bakarmals of Jammu and Kashmir, Gaddis, Gujjars and Kinnaurs of Himachal Pradesh, Holras, Karmalis, Chik Baraiks and Mahlis of Bihar Kolams and Vitolias of Maharashtra, Irulas of Tamil Nadu and Thotis Andhra Pradesh.

3) Hill cultivation goes under a variety of names: Jhum in North-East, Kurmas or Kallu in Santhal Paraganas, Bewara in Ranchi and Palamau in Bihar, Odu, Rama and Dahi in Orissa Dippa, Marhan or Ekka in Madhya Pradesh.

4) Tribes whose main occupation is cattle rearing and whose economy is dependent on these are called the pastoralist. Some of the pastoral tribes are: Todas of Nilgiri Hills, Gujjars and Bakarmals of Jammu and Kashmir and Gaddis and Gujjars of Himachal Pradesh. Kisans of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, Maldhari and Raisi Potra of Gujarat and Rabaris of Gujarat and Rajasthan, Bhotias of North-East.

Check Your Progress 3

1) In the field of education tribals are lagging far behind when compared to non-tribals. One of the main reasons for this state of affairs is economic and social backwardness of the tribal people. A large majority of the tribal people are living below the poverty level. To them education is a luxury. Lack of access to schools is another problem for there are very few schools in the remote tribal areas. The life-style, customs and traditions of the tribal do not really encourage a culture for pursuit of education. The medium of instruction is another major problem in the promotion of education among the tribes. Very often they are taught in a language which
they are not familiar with.

2) Match the following

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Jaintia</td>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Koya</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Tharus</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Swanglas</td>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) To protect the Scheduled Tribes from exploitation and injustice, the Constitution has made provisions to safeguard their interests.

Article 46 of the Directive Principles of State Policy enjoins upon the State “to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of SC/ST and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

Accordingly, under Article 15(4) provisions are made for their educational advancement by reserving seats in educational institutions, granting scholarships, etc. Article 16(4) provides for their reservation in services.

Under Article 330 and 332 seats are reserved for SC and ST in Lok Sabha and State Vidhan Sabhas. Under Article 339(1) the President may at any time appoint a Commission to report on the administration of the scheduled areas and welfare of the scheduled tribes in the states.
MINORITIES

Structure

23.0 Objectives
23.1 Introduction
23.2 The Problem of Minorities in the Contemporary World
   23.2.1 The Dimensions of the Problem
   23.2.2 Who are the Minorities?
23.3 Approaches to the Minority Problem
   23.3.1 Assimilation
   23.3.2 Discrimination and Annihilation
   23.3.3 Tolerance and Equality
23.4 Minorities and the Politico-linguistic Variations
23.5 Minority Rights in Modern India
   23.5.1 Equality for Minorities
   23.5.2 Controversies over Minority Rights
23.6 Let Us Sum Up
23.7 Key Words
23.8 Further Readings
23.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

23.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the problem of minorities in India and also minorities in contemporary societies the world over. The study of this unit should enable you to:

- understand the conceptual and the theoretical explanations of minority;
- analyse the rights of minorities and the need for that; and
- discuss the problem of minorities in the contemporary Indian society.

23.1 INTRODUCTION

We have discussed in the previous unit, the problem of Scheduled Tribe which is a problem essentially of the disparities and deprivations. The problem of minorities is also similar to that of many tribal groups. The minorities, because, of their relatively less numerical strength feel that their rights are persistently ignored. This unit discusses how minorities have emerged and the problems they face and also their rights. We will also talk about the social composition and rights of minorities and the constitutional provisions for them in India.

23.2 THE PROBLEM OF MINORITIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

The problem of minority or minorities came to the fore-front after the World War-I when a number of new-states were carved out of the wreckage of the
Central European Empires and quite a few majority communities found themselves turned overnight into minorities in these states. For example, the Germans were reduced to a minority in Poland and the Austrians in Czechoslovakia. Lest the peace of the world be disturbed on account of ill-treatment of minorities treaties called the Project Guarantee Treaties had been entered into to instill a sense of loyalty among the new States under which they were placed and to enjoin upon the new governments to own the citizens of the erstwhile enemy countries as their new nationals and citizens.

23.2.1 The Dimensions of the Problem

In the past one hundred years or so the minority problems have occupied a very important place in the politics of countries the world over. Many issues have, however, remained unsolved. Even today minority problems in different forms appear very frequently in the West. Thus, race riots occur in England and the USA. Chechnya has been problem for Russia. In erstwhile Yugoslavia the Serbs and the Croats have fought wars of secession.

The position of the developing societies or the Third World is the same. Ethnic and communal riots are chronic part of their politics. The Indian case is one of the saddest ones. India has a record of over hundred years of minority problem. The major problem has been of the Muslims which split the country in 1947. Communal riots have become a recurring phenomenon in the present day Indian society.

23.2.1 Who are the Minorities?

In a very general sense, we can say that when a group of people is divided on any issue or approach or characteristics the difference usually produces a bigger sub-group and a smaller sub-group. The smaller sub-group is called minority whereas the bigger sub-group is called the majority. It is also possible that the two groups could be of equal strength or the smaller group may have control over power and other resources. So, it is not always the numerical strength or non-strength, which is the deciding factor for a group to be called a minority.

It is now widely felt that population size is not the only feature of minority status. If a group is discriminated against on the basis of religion, race or culture it can be considered a minority group. The sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities set up under the Human Rights Commission which drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has defined minorities as only those non-dominant groups in a population which possess or wish to preserve stable, ethnic, religious or linguistic traditions or characteristics markedly different from those of the most of the population.

In the International Encyclopaedia of the Social Science, Arnold Rose has defined minority without any quantitative connotations. He defines it as ‘a group of people differentiated from others in the same society by race, nationality, religion or language, who think of themselves as differentiated group and are thought of by others as a differentiated group with negative connotations. Further, they are relatively lacking in power and hence are subjected to certain exclusions, discrimination and other differential treatments.’

In any country religious groups may now be divided into linguistic groups and vice-versa. This phenomenon is known as cross-cutting cleavage. Accordingly, a person may be a member of a religious minority and yet of a linguistic majority.
or vice-versa. How such a person would behave depends on his or her interest from issue to issue.

Jagnath Pathy (1988) has also listed out the defining properties of minority group. In his opinion, the minorities are:

- subordinate in someway to the majority,
- distinguishable from the majority on the basis of physical or cultural features,
- collectively being regarded and treated as different and inferior on the basis of these features, and
- excluded from the full participation in the life of the society.

He further says, discrimination, prejudice and exclusion by the dominant group and self segregation by the subordinate or minority constitute the basis for minority identification (Pathy, 1988 : 28).

The wish to preserve distinctive features of one’s social and cultural life is an essential feature of a minority community. As a consequence there are always groups which are different from other group in terms of language, religion etc. The dominant group tries to assimilate the minority groups. The non-conformist very often, are likely to be persecuted. This attitude of the majority group generates a greater consciousness among the members of the minority community for preserving their separate identity.

The wish to have separate identity often gives rise to political demands. The demands are for either special treatment, recognition of the need for preserving minority identity or in extreme cases for autonomy or secession from the area.

With these general properties a group can be identified as being a minority group. There are, however, operational problems of applying such specifications with minority, because a great deal depends on the situation existing in a particular society at a particular time. Social groups can only be properly identified in terms of their relationship to other groups. The nature of such relationship is determined largely by the system of control over economic and political resources prevailing in that society and the historical development of those relationships. The numerical strength is, thus, not an objective criterion to distinguish one group from the other. The concept of minority is, therefore, dynamic depending on the relation of domination and discrimination.

A minority group very often organises into a coherent group drawing on the shared values culture, language or religion. For example, the Muslims in India are a minority group on the basis of their religion in comparison to the majority of Hindus. But they constitute a majority in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Similarly, Christians are a majority in Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and so on. Besides having an identity on the basis of religion, a group may also identify itself on the ethnic basis. Thus, a Muslim may identify not only on the religious basis but also on the ethnic basis. He or she could consider himself or herself a Bengali or a Malayalee. A great deal depends on the politics of the situation. Thus, many minority groups are all ethnic groups for they group around shared values and culture.

The Constitution of India uses the term minority but does not defines it any where. The Supreme Court and various High Courts have so far depended on
the statistical criterion. Any community that does not constitute more than 50% in the state is thus called a minority. Furthermore, the Indian Constitution recognises two types of minorities based on language and/or religion. Thus in India about 82% people are by religious designation Hindu. The Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and Parsis and other from smaller group of minorities.

The Constitution does not recognize minorities based on culture, race or nationality.

### Percentage of Population of Major Religions, 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State /UT</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Sikhs</th>
<th>Buddhists</th>
<th>Jains</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Religion not stated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDIA</td>
<td>82.00</td>
<td>12.12</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>89.14</td>
<td>8.91</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>37.04</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>10.29</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>12.88</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>36.22</td>
<td>2.04</td>
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<td>3. Assam</td>
<td>67.13</td>
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<td>3.32</td>
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<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<td>4. Bihar</td>
<td>82.42</td>
<td>14.81</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Goa</td>
<td>64.68</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>29.86</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
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<td>6. Gujarat</td>
<td>89.48</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Haryana</td>
<td>89.21</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>95.90</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Karnataka</td>
<td>85.45</td>
<td>11.64</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Kerala</td>
<td>57.28</td>
<td>23.33</td>
<td>19.32</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>92.80</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
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<td>12. Maharashtra</td>
<td>81.12</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Manipur</td>
<td>57.67</td>
<td>7.27</td>
<td>34.11</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>14. Meghalaya</td>
<td>14.67</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>64.58</td>
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<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>16.82</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
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<td>15. Mizoram</td>
<td>5.05</td>
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<td>85.73</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>7.83</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>16. Nagaland</td>
<td>10.12</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>87.47</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Orissa</td>
<td>94.67</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Punjab</td>
<td>34.46</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>62.95</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Rajasthan</td>
<td>89.08</td>
<td>8.01</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Sikkim</td>
<td>68.37</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>27.15</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>88.67</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Tripura</td>
<td>86.50</td>
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<td>0.03</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>81.74</td>
<td>17.33</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. West Bengal</td>
<td>74.72</td>
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<td>0.56</td>
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<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Census Data Online, 1991)

#### 23.3 APPROACHES TO THE MINORITY PROBLEM

We can see that the problem of minorities has assumed importance all over the world. We have already mentioned that a minority issue is not just related to its numerical representation in a society. It is related to its oppression. Besides, it is to be perceived on the basis of language, culture, religion, etc. in relation to that of a dominant group which is, very often, a majority group in a society.

A whole lot of theories have been advanced about the nature, causes and implications of the problems of minorities. Many scholars have tried to understand the problems of minorities in various ways. Some consider, that ethnic identity among minority groups is natural and primordial. The scholars...
who stress the cultural differences say that primordialism and linguistic differences among minority groups tend to generate conflict rather than cooperation among them. Other scholars consider the utilitarian bent of minority groups and state that it is representing a power struggle. They feel that cultural factors are incidental to this process. These scholars feel that the minority identity should be seen in the context of development where each group tries to forge an identity in its Struggle for scarce resources.

Various Approaches have been adopted towards a solution of the minority while some suggested assimilation, others suggested protection and for some the way out was to get rid of the minority community itself, by persecution, deportation etc.

23.3.1 Assimilation

The issue of minority and majority has been going on for centuries. Earlier the problem was seen as one of the conflict: of religions and ethnic groups. These days the problem is essentially related to national minorities. The concept of nation assumes that political boundaries must coincide with the characteristic of people living within it. A nation state prefers if possible a homogenous religion, language, ethnic identity etc. In the words of Clude “The rise of the problem of minorities was a logical consequence of the ascendency of nationalism. It is injected into politics ... the principle that the state should be nationally homogeneous and a nation should be politically united.” (Clude, 1955. p. 81). This gave rise to unrestricted control over given territory, uniformity of laws, languages, customs etc., irrespective of differences. Homogeneity is never a reality thus there are constant efforts by the majority to assimilate the minority. The minorities are made to abandon their ethnic, religious cultural and linguistic characteristics which differentiate them from the dominant group. For instance in the erstwhile Soviet Union, this kind of homogeneity was imposed with the intention of making the national state secure and its institutions stable. The welfare and security of the state were primary consideration. As a result the minority considerations were sidelined. It was not long before the various majority ethnic groups realised this kind of subjugation and fought for their rights.

The assimilation of heterogenous groups through coercion is not so bluntly adopted, states now prefer adopting other indirect methods. Discrimination is one such method.

23.3.2 Discrimination and Annihilation

While the minority groups are allowed to preserve their distinct characteristics they are also subjected to a great deal of discrimination. The discrimination may be in the form fewer government funds for minority educational institutions etc. Very often they are discriminated in their social life. They are subjected to ridicule and segregation which further compels them to stay away from the majority. That is why we find that minority groups stay together in ghettos away from the majority.

This discrimination in fact leads to assimilation among some ambitious members of the minority community. These people in order to advance themselves seek to rid themselves of their disabilities by deliberately surrendering their typical features. These disabilities may, many times, be
sufficient to induce assimilation, also certain encouragement is given to induce this change.

In case assimilation is found to be impossible, some states resort to the very direct method of annihilation. The members of minority group are eliminated by expulsion or by massacre. Genocide of the Jews by the Germans is a best example of this.

23.3.3 Tolerance and Equality

The policy of tolerance and fair treatment is adopted by many states when dealing with minority community. A great deal of leeway is given for the preservation and persuance of the minority social and cultural life. Though the state may have in mind the assimilation of various minority groups as the final goal. It will nevertheless adopt a tolerant attitude towards minority groups as long as the minority communities do not cause any destabilizing effect on the nation state.

We find this policy of tolerance and fair treatment guiding the provisions in our Indian Constitution. The Constitution establishes no state religion, guarantees equal opportunity to all irrespective of caste, creed and religion. The Constitution was not in favour of forced assimilation to preserve the rich harmony in Indian culture within the framework of national unity. The Constitution forbids discrimination against minorities. Thus, we find that Constitution envisages fair treatment for all.

However the question that has been asked many times is how are the minority groups faring under the Constitution? It is true that there is equality on the paper, but is it really practiced?

It is a contention of the many minority groups, also studies have revealed, that these groups suffer a great deal of discrimination in social life. They are often discriminated in all walks of life, in securing a job, in getting funds for educational institutions, in their social interaction and so on, inspite of the constitutional guarantees. In any case a great deal seems to depend on the bargaining power a particular disadvantaged group has. Some are at disadvantage in their effort to bring to state’s notice that certain of their sociocultural rights need protection. For example, the tribals of central India-Santhals, have been unable to get state recognition for their tribal language, inspite of the fact that there are large number of people speaking the language.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Name some of the major minority conflicts which have troubled and are troubling the world politics.
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................

2) What are the various approaches adopted to understand and resolve the problem of minorities?
   ........................................................................................................................................
   ........................................................................................................................................
23.4 MINORITIES AND THE POLITICO-LINGUISTIC VARIATIONS

Geographically, a minority may either be spread all over the country or concentrated in some regions. If a minority community is spread, it can carry out only some agitations for its rights. When it is geographically concentrated, it often resorts to movements for autonomy or even for secession. For example, the contemporary Jharkhand movement was a movement for regional autonomy while the Phizoite Naga movement is for secession. Further, if minorities are not found numerically spread in many areas but are influential in a few localities, they may field or sponsor their own candidates in elections and may form even their own political party. If they are weak, they support the candidates belonging to other communities in the elections. They support, however, those parties and candidates who, they think, are most likely to protect their interests. When minorities consistently support other individuals or political parties in the elections, they are said to constitute ‘vote banks’.

In India as elsewhere linguistic groups are regionalised. Most of North Indians speak Hindi in different dialects. In South India the different Dravidian languages, namely Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam, are spoken. Further, in Western India Marathi and Gujarati are major languages and Punjabi is spoken in Punjab. In Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh there are some smaller linguistic groups. In Eastern India Assamese, Bengali and Oriya are major languages. In the fringe areas and in between the major language groups of India there are small but distinct language groups. We cannot, therefore, call any Indian language group as the majority population. Hindi is spoken by the largest number about 30% of people. However, if we take the linguistic regions within India, we frequently find minority language groups. Almost all the Indian states have been reorganised to bring about some linguistic homogeneity of the regions. Yet a few minority languages exist in a state. For example, Konkani is found in South Western India where Marathi is the main language or the various tribal languages are spoken in Central and Northeast India.

Because of the peculiar political history, the Hindu-Muslim relation has emerged as the gravest political problem in modern India. During the British rule the economic condition of the Muslims deteriorated. The Muslims avoided English education and fell behind the Hindus in the competition for services and other avenues. A section of the Muslim elite advised the Muslims to accept English education and government services and to move away from the Indian National Congress which, they thought, was dominated by Hindus. The British followed their famous “divide and rule” policy and granted separate electorate for the Muslims as mentioned in the earlier sections of this unit. Separate electorate was later extended to the other minorities too. On the other hand, the insistence of the All-India-Muslim League upon the two nation theory led to the partition of India and large scale migrations from and to the country. Mostly the wealthier section of the Muslims went over to Pakistan and a substantial number of Muslims continued to live in India.
As already noted, the Indian Constitution did away with the concept of political minority. That is to say, under the Indian Constitution the minorities (except the Anglo-Indians) have no separate political rights apart from those which they enjoy as ordinary citizens of India. Every member of a minority-group enjoys rights only as a citizen of India. He/she is protected from all kinds of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. Every citizen has equality before the law and the equal protection of law. They also enjoy equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

There is, however, the provision of the affirmative action of the State aimed at ameliorating the condition of the weaker sections of the people. Thus, legislative seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Special protection of land and wealth is provided through the restriction on their movement from the places where they normally live. Government services and other facilities are reserved for members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes.

Yet, there is another set of rights which relate to the minorities. These belong to the domain of freedom. Specifically they are the freedom of speech and expression, to form associations or unions, to assemble peacefully and without arms, at a place or places, to move, reside and settle in any part of the territory of India. Minorities are also provided to acquire, hold and dispose of property and to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business. There is, of course the right to life and liberty besides the freedom of religion. However, the State can regulate or restrict any economic, political or other secular activities which may be associated with religious practice. The State may make any law providing for social welfare and reform of Hindu religious institution. The Sikhs have the right to wear and carry *Kirpans* (swords) but like the Jains and the Buddhists, they are regarded as Hindus, with reference to reform of Hindu religious institutions.

The second kind of rights of the minorities are group rights. Any section of citizens living in any part of India and having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve that. No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or aided by the State on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language, or any of them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Based on your observations and experiences, write a few lines on how you perceive the minority problems.</td>
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### 23.5 MINORITY RIGHTS IN MODERN INDIA

We have said that after World War I, a number of minority treaties were adopted for the new States. In India also before the transfer of power, the British thought of binding the successor regime to some special provisions regarding the minorities. But such treaties and provisions could not be effectively imposed upon sovereign States in Europe nor the special provision for Muslims could be successfully carried out in independent India.
The minorities, might, however, seek to ensure their group rights within the States of the sovereign constitutional systems. For example, the first representative system was introduced at the local government level in British India in 1872-83. Right at that time some Muslim leaders of Bengal and Punjab demanded separate electorate in which they wanted to elect their leaders themselves and not with the help of votes of other communities. They got their rights with the support of some British officials though the Indian nationalists strongly opposed the political separation of the minorities. The separate electorate was introduced, more or less in the same way, in the provincial and central legislatures, when they were created by the Indian Councils Act of 1909. Thus under the Government of India Act, 1935 altogether 18 separate constituencies were created through the provisions of the separate electorate and reservation for minorities.

The modern sovereign States in the world do not favour the separate electorate system formalities. But there are two other constitutional devices. These are collegial executive and proportional reservation. The independent India not only abolished the system of separate electorate but also removed the concept of political minorities. Instead, it has granted special cultural and educational rights to the minorities over and above the rights to equality and freedom that they enjoy as individuals. The cultural and educational rights enable the minorities to run their own educational and cultural institutions or foundations. We have mentioned in Section 23.3 of this unit the various provisions laid in the Indian Constitution to safeguard interests of the minorities, the state has no authority to undertake social reform which tamper with the cultural and educational rights of the minority communities.

The question may arise here as to why a minority community should specialty be given a group right when the majority community has no such right. The answer is that a majority community by virtue of its number can guard its interest. But a minority community needs protection from the dominance of the majority community. The minority treaty or the system, of separate electorate or minority rights are but some legal-constitutional provisions for protection of minority. Both these two systems have operated in Switzerland successfully under the proportional representation system, multi-members constituencies are created and the voters are given as many preferences as there are seats. Those candidates who get the prescribed quota of votes are elected. The quota is fixed on the basis of dividing the number of votes by the number of seats. This enables the minority communities to send their representatives to legislatures in strength proportionate to their number in the total electorates of the country. Similarly, the collegial executive is elected by a legislature through proportional representation. This enables the communities to be represented in the executive in strength proportionate to their number in the legislature.

23.5.1 Equality for Minorities

Minority problem can politically be conceived in two broad forms: 1) in a democratic set-up, wherein all members of a given society or country have political freedom, and 2) in a colonial set-up where a minority is either the ruling class or being ruled in the social condition of slavery.

Thus in a democratic set up a minority community may compete as well as collaborate with the majority. The basic desire of the minority in such a situation
is for political, social and economic equality. Political equality takes the form of equal rights. Social equality takes the form of equal status. Economic equality takes the form of equal opportunity and prosperity. The liberal democratic constitution can furnish the principles of equality before law and equal protection of law besides equal opportunity in the affairs managed by the government. But they cannot guarantee equal prosperity or even social status to all which largely depends upon economic prosperity. Objectively, in a country like India, containing several minority groups, the economic status may vary from group to group. Thus, the Parsees and the Sikhs in India are as affluent as some of the majority community of the Hindus. The Muslims are less affluent. But the condition of the tribal groups is generally much worse. Such conditions may easily promote disaffection particularly in a situation with the increased communication facilities and frequent interaction among the different groups.

Contrary to this, in a colonial situation the ruling class, which is often in minority is mostly privileged, the example may be given of the British in India fifty years ago or of the white community in South Africa in recent. When the ruling class is in a majority like whites in North America the condition of the minority is like that of the American Indians which is miserable.

All religious and linguistic minorities have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. The State, while granting aid to educational institutions, shall not discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority whether based on religion or language.

23.5.2 Controversies over Minority Rights

Some of the minority rights have become subjects of controversy. Regarding social reform among the Hindus, two kinds of grievances have been expressed. First, a section of the Sikhs resent being regarded as Hindu for this purpose. Actually, they are opposed to the reforms like the Hindu Marriage Act and the Hindu Succession Act which grant equal right to women and forbid bigamy of males. A section of the Hindus, on the other hand, demand that minorities like the Muslims and the Christians be brought under the scope of such reforms and all sections of the citizens be governed by a common civil code. But many Muslim leaders are opposed to it on the plea that the Muslim Personal Law is a part of the Muslim religion. However, by insisting in retaining the Muslim Personal Law they are also stopping progress of the Muslim women. The government of India regards it a sensitive issue and prefers to wait until the Muslim public opinion is sufficiently aroused in favour of bringing some change in it.

On the question of minority educational institutions too, there is some controversy. Many such institutions allege governmental discrimination against them. On the other hand, there are allegations of corruption and oppression of teachers in such institutions by their authorities. Moreover, many such institutions insist on religious or traditional education and thus oppose the modern scientific education. This keeps the minority youth deprived of modern education and thus lagging behind others.

For historical reasons, the Hindu-Muslim relationship has emerged as the central minority problem in India. We have mentioned earlier that the British fostered conflict and brought it ahead by partitioning the country. That was preceded
and followed by communal riots which had taken hundred of thousands of the lives of either community. Poverty and unemployment of the people have intensified conflicts among communities. Over and above all this, communal politics has become a part of the electoral strategy of most of the political parties in India. There is increasing intolerance of the rights of minorities in the country. While society needs to be tolerant of minorities, the State should be absolutely impartial about the different communities. Therefore, the principle of secularism has been enshrined in our Constitution according to which the State should keep away from the religious affairs and controversies of any community. Instead, it should strictly maintain law and order. This alone may maintain unity of the people and the unity of nations.

Check Your Progress 2

1) List out some of the minority group of our country.

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2) What are the provisions for minority rights enshrined in the constitution?

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3) What are the defining properties of minority group?

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23.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the problems of minorities. We find that it is a problem which is affecting practically every country. Though the problem is seen essentially in terms of numerical representation. We find that it goes beyond that, the problem arises because of subjugation, exploitation and discrimination by a stronger group towards the weaker group.

The status of minority group is defined not only by certain characteristic features but by the dynamics of politics which are prevalent from time to time. In a
The unit discusses the various approaches adopted to tackle the problem of minority. We can see that no single approach is used at one time, often it is a combination of assimilation, discrimination and a policy of tolerance that is being followed.

We also talked about the minority rights, the controversies regarding this and the prevailing situation of minority problem in India.

### 23.7 KEYWORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Consensus</td>
<td>Agreement in opinion of all people concerned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated</td>
<td>To cause difference or to change what was similar between things or people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>A dominant group is one which exercises control over other groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>To treat one with difference and prejudice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genocide</td>
<td>A deliberate extermination of group or a race. The extermination of Jews by the Germans during Hitler’s regime is a good example of genocide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segregation</td>
<td>To keep apart, to isolate a group from others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian</td>
<td>Concerned with looking at the usefulness of a thing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 23.8 FURTHER READINGS


Kabir, Humayun. 1968, *Minorities in a Democracy*, Firma KLM.


### 23.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) The recent conflicts in Yugaslavia between the Serbs the Croations assumed a major significance for the world politics. We heard about the race riots in America where there was backlash from the American blacks. The ethnic struggles by various minority groups in the erstwhile Soviet Union has resulted in a change in the configuration of the state itself.

2) Some of the major approaches which are often adopted as a solution to minority conflicts is assimilation, discrimination, annihilation and attempts to a fair treatment.
Check Your Progress 2

1) Some of the major minority group in India are Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsees, etc.

2) There are only two specific Articles (29 and 30) in the Constitution that explicitly guarantee the protection of the interest of minorities in India.

3) In the first instance the minority group is distinguishable from the majority on the basis of physical or cultural features. They are exclude from full participation in the life of the society, and are subordinate in someway to the majority. Discrimination, prejudice and exclusion dominant group constitute the basis for a minority group identification.
ETNICITY

Structure

24.0 Objectives
24.1 Introduction
24.2 Ethnicity: The Problem, Definition and Identity
  24.2.1 The Problem of Ethnicity
  24.2.2 Definition of Ethnicity
  24.2.3 Ethnic Identity: A Psycho-Sociological Reality
24.3 Ethnicity: The Various Perspectives of Analysis
  24.3.1 Perspectives on Ethnicity
  24.3.2 Some Characteristics of Ethnicity
  24.3.3 Latent and Manifest Identities
24.4 Pluralities and Larger Identity
  24.4.1 Quest for a Larger Identity
  24.4.2 The Emergence of India as a Nation
24.5 Deprivation, Disparity and the State’s Response
  24.5.1 Regional and Ethnic Identities
  24.5.2 Jharkhand Movement as an Example
  24.5.3 The Indian State’s Response
24.6 Let Us Sum Up
24.7 Key Words
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24.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

24.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- understand what the term ethnicity means;
- explain various perspectives on ethnicity;
- analyse the major reasons for the emergence of an ethnic movement; and
- relate it to various factors which come into play.

24.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you read about the problems of minorities. In this unit, we will get to know about ethnicity, a phenomenon which has become a thorny issue. This unit will start with the definition of ethnicity and outline some of the perspectives on ethnicity. We will also be explaining the importance of identity for a group which provides an ethnic movement the impetus and a motive. Towards the end of the unit we will explain to you how ethnicity is greatly shaped by disparities and deprivations; a modern problem of development initiatives.
24.2 ETHNICITY: THE PROBLEM, DEFINITION AND IDENTITY

You must have heard the word ethnicity or ethnic problems. The word ethnicity comes from the root word ethnic which loosely means race. An ethnic community does not strictly have a racial connotation. A community can be distinct from others in many ways: their racial stock or origin being one of them. A community may distinguish itself from others by way of a particular or distinctive culture, language, religion or a combination of all these. Because of this distinctive aspect the ethnic communities often come in conflict with other communities with whom they come in contact.

In this section we will understand this problem of ethnicity by first understanding what ethnicity means and the nature of identity of ethnic communities.

24.2.1 The Problem of Ethnicity

Ethnic activity and separation came in a big way in the post colonial, newly emerging nations like Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nigeria etc. This was easily and crudely explained away as tribalism, backwardness etc. But ethnic activity affected even the developed West; the problem of Welsh and the Scots, Wallon-Flemish conflict in Belgium, the Basques in Spain, to name only a few. Even the seemingly egalitarian conflict-free melting pot America has been shattered by black ethnic activity. The erstwhile Socialist block, now, and for a long time, has been cauldron of ethnic crisis, with Croats, Serbians, Bosnians, Slovaks, Czechs etc. in a conflict. In fact, ethnicity has now become a worldwide phenomenon.

The problem of ethnicity and national building has been widely discussed over the past few decades. The phenomenon of ethnicity has become an intrinsic component of the socio-political realities of multi-ethnic or plural cultural societies, specially in a country like India.

In India, with its variety of pluralities, in terms of language, race, religion and so on ethnic conflict has become a part of the political scenario. In most countries, including ours, the processes of development and change have generated conditions for ethnic conflict, as the fruits of these development processes have come to be distributed unevenly. Also the nature and character of the lower structure and rule of the political leadership have their role to play.

24.2.2 Definition of Ethnicity

The definition of concept in any field of social science is usually difficult. And a term such as ethnicity is loaded with meanings, values and prejudices and therefore, is even more difficult to define.

Ethnicity pertains to the word ethnic which is a distinction of mankind based on race. Ethnicity has now lost the original connotation. “It is now employed in a broader sense to signify self-consciousness of a group of people united, or closely related, by shared experience such as language, religious belief, common heritage, etc. While race usually denotes the attributes of a group, ethnic identity typifies creative response of a group who consider themselves marginalised in
society” (Barun De and Sunanjan Das, 1992: 69). Barth and Benedict Anderson feel that boundary is an important criterion for self definition by ethnic group, to separate themselves from ‘others’.

Let us see how the identity of a group is defined vis-a-vis another Community and how this identity becomes psychologically and socially important for a member or members of the community.

### 24.2.3 Ethnic Identity: A Psycho-sociological Reality

William G. Sumner observed that people have their own group as the center of their lives, and rate all other groups with reference to their own. He called this tendency of individuals to cling to their clan ethnocentricism. It is a generalised prejudice.

Why do human beings slip so easily into ethnic prejudice? Human beings have a natural tendency to form generalisations, concepts and categories. Their categories are close to their first-hand experiences. They also categorise basing on hearsay, fantasy and emotions. This process of social categorisation leads to the formation of an “in-group” and “out-group”. All groups develop a way of living with characteristic codes and beliefs. Therefore, the formation of ethnic attitude is functionally related to becoming a group member. According to the social categorisation theories given by H. Tajfel (1981) as well as J.C. Turner (1982), every social group attempts to achieve an identity in contradiction to the “out-group” Identity can be broadly characterise as the process by which an individual is bound to his/her social group and by which he/she realises his/her social self. In the context of the Indian political identity, such a formulation has several implications. The emotional fervour associated with linguistic issues can perhaps be viewed in the context of this definition of social identity structure of the different language groups in the country.

The normative character of ethnic prejudices involve far more than the fact that attitudes are shared by members of a majority or minority group. Each member is expected to hold such attitudes and various kinds of pressures are brought on those who fail to conform to it. A sense of identity is a very natural human tendency but when an ethnic identity is consolidated and used as a reference point for mobilisation to share in the power structure, the mobilisation becomes far more effective.

While ethnic attributes are categorisation for the purpose of classification which is a static formulation, ethnicity is a dynamic process, whereby a group of people or community regroups itself as an adaptive strategy in response to specific demands of the situations.

Various scholars have looked at this phenomenon in various ways. We will have a quick look at some of the approaches to the study of ethnicity in our next section.

### Check Your Progress 1

1) What are the various basis on which a community considers itself as distinct and different from others?

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2) Write in few lines what you understand by the concept of identity.

24.3 ETHNICITY: THE VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES OF ANALYSIS

Ethnicity has given new forms and meanings with changing process such as imperialism and modernity. Consequently, ethnicity has become an important field of study for social scientists. There are various assumptions regarding ethnicity.

There are some scholars who see the ethnic problem in terms of assimilation and integration; wherein an ethnic group is absorbed into the mainstream group or a dominant ethnic group: an assimilation of this kind in effect is homogenisation to create a nation state. To diffuse tension and to protect the dominated group it is also suggested to co-opt the marginalised group.

There are social scientists who see ethnicity as a natural bond between people, immutable or primordial (Geertz 1963:109). Thus the formation of political identity is seen by them as stemming from this primordial loyalty.

There are still others who essentially see no difference between class interest and ethnic interest. They argue that ethnicity is another alternative avenue for mobility (Berge 1976). Loyalty which goes in the way of mobilisation.

In this section and sub-section which will follow, we have given few ideas on ethnicity by some scholars who have worked in this area. Though there are conflicting and differing opinions on ethnicity some common points can be gathered from these various understandings.

24.3.1 Perspectives on Ethnicity

The conception that ethnicity is culturally pre-determined with its primordial loyalties and sentiments is largely discounted among social scientists. By and large scholars agree that an ethnic group is essential a social group when it is mobilised for collective action in pursuit of the interest of the group.

Writing on the politics of ethnicity in India and Pakistan, Hamza Alavi feels that the boundaries of ethnic categories are not ‘objectively’ pre-given, for whenever there is change of interest or situation, realignment has occurred as is evident from experiences. A so called objective criterion like, religion can be abandoned in favour of another like region or language. Alavi further states that the ethnic community, therefore, is not simply a politically mobilised
condition of a pre-existing set of people, described as an ethnic category. The ethnic categorisation itself is dependent in some way in the very emergence of the community. Experience shows that both ethnic category and ethnic community are simultaneously constituted in a single movement.

Writing about ethnicity and nation-building in Sri Lanka, Urmila Phadnis says that ethnic identity is a significant but not a sufficient requisite for evoking ethnicity. It is the mobilisation and manipulation of group identity and interest by the leadership that leads to ethnicity. Ethnicity is used as an ideology and also as a device to wrest greater concessions and shares in the power structure. Dipankar Gupta also argues that the manifestation of ethnicity in Indian politics is not so much an outcome of popular grass-root passions as it is a creation of vested political interests. He applies the notion of ‘conspiracy’ to ethnic politics in India to draw attention to the deliberate and calculated manner in which such politics is fashioned. He justifies his approach by asking the question as to, why from a variety of ethnic identities that abound in one society only certain ethnic dyads are politically activated and that too very selectively at certain points of time?

K.S. Singh and Sandra Wallman (1988) feel that ethnicity is being increasingly used to denote people with a distinctive set of bio-cultural and bio-social characteristics. Ethnic differences is recognition of contrast between us and them. In their opinion, ethnicity is an excellent tool for identification of the aspirations of a community for delineating its boundary, and for preserving its identity. These are some perspectives or approaches to study ethnicity.

### 24.3.2 Some Characteristics of Ethnicity

Following are some of the characteristics of ethnicity.

1) Ethnicity relates to ascriptive identities like caste, language religion, region etc.

2) Inequality in terms of sharing power between two ethnic groups results into conflict. The ethnicity is socially mobilised and territorially confined. It has numerically sufficient population, and is a pool of symbols depicting distinctiveness. It has a reference group in relation to which/whom a sense of relative deprivation (real or imagined) is aggregated

3) Being left out of the developmental process or even being a victim of uneven development, ethnicity causes ethnic movements.

4) Ethnicity is manifested in Indian politics not merely due to grassroot discontent but is also a creation of vested political interest.

5) Ethnic groups that use ethnicity to make demands in the political arena for alteration in their status, in their economic well-being, etc. are engaged very often in a form of interest group politics.

Before we try to understand the role of ethnicity in Indian politics, it is important to stress that whatever the difference between ethnic groups, the focus of their interaction finally boils down to the centrality of politics of who gets what, when and how? As already stated the focus of interests of an ethnic group, is to get some benefits for itself. The group often uses ethnic criterion like religion, language or caste to mobilise itself to give identity to itself which separates it from other group or groups. Thus, delineation of boundary of an ethnic group
of community is an important aspect of ethnicity markers. But exactly which one will get projected at a specific point of time would usually depend on where or how the person draws the boundary. Since delineation of the nature of boundary rests on the conditions existing at a given moment, the whole exercise becomes a response to the specific conditions. This adds fluidity to the situation and makes the identity projection a dynamic phenomenon. The nature of identity shifts along with changing circumstances and calls for change in boundary or a change in identification. The seeming singularity of identity, by and large, conveys a notion only. In reality, plurality of identities appears much more widespread than it ordinarily appears to be.

24.3.3 Latent and Manifest Identities

With plurality of identities, it is important to appreciate that all the identities of individuals or groups cannot be noticeable at a time. In fact, among various identities only one becomes manifest or apparent at a given point of time and the rest of the identities remain subsurface or latent. It may be repeated here that exactly which type of identity becomes manifest at a specific hour would depend on the nature of the immediate boundary delineation. It is, thus, through the interplay of latent and manifest identities that ethnicity expresses itself in a dynamic process. In general, whether an individual would identify himself/herself as a Hindu Rajput or a Bihari would depend, by and large on the existing conditions and felt needs of a given moment. A person ordinarily exercises his/her in order to work out what response it would be most appropriate at the given situation and acts accordingly. Thus, he/she contributes to the overall dynamics of the process.

Activity

Do you feel a sense of identity with the community you belong? If so, write in few lines the reasons why you have this feeling of identity?

24.4 PLURALITIES AND LARGER IDENTITY

India as we know has cultural economic and social heterogeneity. The complex ethnic plurality of our nation is a known fact. The ethnic groups vary in size, culture, consciousness of group identity etc. and very often clear boundaries can be demarcated between group. The system on the whole is highly segmented and heterogeneous.

In such a system what are the ways in which these groups have incorporated into a nation state?

In the sections to follow we will discuss this constant dynamics; the quest for a larger identity at one level and pursuance of ethnic identities at the other level.

24.4.1 Quest for a Larger Identity

There is a general notion that narrow loyalties are expression of retrogradation or prejudice. This originates from the concern for broader identity and lack of appreciation of the fact that plurality of identity is a reality. In fact, emergence of ethnicity all around primarily on cultural counts has put the boundary of any nation-state under severe stress. Implicitly assuming the political boundary as something very sacred, the quest for larger identity is usually emphasised.
No doubt, this serves some immediate political purpose(s). But at the same time, this emphasis on a large identity like nation ignores the reality of plural identities and their possible interplay and thus reverts back to the nation where religion, language etc. become static categories of ethnic attributes. At this stage, will be beneficial to understand how nationality or a nation has originate India. This we hope will clear, some confusions regarding the conflicting relationship between ethnicity and nationality.

24.4.2 The Emergence of India as a Nation

Geographically, Indian Sub-continent has facilitated the existence of numerous groups belonging to various racial stocks, speaking different languages and having different patterns of culture. Centuries of living together has not removed these differences. At the same time, the different groups moved in a unison in the political, economic and social spheres. The different groups were united by a common historical destiny which created a psychological unity. Though diverse practices were allowed, Hinduism retained a pan-Indian quality. Language too played its role in uniting the diverse elements: Sanskrit in ancient India provided the bridge between various pluralities, while Urdu, English and Hindi sought to do the same in later times. Thus, there existed a pan-Indian culture as well as various diverse, regional, local and ethnic culture what we may call as great and little traditions respectively.

Politically and administratively, India came under one umbrella under the centralised rule of Ashoka’s Kalinga empire. Later the strong centralised monarchy under the Moghals created a pan-Indian sentiment. At the same time, several political powers, small identities had emerged in India. These were like the kingdoms of Marathas in Maharashtra, Sikhs in the most of Punjab in the North-West and in Bengal in the East. These territorial identities were not always well defined.

By the time of the British took over the reign of India, the change was enormous. With the British came the printing press, new system of education, new means and modes of communication and transportation and ideas of secular state, fraternity and liberty. Years of discontent with the British rule and its policies resulted in the first indigenous revolt in 1857. “The failure of the movement of 1857 to drive British out of India led to rethinking amongst educated Indians about alternative ways and means of getting rid of foreign domination. They commented that new education, science and technology had to be accepted in order to forge a new Indian national identity. If Indians could strive as a single entity. The task wold be easily and quickly accomplished. Thus, in the second half of the 19th century, organisations with the prefix ‘Indian’ began to appear” (Gopal, 1992: 42). The growth of national feeling was facilitated by infrastructural facilities and conditions such as printing press, new means of communication and transportation, etc. as mentioned above. This growing consciousness was implicit in the growth of such pan-Indian organisation like British Indian Association and later the Indian National Congresion in 1885. Indian nationalism reached a maturity and became the uppermost concern, though there were occasions when ethnicity and plural identities were in conflict with nationalism. The latter, very often, appeared as integral part of Indian nationalism. Although secular ideas of nationalism were on the rise the question of regional identities were not dead and buried, rather, they were just relegated to the background. Thus, we not only had pan-Indian organisations like Indian
National Congress, there were organisations at the regional level like the Justice Party with its undertones of ethnic chauvinism in the Madras Presidency. However, “Secular nationalism, in the face of foreign rule kept ethnic and caste identities under control. It did not subdue them, but made compromises” (Ibid).

Once the freedom was won all the subdued forces surfaced again in the independent democratic India. Political power came to be the key to economic prosperity and enhanced social status. Henceforth, conscious attempts have been made by vested interests to whip up ethnic identity and invariably all political parties have made compromises with ethnic demand. Thus, we can see that the articulation of ethnicity or ethnic movements has closely been related to the power structure, the democratic process and initiation of socio-economic development.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write in few lines the opinions of K.S. Singh and Sandra Wallman on ethnicity.

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2) Who coined the word ethnicity?

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3) What are the principal arguments given by the tribals for their demand of a separate state of Jharkhand?

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24.5 DEPRIVATION, DISPARITY AND THE STATE’S RESPONSE

A careful observation will reveal that ethnic movements are generally the expressions of deprivation and disparities in sharing of privileges. The Jharkhand Movement, for example, was a movement essentially to fight the exploitation of tribes by non-tribes not only in terms of natural resources but in terms of subjugation of their culture.
24.5.1 Regional and Ethnic Identities

What can be gathered from the above is that state is essentially accommodative of some of the ethnic demands. This has diffused the ethnic tension and conflicts in the country. And in some sense this enhanced the mobility and bargaining power of the ethnic group.

The post-Independent India has seen a lot of changes. We have made some new strides in development activity. Amidst this, there have emerged new classes and groups which have asserted for their separate identity and have enabled them to claim a larger share in the fruits of development. They have also realised that in a federal political structure like ours, which has a strong central state, the best way of carving out more power is to capture power at the state level.

Soon after Independence the most powerful manifestation of ethnicity in India was the demand for creation of state or province on linguistic basis. The State Reorganisation Committee was formed in 1956 and boundaries of the states were redrawn on the linguistic basis. This forming of linguistic states was a manifestation of ethnic identity. This process reinforced the regional and linguistic identity and ethnicity. Thus, the demand for separate state on various accounts like ethnicity, language, etc. soon became a part of the political scenario. Various political parties were formed at the state level which were, by and large, identified with ethnic elements.

24.5.2 Jharkhand Movement as an Example

The tribal belt of Central India comprising the portion of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa has seen the rise of the Jharkhand Movement, which agitated for the formation of a separate state for tribals and which they succeed in achieving. The Jharkhand Movement is a good example of politics of ethnicity. The movement drew its sustenance mainly from the growing discontent among tribals on account of their land alienation, exploitation and political neglect of their problems at the national level.

The Jagirdari system in the 18th century turned tribals into more tenets. And they were exploited shamelessly by non-tribals. In the wake of this there were a series of tribal uprisings between 1789-1900 A.D.

The Christian Missionaries entered the area of the middle of the 19th century. They made available for the tribals the facilities of education and helped, increase employment opportunities and economic improvement for them. A few educated tribal Christians organised Chhota Nagpur Unnati Samaj (CNUS) in 1928 for the tribal upliftment.

The turning point came when a separate province of Orissa was carved out of Bihar in 1936. The Chhota Nagpur Unnati Samaj and its new incarnation was Adibasi Sabha in 1938, emerged as the dominant political party under the leadership of Jaipal Singh, a British educated tribal of the area and this party demanded, for the first time, a separate tribal province.

The principal arguments given for the demand of separate state were: the physical characteristic of the area is such as there is a large concentration of the tribals. Their mental make-up, language culture and values are totally different from those of non-tribals. Also, the tribals felt that the welfare and
developmental works both provided and carried out for them are pittances in comparison to the mineral wealth and forest resources exploited from the region. The tribals had a strong fear of losing their identity as they were in minority surrounded by the non-tribals.

The tribals were marginalised at all levels. This had generated tremendous frustration among them. This harsh reality had provided the ground for effective propaganda which had facilitated the growth of an internal solidarity and out-group antagonism. There was an antipathy among them towards the non-tribals or Dikus. Interestingly, the definition of Dikus has changed with changing context. Originally Dikus were Zamindars and their non-tribal employees. Later non-tribals of upper castes background were identified as such. At present, the people from North Bihar are branded as Dikus.

24.5.3 The Indian State’s Response

The Indian constitution, has recognised the ethnic diversities and ensured that these diversities may not be obliterated. At the same time, the constitution has also felt that ethnicity should not stand in the way of political, social, economic and cultural progress of people in the country. Provisions such as universal adult franchise granted to the people irrespective of their caste, race, language etc. granted to the people secular participation in various social and economic activities. The state has also turned to be reformist and has intervened to promote the lot of weaker sections and minorities.

Let us have look at some of the government policies to have an idea of the nature of ethnic demands and the State’s response. “The most important of such demands came from religion and linguistic groups the resultant fear of dismemberment of the nation, appears to have made such demands totally unacceptable to the government. Whereas, demand for linguistic reorganisation of the State have been considered despite initial reluctance. Further, a policy of accommodation is clearly visible on the official, language issue. Brass (1978) lists down four rules which regulate the attitude of government towards ethnic demands. They are: (1) All demands short of secession will be allowed full expression, but sessionist demand will be supressed, if necessary, by armed forces (2) Regional demands based on language and culture will be accommodated but those demands based on religious differences will not be accepted. (3) An ethnic demand will be accepted only when it achieves broad popular support in the region and (4) the views of other groups involved in the dispute is essential for problem solving” (Nair, K.S., 1985: 106).

24.6 LET US SUM UP

One often hears a great deal about ethnicity and ethnic movement without really knowing what these mean. In our unit on ethnicity we have attempted to bring across to you the meaning of ethnicity. We have also mentioned about various perspectives on ethnicity and we hope that you would realise that ethnicity can be looked from various angles. The problem of ethnicity cannot be seen only as an identity problem but a problem of deprivation and lop-sided development. By presenting the case of the Jharkhand movement, we have drawn attention to the underlying basic problem of deprivation and exploitation covered in any ethnic movement.
It can be said in the end that ethnic movements are basically movements demanding for a larger share of the fruits of development and for this they adopt various strategies of mobilisation. The ethnic identity having a strong emotive appeal mobilises people into strong cohesive groups which then go on to make their demands felt whether real or imaginary.

### 24.7 KEY WORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boundary</td>
<td>A line that marks a limit in terms of identity. A boundary separates one group from the other by pointing to the distinctive aspects of each group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnocentricism</td>
<td>It is a word coined by W.G. Sumner and used in his book ‘Folkways’. It is a technical term for the view of things in which one’s own group is the centre of everything and all other groups are scaled and rated generally inferior to it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-group</td>
<td>A social group of people having the same interests and attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-group</td>
<td>A social group of people other than those of in-group and their interests and attitudes are also different from those of the former.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latent</td>
<td>Concealed and not visible, lying undeveloped but capable of developing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifest</td>
<td>That which is clearly seen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilisation</td>
<td>In this context, it would mean to mobilise people into active participation in an ethnic movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primordial</td>
<td>Existing from the beginning. That is why it is said to, be very basic. For example, identity to one’s group by way of language, ethnic stock etc. is primordial because it seems to have always existed.</td>
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</tbody>
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### 24.8 FURTHER READINGS


24.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) An ethnic community may consider itself distinct and different from other on the basis of a shared culture, language, race, religion or combination of all these.

2) William G. Sumner observes that people have their own group as the centre of times and rate all other groups with reference to their own. Identity is this process where an individual is bound to his/her social group by which he/she realised his/her social self.

Check Your Progress 2

1) K.S. Singh and Sandra Wallman feel that the word ethnicity is being used to denote people with distinctive set of bio-cultural and bio-social characteristics which draws a line between us and them. They are of the view that ethnicity is an excellent tool for identification of the aspirations of a community for delineating its boundaries and presenting its identity.

2) The term ‘ethnicity’ was first used by W.G. Sumner in his book ‘Folkways’ (1906).

3) Some of the principal arguments given by the tribals for the demand of a separate state-of Jharkhand were that the tribals are different from non-tribal in terms of language, culture, values, physical and mental makeup. They feared that they will lose their identity of being minorities. They also argued that the welfare and developmental measures provided by the government are pittances as compared to the mineral wealth and forest resources extracted from the tribal dominated areas.
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\section*{29.0 OBJECTIVES}

In this unit, we have discussed the status of women in contemporary Indian society. After you have read this unit you should be able to

\begin{itemize}
  \item explain the concept of gender, role and status in terms of the status of women in Indian society
  \item describe the status of women in contemporary India, and within the family in relation to household work
  \item describe women’s status in the context of employment
  \item discuss the aspect of gender role stereotyping and its impact on women’s health and education
  \item explain and exemplify the status of women in the media programme.
\end{itemize}
29.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the issues affecting the status of women in Indian society. Here, we have examined various aspects of women’s status in contemporary Indian society in terms of their work, education, health and media images. This unit in brief will provide you the background for further discussion in the following units of this block. In the later units, we discuss in great detail gender issues relating to and important facets of women’s movement, work, education, health and legal aspects.

This unit begins with a brief discussion on some of the key concepts of sociology viz. gender, role and status. These concepts have been examined here in terms of women’s status in contemporary Indian society. In section 29.3, we examine the status of women in the family. Here we discuss the aspects of women’s status in the context of lineage, rule of residence, and household chores. In the section on women and paid employment we discuss how women perceive themselves as workers and how traditional role expectations influence women’s work. The employer’s attitude towards women employees, and the traditional positions of authority in the rural and urban areas, which have been affecting the status of women in society, are also explained in this section. In section 29.4 and 29.5 of this unit we have discussed in good length the impact of gender role stereotyping on women’s health and education.

In the section on women’s health we discuss aspects of food discrimination, amniocentesis and sex discrimination and women’s psychological responses towards these. In section on education we examine the educational status of women in terms of their performances and enrolment in various courses of study and gender biases in the textbooks. Lastly in Section 29.6 we present an overview of the status of women in media. Here we analyse a case study on the television programmes of Doordarshan. We also discuss briefly the changing facets of women’s status in contemporary India.

29.2 RE-EXAMINING SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

In this section we shall be examining the concepts of gender, role and status and the traditional view on women’s role and status.

29.2.1 Gender

If you have already studied the units of Blocks 1, 2 and 3 of the first elective course of sociology for B.A. at IGNOU, you may wonder why we are going to look at such terms as role, status, function and even family and education once again. We are going to do so because it is now generally accepted that sociology and sociological theory have not paid adequate attention to the fact that societies are divided or stratified into not only on the basis of caste, class, religion and so on, but also on the basis of what we call “gender”. The dictionary meaning of gender is “classification of objects roughly corresponding to the two sexes” as well as the properties of these two sexes. While discussing the differences between the sexes we generally focus on biological and reproductive functions, but differences in gender relate to various other
attributes, which may be socially and culturally determined. In other words sex is biological whereas gender is sociological, namely, the social meaning we attribute to it. Over here we shall be looking mainly at some of these attributes and how they come into existence. Further, we shall be looking at how the concepts of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ become important not only in terms of the difference between them, but also as concepts which help us better understand society and social relationships.

29.2.2 Role and Status

You are already aware of or will now realise the vital importance of the terms such as role, status and function for an understanding of society. These terms tell us how individuals and groups organise themselves as well as relate to each other. Very simply, role tells us about what is expected from an individual in a particular situation, while status deals with her or his expectations arising out of that situation. To put it another way, a role deals with duties and obligations while status deals with rights (but not necessarily legal rights). You will, of course, realise that these definitions or explanations are very simply put and may in fact overlook many complexities and even conflicts. For instance, it is commonly assumed that a mother is a woman, a wife, a cook, a teacher of her children, a daughter-in-law and so on. What happens when the mother is also the principal of the local village school? Not only does she have to deal with a range of roles and statuses, but also with the tensions that may arise out of her role as mother and her role as an administrator. We shall try and show you how conventional analyses have tended to concentrate on the traditional and accepted roles of women as bearers and rearers of children and not on their other roles. So far, biological differences have been focused on without adequate attention to the implications of these differences.

29.2.3 Traditional Expectations and Women’s Role and Status

As a girl or boy living in contemporary India, you would have heard of, or even been witness to, caste and religious conflicts and wondered how these conflicts arise. In many cases they occur because of differences in expectations. You would perhaps also have heard of how a certain caste or community oppresses or ill-treats members of other castes and communities. Such matters are now routinely discussed in the school, within the home and among the friends. Occasionally there may also be cases of men of one group or caste molesting or raping women of another group or caste. Such matters are also discussed, but perhaps less freely. As in cases of other inter-caste and inter-community conflicts, blame is attached to one side or another. You might also hear some comments on how it was really the Chamar woman’s fault: why was she walking by a deserted path late at night? Or if a large number of women have been molested you might also hear people justify this in terms of “the Chamar need to be kept in their place, and the only way to do so is to attack their women”. In so doing their izzat or honour is threatened.

There may be some further discussion on how such situations arise. How often though, have you heard people say that the Chamar woman was walking home in the dark because she had to look for work in the neighbouring village so as to keep her children alive? Or that the scheduled caste women were molested because the men were too frightened or powerless to defend them?
If you have heard such arguments you would realise that these relate to expectations: women are assaulted because it is expected that they will not strike back. More importantly in attacking them higher caste men are fulfilling their expectations associated with their superior position. Caste oppression is a recognised expression of power and control of one group over another.

You are probably now quite confused by the manner in which terms, such as ‘keeping people in their place’, ‘honour’, ‘conflict’, ‘power’ and so on have been used. To make it simpler we are now suggesting that it is essential for us to take into consideration how the various roles and expectations of social groups may compete with one another. By giving you above the random examples of the tensions experienced by an individual woman and then of women from a group caught up in conflict situations we wanted to make you aware of the fact that a study of Indian society needs to take into consideration the role of gender to understand the concepts of role, status, and conflict.

29.3 WOMEN’S STATUS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

In the following sections we shall be discussing various aspects of women’s status in society in terms of some important indicators. The form and extent of work and political participation, levels of education, state of health, representation in decision making bodies, access to property etc. are some relevant indicators of status of the individual members in a society. However, not all members of a society have got equal access to the factors which constitute these indicators of status. Gender is one of the crucial dimensions behind this inequality. Hence, due to various socio-cultural factors the economic and political roles of women have remained mostly unrecognised. In our society they are marginalised and economically discriminated against.

Contemporary Indian society has been exposed to the broad processes of social transformation, agricultural modernisation and economic development, urbanisation and rapid industrialisation and globalisation. However, these processes have generated regional imbalances, sharpened class inequalities and augmented the gender disparities. Hence, women have become critical symbols of these growing imbalances. All these have affected adversely the various aspects of women’s status in the contemporary Indian society. Within the limited scope of this unit we shall not be able to cover all aspects of women’s status in our society. Hence, we shall concentrate only on the aspects of women’s work, health and education, in this unit. Besides these we shall also present a case study on images of women as presented in popular media programmes. This will help you to analyse how media programmes reflect the status of women in Indian society.

29.3.1 The Family and Women’s Work

It is not enough to say that any society consists of men and of women. It is equally important to look at how the two groups of people interact, as well as at the roles and expectations each group has of the other. Such roles and expectations are a product of the stereotypes of each gender. By gender stereotype we mean attributes and qualities commonly associated with a gender. These attributes arise out of the interaction of a complex set of factors, many
of which operate in the context of the family. We shall now see how these stereotypes come into existence.

i) Lineage, Residence and Women

Those of you who have read Block 2 of ESO-12 will be familiar with many of the terms being used here. Most families in India, irrespective of their caste and religion, are patrilineal. The exceptions are the matrilineal Nairs of Kerala and tribes like the Khasis of Meghalaya. Simply put, patrilineality implies descent and inheritance through the male line. It also usually implies patrilocality or living of the husband in his father’s home, quite often with his father, brother or brothers and their wives and children. This is also a simplified definition of a joint family. Under patrilocality a wife’s visits to her natal home are usually restricted to ritual occasions, and a child is socialised mainly according to the values of the father’s family. Even though a mother has a vital part to play in the child’s life, major decisions regarding his/her future and that of others in the family are taken by the men in the family.

ii) Gender Role Stereotyping and Household Chores

Thus the first idea on gender role differences which a child acquires is that of women of one’s family marrying and leaving their homes to live with different groups of people. Secondly, men appear to exercise far greater influence in decision-making and are far more visible and audible than their wives. Third, most of the tasks within the home are done by the mother, grand- mother,
Women and Society

sisters and so on. At meal times, they carry food to the fields for the men. All these tasks which consume time and energy are not counted as ‘work’ or ‘employment’ and there is no payment involved. In Western countries, women’s groups, politicians and other concerned individuals have been arguing for payment for housework and childcare. In India the question of payment for household jobs has not really been an important issue or demand. As we shall see, there are many other issues, which require urgent attention. At the same time, it is important for us to remember that non-payment should not also mean non-recognition. The fact that women are expected to perform all these tasks as a part of their conventional roles and no special merit is awarded to them for these tiring and tiresome jobs. In fact, you are all familiar with stories of how Meena’s bad cooking resulted in her mother-in-law’s continued stomach ailments or criticism of Rashmi’s job as a teacher which left her little time to knit the usual number of sweaters for her family members. Figure 29.1 shows different concerns that determine the status of women in India.

Check Your Progress 1

i) What are the major attributes of gender differences? Use three lines for your answer.
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ii) What do you mean by gender stereotype? Use three lines for your answer.
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iii) Give an example of gender role differences in two lines.
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29.3.2 Women and Paid Employment

Not only is women’s productive work within the house unpaid, but also it often is not understood how multiplicity of roles may result in conflict in their performance. Let us discuss the issue of women’s work participation and grasp the nature of complexities regarding their work.

i) Women’s Work Participation

As per to 1981 figures, 19.7 percent of Indian women were recorded as paid workers, of whom over 87 per cent were in the unorganised or informal sector of the economy. The work participation rate of women in 1991 and 2001 was 22.3 and 25.7 percent, respectively. The increase in the work participation of women during the decade 1991-2001 is mainly due to the increase in the proportion of marginal workers (6.3 percent to 11 percent) in the total female work force. The proportion of the main workers, in fact, decreased from 15.9 percent to 14.7 percent. It is held by many observers of Indian economy that
without women’s paid or unpaid labour the Indian agricultural economy would not be able to function. In the informal sector, there is no legal redressal for problems; no maternity or other leave benefits and little security of service. Working long hours as domestic servants, stitching clothes for the garment export industry, working on the assembly line of small electronics manufacturing units or the beedi, tobacco, cashewnut factories, women live in fear of retrenchment, exploitation (often of a sexual nature) and inadequate wages.

What is particularly important here is that repeated under-representation of women’s work in census and other statistical exercises is a reflection of a combination of factors. Women’s work participation and their status as workers have been affected by various factors. Some of the important ones are women’s self-perception, employers’ attitude to women employees, traditional positions of authority in the rural and urban areas, and traditional role expectations. In the following sub-sections we shall be discussing a few important aspects of these factors.

ii) Women’s Self-perception

Let us look at how women perceive themselves as workers. Once in a job how a woman relates to it depends on her primary socialisation. If, as is the case with most, she has internalised the dominance of the homemaker role, she is likely to adopt a non-competitive, uninvolved and low profile at work. She is committed to the value system, which stresses that her energies and motivations are to be directed to making a success of her home and not her job. Interestingly, this is true of women in highly skilled occupations as well. In her study of women scientists, Maithreyi Krishna Raj (1978) found that though women were concerned about continuing their jobs, they were not looking for better prospects nor have they ‘begun with a long range career strategy’. Once in a job, women rarely attempted to acquire further qualifications, which would help in promotions. In fact, their attitude towards promotions was by no means clear-cut. T.S. Papola’s (1982) study of working women, which covered a range from those in supervisory posts in industrial establishments to unskilled workers in Lucknow city, showed that women were more different than men in respect of their promotion prospects. They felt insecure about their qualifications, personal attributes and ability to pass requisite in-service examinations. A small though significant proportion said that if promotions involved transfers outside the city or giving more time to the job, they would not be in a position to apply.

Apart from not applying for promotions because it would conflict with one’s family commitment, some women do not even enter the profession for which they have been trained. For instance, according to the 1971 census, 7.1 per cent of doctors were women, though the number of women actually qualified was about 25 per hundred. While some may have migrated to other countries or been temporarily unemployed for a variety of reasons, the likelihood of voluntary abstention from the profession of their choice cannot be ruled out. It is not improbable that a work environment which involves interacting with male colleagues and patients in a variety of situations as well as being on night duty would deter parents and conjugal families from allowing women to practice as doctors. The requirement of rural service for government doctors is another factor, which deters families as well as the women themselves.
iii) Employers’ Attitude

Familial proscriptions and women’s own apprehensions are not uncommonly exploited by employers. Papola’s (1982) study showed that women were discriminated against at the time of promotions and tended to be crowded into lower status clerical and primary school jobs. They were rarely promoted to executive and supervisory posts. Among skilled and unskilled workers, the reasons put forth for preferring men were their greater physical strength and lower rate of absenteeism. As regards employment and promotion to supervisory and clerical categories, male employers defended themselves by pointing out that women did not come forth to be recruited or promoted. When questioned further, over half the employers said that in any case a woman’s primary responsibility was to her home, and with a high male unemployment rate, women who were often secondary earners, should not be given preference over men.

iv) Traditional Positions of Authority in Rural Areas

Where the ownership of land, means of production as well as decision-making are dominated by men, the division of labour within the family as well as in the employment market is weighted in favour of those in positions or authority. Case studies show that even when men are not the chief breadwinners, women, steeped in a tradition which reveres men as the *annadatas* (bread givers), rarely speak of themselves as the heads of households or those who can make major family decisions. In her in-depth study of five working class women in Kerala, Leela Gulati (1981) concluded that though in three families women were the principal earners, employment did not improve the women’s self-estimation or status in the social hierarchy. Notions of female dependency and inferiority are carried over to areas where in fact, men have to rely on their wives’ skills for survival. In Narasapur (Andhra Pradesh) where women make fine lace, the menfolk took the produce to distant areas to sell. Women spoke of their dependence on men, but did not point out that without their skills, husbands may well be unemployed if not destitute. They were characteristically modest about their role in productive labour. Though women were aware that their work was quite distinct from housework and was by no means a leisure time activity, they did not attach much importance to their economic roles.

v) Traditional Positions of Authority in Urban Areas

In the urban areas, the working class, and men in particular have a wider range of job options available to them. The study by Leela Kasturi (1990) shows that when unemployed weavers from Tamil Nadu migrated to Delhi, the womenfolk found jobs only as domestic servants, while men became mechanics, cooks or drivers. The shift in residence meant a severance with an established way of life and the support of the extended family. Men who had few options at home became more whimsical and choosy about jobs in the metropolitan city. Women could hardly take anytime off from work to look around for alternatives; yet, men as well as women regard the unpaid and paid work of men as supportive and women’s earning as supplementary. In a study of sweeper women of Delhi it was found that women supported unemployed husbands unquestioningly and even put up with physical abuse from them. The husbands were the *maliks* or masters, entitled to such services (*seva*) as massage of the legs and feet. Govind Kelkar (1981) found that women had to
perform such services after full day’s work in the areas of Green Revolution in Punjab. Female ‘misdemeanours’ such as answering back, serving food which was regarded as unpalatable or occasionally exchanging information on family matters were punished with beatings.

A study of the sweeper community in Delhi by Malavika Karlekar (1987) shows that husbands were moving out of the traditional occupation and women actively supported male attempts at getting better jobs in the urban environment. Women appeared convinced that men had a right to better lives, while they rarely had such thoughts for themselves. Restricted physical mobility, full responsibility for housework as well as fairly rigid views on where women from certain castes should work led women automatically to a situation where it was assumed that occupational mobility was meant for men only. Not unexpectedly, most daughters after the age of eight years or so joined their mothers at work or cooked and cleaned at home. Boys rarely helped, and it was not unusual to see sons playing in the alleys while their younger sisters were at work, either at home or with their mothers.

vi) Working Conditions

For the majority of working class women, a job is essential. In relation to the men they have fewer choices as well as limited chances for occupational mobility. When men and women work in the same occupation, female tasks are often the more arduous and time-consuming. For instance, in paddy cultivation they spend long hours in sowing, weeding and transplanting. In Kerala the extraction of the cashew seed from a corrosive liquid is women’s work. Again, when both sexes do identical jobs, women often get paid less than men. Protests are rare, apart from ignorance of legal and other rights; there is a fear of exploitation and sexual harassment by the landlord or contractor.

Activity 1

If you are living in a nuclear family, describe in about 10-15 sentences a day in the life of all your family members and state approximately how much time they spend on household chores and employment activities within and outside the home. Before doing so, identify each family member by age, sex and relationship to you. If you live in a joint family, describe the same as above for only the female members of the family. Compare, if possible, your note with the notes of other learners at your Study Centre.

vii) Traditional Role Expectations

Irrespective of social class there is, at the level of belief, widespread commitment to the notion that a woman’s job must not interfere or compete with her primary role of wife and mother. There is also concern with her physical safety and the respectability of the occupation. Clearly, working class families are far less able to ensure these conditions, and often their women work under very difficult circumstances. Highly rated occupations for middle class women are teaching jobs at various levels, librarianship, medicine, particularly with specialisation in gynaecology and paediatrics, health visitorships and so on. However, as the availability of jobs is dependent on the market situation, as well as on access to higher education, many women have to be content with being telephone operators, clerks, typists and nurses.
As you are reading these pages, you may well think back on your own life experiences: how often have you heard your father or your brother discuss their work and work-related issues and problems? And how often have your mother, wife, and sister, irrespective of whether they are housewives or school teachers, clerical workers or college teachers, talked about tensions in running the house, arguments with their bosses on a matter of principle or about how they enjoyed teaching the parts of a flower in a different way? If you reflect on the matter, you will probably find that men talk and express more in the home environment on their work-related lives, whereas women tend to discuss marriage negotiations, incidents with other relatives, the price of kerosene, and so on much more with family members. What is involved is a question of perceptions, which is vital for an understanding of how individuals view their roles. Women, much more than men, irrespective of their multiplicity of roles, tend to internalise the view of home-maker and nurturant provider. This self-perception is more acute in a patrilineal system where official authority figures are men.

**Check Your Progress 2**

Select the correct answer to the following questions.

i) According to the 2001 census the female work participation rate is

   a) 25.7 percent
   
   b) 22.5 percent
   
   c) 39.3 percent
   
   d) 15.9 percent.

ii) Studies show that if a woman has internalised the dominance of home-makers role she is likely to adopt a

   a) competitive, involved and high profile at work
   
   b) non-competitive, uninvolved and low profile at work
   
   c) both of the above
   
   d) none of the above.

**29.4 ROLE STEREOTYPING: IMPACT ON WOMEN’S HEALTH**

We have spent quite some time discussing work either for a wage or otherwise primarily because it both describes as well as defines an individual woman’s position in her family and in society. We concluded that the patrilineal family was largely responsible for the formation of such images. At the same time, there are agencies and agents outside the family, which help in the formation of stereotypes. It is important to know how women react to their situation. The following sub-sections discuss food discrimination in the family, amniocentesis and sex discrimination within the given definitions of roles and expectations. These show how women’s mental and physical health is affected by such definitions of roles and expectations.
29.4.1 Food Discrimination

As you have seen, women work long and tedious hours, often under difficult and unhygienic conditions. A number of studies have also documented how in a scarcity situation, women and girls suffer as a result of food discrimination. By this we mean that men and boys eat first, and are given the larger and more nutritious portions. Traditionally, women eat after men in our society, and when there is limited food to be distributed, they automatically get less.

What is important here is that food discrimination is not only a function of poverty and scarcity, but also of perceptions and expectations. It is assumed that men need better and more food because they work hard and are the bread winners. The fact that women may work as hard and earn as much is rarely taken into consideration. Certainly the labour and energy they expend in household-related tasks are rarely taken note of. These perceptions are a part of a system where little value is attached to female life.

29.4.2 Amniocentesis and Sex Discrimination

You have probably heard of amniocentesis or the process by which the amniotic fluid is extracted from a pregnant woman to determine the health of the foetus or unborn child. Some birth-related defects are more common in girls and others in boys. Thus, the process of the test involves determining the sex of the child so as to establish the presence or otherwise of some or other defects. The aim of the test is not to ascertain the sex of the child, though it is now being misused for pre-birth sex determination. In 1985, a study of the Greater Mumbai area showed that there had been 40,000 abortions of female foetuses following amniocentesis. Most women who go in for the tests leading to abortion of the female foetus are from middle class homes, and may even have college education.

The misuse of this test has now resulted in banning of this test in India. What is important here is to understand and make the distinction between a test conducted only for medical reasons and one, which is used to destroy a healthy female foetus. It is the latter situation with which we are concerned. Why is an unborn baby girl less valued than a male child? This is not an easy question to answer particularly when you have seen how much work a woman does. In part we can answer this question by looking at roles, expectations and obligations. We can say that certain obligations, namely that of a daughter to be educated, clothed and married with a dowry, outweigh expectations arising out of her role as a contributor to the household in a variety of ways. You may say that the question of contribution did not really occur in the case of the urban middle class, among whom amniocentesis became so common.

Here one could perhaps argue that the considerations of dowry to be paid is the most important factor. Secondly, it is possible that with the rising cost of living and increasing expectations, the small family norm is becoming more popular among those who had earlier large families. Here, in cases of accidental pregnancy, abortion following amniocentesis may have been practised, particularly if the foetus was that of a female. The argument of course remains the same: a girl is less wanted than a boy. It can be hypothesised that irrespective of the sex of the first child, it was unlikely that the second foetus, if it was that of a boy, was aborted, even if the parents want only two children, and that too, preferably one of each sex. On the other hand, a female foetus was likely
to be aborted more readily. In a study conducted among the Kallar caste of Madurai district of Tamil Nadu, female infanticide had become a way of resolving the burden of dowry on poor families. Hospital records showed that mothers who had given birth to daughters ran away from their hospital beds in large numbers with newborn infants. Follow-up enquiries by the hospital staff showed that the babies were killed by women desperate to survive themselves. In the year 1997, data on female infant death due to ‘social cause’ an euphemism for female infanticide from the primary health centre (PHC) records showed that on an average around 3000 cases of female infanticide occur in a year in Tamil Nadu. This accounts for one-sixth to one-fifth of all female infant deaths in the state (Venkatesh, 2000). A daughter is unwanted, as she would mean long-term problems for her poverty stricken parents.

29.4.3 Women’s Psychological Response

It is not as though there is no reaction from girls and women to their deteriorating position. The incidence of a range of physical ailments, neurotic disorders and spirit possession are manifestations of how women react, at one level, to their situation. The unit on women’s movement will show you how this growing resentment if not anger has been channellised into effective action. Nonetheless, individual woman’s response is very important, particularly as it tells us something about the inner workings of a human mind.

a) Accumulated and Repressed Rage: Psychoanalysis

On the basis of case studies, particularly of rural women, psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar (1983) was struck by their accumulated and repressed rage, the helpless anger of young women, and their lack of social emancipation being the canvas on which the individual picture of hysterical illness is painted. In the Indian context, hysteria takes the form of possession by ghosts of forbidden sexual and aggressive wishes. Families become actively involved in ridding girls of these malevolent spirits, often through trips to shamans, gurus and matas. At the same time, psychiatrists have pointed out that urban middle class families tend to respond more quickly to the obvious maladjustments of male children: underachieving at school, tantrums and depression at home result in trips to remedial clinics in hospitals. Girls either do not express themselves (that is, they repress their resentment and unhappiness) or even if they do, families tend to take more notice of boys’ problems than those of girls. After a certain point, internalised unhappiness manifests itself in more concrete forms. It is not being suggested that women sham illness or even possession states in order to gain attention. What is being suggested, however, is that at the level of the unconscious, a sense of social marginalisation and anguish leads to an obsession with the self either at the psychic and physical level or at both. This compensation by the individual for collective neglect often leads to illness of various forms.

b) Maibis and Polygyny Among Meitei

Interestingly, among the Meitei of Manipur where women enjoy considerable freedom in choosing their marriage partners as well as economic autonomy and control in the area of weaving, an important source of income for entire families, the percentage of women shamans or maibis is high. Who become maibis? Surely not all independent-minded women, though according to a Meitei proverb, ‘stubborn women are destined to become maibis’. In a society
where men define social reality, a stubborn woman is perhaps one who is not sufficiently deferential to the man’s point of view. While spirit possession among women is accepted in some societies as an institutionalised form of female rebelliousness, it does not help in improving women’s general status. Rather, it leads, as in the present case, to labelling women who differ as potential maibis. Or it may also result in the resurgence of certain other practices aimed at subjugating women. For instance, among the Meitei, polygyny in the urban areas is on the increase. The right of one man to claim control over the sexuality as well as the economic potential of more than one woman is of considerable significance in a society where female independence has been traditionally valued. While the author records a growing number of Kainabas or divorces instituted by women, Chaki Sircar (1984) has documented the suffering of those who were forced into a situation of competing with co-wives.

It is now time for us to look at how institutions outside the family work to create or to reduce inequalities between women and men. In the following sections we shall look at education, and then briefly at the media.

### 29.5 ROLE STEREOTYPING IN THE EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIALISATION PROCESSES

You are perhaps aware that many more Indian boys than girls are enrolled in schools, and finish their education up to certain levels. Looking around you will see girls helping their mothers at home, going out to work, or taking care of their younger brothers and sisters. Such situations are discussed at length in the unit on education (unit 10, Block 1 of the first elective course of sociology for B.A. at IGNOU).

What we shall look at here is how the educational system itself perpetuates stereotypes and creates new ones. We are using the term educational system to include what is taught in class, namely the syllabus, attitude of teachers and school and college administrators and the views put forth in textbooks. At the level of policy, there has been a certain degree of confusion regarding the right kind of education for girls. What are the views of those who argue for more home science colleges for girls and computer courses for boys?

#### 29.5.1 Gender Differentiation in Courses of Study

Are girls not capable of becoming neurosurgeons, engineers, nuclear scientists, and so on? A look at the school (Class XII) results for 1985 shows that girls secured a higher pass percentage than boys in all the four groups namely science, humanities, commerce and vocational studies. Of the 6,644 students who offered science, 4,852 or 73 per cent were boys while of the 26,716 appearing in the humanities group, 59 per cent were girls. The commerce group was evenly divided between boys and girls. Interestingly, though a fewer number of girls were in the science group, their pass percentage was as high as 83.8 per cent as against 70.7 per cent for the boys. The all India figures of girls’ enrolment in higher education in science was 40 per cent of all those in college while only 4 per cent were studying engineering or technology.
Women and Society

Medicine, which gained early respectability as a profession suitable for women, accounted for a ratio of one girl to every three boy students.

i) Factors Influencing the Choice of Subjects

There are certain tentative conclusions to be drawn on the basis of the empirical data given above. On the whole, arts subjects are more attractive to students irrespective of sex. More boys than girls study science and engineering and girls are clustered in lower status courses and institutions. However, most importantly, these figures are not a true reflection of actual ability. The fact that science, technology and engineering education is unequally distributed among the sexes does not necessarily represent differences in aptitudes. The streaming which takes place at the relatively early age of 16 years is not based only on academic factors. Conversations with principals and teachers of leading schools in Delhi indicate that often bright girls opt out of the science stream for reasons which have no connection with their academic performance. Classroom behaviour may also provide some clues on what factors influence the choices and attitudes of girls. While doing practice teaching in some of the capital's important schools/student-teachers not only found a sharp drop in the numbers of girls studying science at the Plus-Two level, but also that their class participation was substantially different from that of boys. Those who taught classes IV and VII found that girls were as assertive and definite in their points of view as their male peers. At the higher levels, they became quiet and reserve non-participants, though they were diligent with their homework and performed well in unit tests. Outside class too, older girls tended to wander around in groups by themselves while boys could be heard shouting lustily on the playing fields.

ii) Choice of Subjects and Professional Mobility

A principal commented that most of the girls who took up science hoped to enter medical colleges. Of those who were not successful, the majority went into home science, biochemistry or switched to arts subjects. Very few aspired to be engineers, research scientists or geophysicists. Studies of girls who do become scientists and professionals in competitive areas indicate a lower degree of job involvement and concentration in the lower echelons of service. One reason for this, of course, is that women do not remain long enough in a profession or job to be eligible for promotions. Often, familial reasons such as marriage, limited physical mobility due to the nature of husband’s employment, reluctance to spend more time at work as it would mean compromising with responsibilities at home and so on are responsible for well-demarcated hours of work and degrees of participation. Role conflict is minimised by a socialisation process, which stresses the primacy of home-oriented duties. Girls are trained to be good housewives early as participation in culinary and other activities is actively encouraged and applauded by family members.

29.5.2 Biases in Textbooks

There have been a number of studies on the content of text books which suggest that boys are invariably depicted as out-going, adventurous, brave and helpful; girls on the other hand are shown as dependent, submissive, quiet and obedient. At the same time, girls are expected to study and to perform well, however, they are not to be excessively competitive or demand too much freedom of thought and expression.
29.5.3 Differentiation in the Socialisation Process

Educationist Krishna Kumar’s (1986) experiences of “growing up male” are amply substantiated by Leela Dube (1988) and psycho-analyst Sudhir Kakar’s (1983) studies of male and female socialisation in India. Thus, watching girls heading straight home in “silent cluster” from school led Kumar to believe that “girls are not individuals”. As boys, he and his peers were free to spend time on the way, experiment with their cycles and watch the world go by. Such joys are rarely available to a large section of middle class girls. Bar those girls in the villages who have to earn a living, or help at home and do odd jobs of fetching and carrying, restrictions on movement are not so severe. If you live in a village you will observe that a girl can, until puberty, be allowed to move about quite freely in public places. You would perhaps think that she could be spending that time in school. If you are an urban dweller, you will be familiar with discussions at home, or perhaps on the radio and television, of how difficult it is for parents to allow their daughters to stay back after school hours, to participate in extra-curricular activities. Parents and guardians are constantly bothered with their safety on public buses; and, in any case, there is always the question of relations and friends who want to know why it is necessary for Rani to play basket ball or learn music after school hours. That is the time when she is expected at home, to participate in a variety of household chores. Such questions, however, are less often raised in case of her brother, Ravi, who is always late in coming home from college. A part of stereotyping process assumes that boys, more than girls, have a right to more independence and self-expression. Expectations and obligations are more rigid in the case of girls, and their rights are accordingly fewer.

Check Your Progress 3

i) Why does food discrimination exist in the family? Answer in five lines.
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ii) What are the reasons behind low degree of job involvement and concentration in the lower echelons of service of the women scientists and professionals? Give your answer in about six lines.
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29.6 MEDIA, WOMEN AND THE CHANGING SCENARIO

Listening to radio programmes and watching the television and reading the newspaper reports you may feel that issues, relating to women are now receiving more attention. Whether it is a horrifying description, of a ‘dowry death’ or of atrocities against a scheduled caste or tribal woman, of more girls going to school each year, there seems to exist more information of what we can call gender issues. At the same time the media through advertisements, television serials and other programmes continue to portray women as either weak, defenseless creatures, or as bewitching maidens, out to win the hearts of unsuspecting young men. Anything ranging from a motorcycle to a soap is advertised with an appealing woman model inviting us to buy the particular item.

29.6.1 Women as Projected on Television

There has been gender bias in the television programmes. Over here we shall look briefly at the findings of a report on how stereotypes are formed and perpetuated in Indian television programmes. The study conducted by Prabha Krishnan and Anita Dighe (1990) was based on intensive viewing of all Delhi Doordarshan programmes on alternate dates of the month of July 1986. Thus every programme became a part of the sample which was classified in seven broad areas. We shall look briefly at some of the important findings of their study.

Men appeared as ‘newsmaker’ in 77.4 per cent of the cases while women were in that role in only 6.5 per cent cases and for the rest, a categorical analysis was not possible. The authors pointed out that when reporting on politicians, women appeared in the political news as wives, mothers and daughters of well-known leaders. They appeared as victims of calamities and as members of audiences. In areas where curfew was imposed, women were shown as shoppers when curfew was relaxed. With the emphasis on developmental programmes, the official media did give some coverage to women working in agriculture, sericulture, tea gardens and so on.

29.6.2 Biased Representation of Women in the TV Serials and Cinema

In their analysis of serials and cinema, the authors observed that men characters were almost double that of women characters. In terms of occupation women appeared mainly as housewives. If employed, they were invariably school teachers, office workers and flight attendants. By and large, women are depicted as dependent, submissive and sacrificing, whereas men are self-confident, dominant, ambitious and even ruthless. Krishnan and Dighe conclude that “women are underrepresented in general, marriage and parenthood are considered more important to women than to men” and female-dominated occupations are played up. The authors also point out that television programmes have distorted the women’s movement and its role.

29.6.3 Changing Scenario

We need to remember that since the 1980s there has been some resistance to the stereotypes formed of women. Secondly, certain laws as well as legal
judgments have worked towards greater gender equality. Textbook reforms, agitations against the portrayal of women in the media and moves to involve more women in the political process at various levels and so on are all part of a new phase of awareness in Indian society. This has led to resurgence of women’s movement in various parts of the country in recent years. We shall discuss these aspects in detail in the next unit (unit 30). The consciousness has not only made all of us more sensitive to the situation of half the country’s population but has also generated a lot of data, studies and reports on relevant issues. It has led to the development of **Women’s Studies** as an area of academic research and teaching, which acts as an essential input in correcting our biases in knowledge. It can also be hoped that this new knowledge will help to correct stereotyping of women and their role and therefore carry positive impact on status. We shall discuss these aspects in greater detail in unit 30.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remember the plot of a story in a book, or a television programme or serial you have read or viewed in the last month. How many male and female characters appeared in it and what were their roles. Describe these in about fifteen sentences. Compare your note, if possible, with the notes of your co-learners in the Study Centre.</td>
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### 29.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the meaning of role, status and expectation in the context of women’s status in contemporary Indian society. We have analysed the status of women in family and work place. We have also examined how women’s perceptions of work, employer’s attitude, traditional positions of authority and role expectations have affected women’s employment in our society. The aspects of women’s role stereotyping and their impact on women’s health and education have also been analysed in this unit. Lastly, we have examined the status of women in media programmes with special reference to the television programmes presented on Doordarshan.

### 29.8 KEY WORDS

- **Case Study**: In-depth enquiry of a case or subject. It is a research approach that involves thorough analysis of a single case.

- **Gender**: Humans are divided into two sexes or two genders - male and female. While sexual differences are biologically determined, gender differences are culturally constructed. A woman is not only a biological entity, but is expected to fulfil certain functions according to the norms of her society. Thus while all women are members of the female sex, their gender roles may vary according to the societies and families into which they are born.

- **Gender Role**: The process by which roles are assigned to boys and to girls and later men and women, on the basis of social expectations.
Patriliny
Descent through the father’s lineage.

Socialisation
The process through which young children are taught about roles, status, and expectation by family members and later by the school.

Women’s Studies
This can be a separate discipline or can concentrate on revising existing syllabi and curricula by introducing data on women in a variety of roles. Currently, in India, there is no undergraduate degree in Women’s studies, but attempts are being made to revise curricula at the college and university levels particularly in social sciences and humanities.

29.9 FURTHER READING


29.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1
i) While discussions on differences between sexes generally focus on biological and reproductive functions, differences in gender relate to various other attitudes. These attitudes may be social and cultural as well.

ii) By gender stereotype we mean attributes and qualities commonly associated with gender. These attributes arise out of interaction of a complex set of factors, many of which operate in the context of the family.

iii) Men appear to exercise far greater influence in decision-making and are far more visible and audible than their wives.

Check Your Progress 2
i) a

ii) b

Check Your Progress 3
i) It is not only because of the poverty and scarcity in the family but also because of perceptions and expectations. It is assumed that men need...
better and more food, because they work hard and are the breadwinners. The fact that women’s hard work and earnings are rarely taken into consideration. These perceptions are part of system where little value is attached to female life.

ii) One reason is that women do not remain long enough in a profession or job to be eligible for promotions. Besides this, familial reasons such as marriage, limited physical mobility due to nature of husband’s employment, household responsibilities and the process of socialisation in the family where girls are trained to be good housewives are also responsible.
30.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we have discussed the historical and contemporary dimensions of women’s movement in India. After going through this unit you should be able to

- describe women’s movement as an important variant of social movement
- explain how women’s issues are raised in the reform movements of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- state and describe the basic aspects of women’s organisation, issues and their participation in the freedom movement
describe the changing facets of women’s movement in the post-Independence period

explain the resurgence of women’s movement in the 70s and 80s.

30.1 INTRODUCTION

Social movement has been defined as an organised effort by a group of people either to bring or resist change in the society. Women’s movement is an important variant of social movement in the sense that it aims to bring changes in the institutional arrangements, values, customs and beliefs in the society that have subjugated women over the years. In section 30.2 of this unit we have discussed women’s movement as an important variant of social movement. The reform movements of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused on women’s issues. The Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and the Arya Samaj played important role in projecting women’s issues in a wider context. You will find these aspects in section 30.3. Social reforms among the Muslim women have also been discussed in this section. In section 30.4 you will read about women’s organisation and participation in the independent movement. In this section you will also observe the role played by Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru in encouraging women to participate in the independence struggle.

In the post-Independence period constitutional provisions and social legislations for women, planned economic development and social change affected women’s movement significantly. We discuss the changing facets of women’s movement in the post-Independence period in section 30.5. During the 1970s and 1980s occured the resurgence of women’s movement in India. Section 30.6 of this unit deals with this aspect. Here we discuss the attempts of women to organise on the basis of ecological, social and economic issues. Issue-based movements in the 1970s and 1980s included anti-dowry, anti-sati, anti-rape movements. Here we also discuss the emerging trends of the contemporary women’s movement and government’s response to women’s issues.

30.2 WOMEN’S MOVEMENT: A VARIANT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT

The study of social movements is not an area for historians alone. Sociologists studying social structure, processes and change would logically be interested in social movements. It is a process through which a collective attempt is made at mobilisation for change or resistance. However, in the context of change it differs from evolutionary process of social mobility and change in the sense that movements are based on a perception of injustice or oppression of a certain section or sections within the society. Social movements adopt protest, confrontation or conflict as a method to focus attention on different issues and attempt to bring about qualitative changes in the traditional social structures and social relationships, which are unequal and oppressive. The women’s movement is an important variant of social movements. It is an important but neglected aspect of studies on social movements like tribal and ethnic, peasant and workers, backward classes, cultural and religious movements, etc.
In Indian society, differences based on caste, class, religious and ethnicity distinguish the life and problems of women in different parts of the country. An overwhelming majority of 80 percent people in India live in rural areas. The process of development and change affects various sections of women differently. It is in the context of a culturally diverse and stratified or unequal society that the emergence of women’s movement needs to be understood.

In this unit women’s movement is discussed under four broad headings i) Reform Movements and Women’s issues, ii) Women’s participation in the freedom movement. iii) Institutional initiatives and women’s issues in the post-independence period and iv) Resurgence of women’s movement in the 70s and 80s. Let us begin with the first one.

30.3 REFORM MOVEMENTS AND WOMEN’S ISSUES IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

The position of women in India has varied in different periods and in different classes, religion and ethnic groups. By nineteenth century there were several evil social practices like Sati (burning of widow on the funeral pyre of her husband), child marriage, ban on widow remarriage, polygamy etc. which were a matter of debate.

During the British rule the spread of English education and Western liberal ideology among Indians and spread of Christianity and missionary activities, resulted in a number of movements for social change and religious reform in the nineteenth century.

The broad objectives of these movements were caste reform, improvement in the status of women, promoting women’s education and an attack on social practices whose roots lay in social and legal inequalities and religious traditions of different communities.

In the earlier phase of the social reform movement during nineteenth century, the initiatives came largely from male reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The issues that were taken up by them were Sati, ill treatment of widows, ban on widow remarriage, polygyny, child marriage and denial of property rights to women and the need to educate women. Struggle for women’s education initiated by men resulted in setting up of women’s schools, colleges, hostels, widow homes, protection homes etc. The social reformers’ assumptions were that female education would revitalise the family system, which was threatened by the increasing communication gap between educated men and their uneducated wives. The social reform movement saw the emergence of women’s organisations and institutions. However, the movement was led by men and originated in metropolitan cities.

Leaders of the social reform movement also realised that religious reforms cannot be separated from it. The British policy was to keep different religious communities separate from each other and maintain each system of family laws, which was closely related to the religious and customary traditions of each community. Social reform movement never developed as a unified movement but developed within each community.
This period has witnessed the proliferation of various organisations. These organisations took the lead to project important issues, which adversely affected the status of women in the society. The most important of these organisations where the Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj. In the following section, we shall be discussing these organisations briefly.

30.3.1 The Brahmo Samaj

It was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1825, and attempted to remove restrictions and prejudices against women, which had their roots in religion. These included child marriage, polygyny, limited rights to inherit property and seclusion of women. Education of women was seen as the major instrument to improve women’s position. Keshab Chadra Sen stressed the need for educating women at home and government support was sought for this purpose. A women’s magazine called *Bamabodhini Patrika* was started. An inter-caste marriage was also solemnised under the auspices of the Brahmo Samaj. Opposition to such moves from Hindu orthodoxy resulted in the passing of Civil Marriage Act, 1872. This Act, which permitted inter-caste marriage and divorce, fixed 14 and 18 as the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys respectively.

The influence of the Brahmo Samaj was confined to Bengal and North India.

30.3.2 The Prarthana Samaj

It was founded in 1867 and had more or less similar objectives as Brahmo Samaj. However, it remained confined to western India. M.G. Ranade and R.G. Bhandarkar were the leading figures. In 1869 the Bombay Widow Reforms Association was formed which arranged the first widow remarriage in 1869. Two leaders of the Prarthana Samaj, R.G. Bhandarker and N.G. Chandravarkar, later became Vice-chancellors of the first Women’s University set up by Karve in 1916 in Bombay. This was later named as the SNDT Women’s University.

Both these movements stressed women’s education to bridge the widening gap between males who had the benefit of modern education and women of the family.

The idea was to make them better wives and mothers. The debate on women’s education that raged in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shows that it did not originate from the influences of Western education only. Other reformers also stressed the need for women’s education.

Both these movements were the outcome of the reaction of urban, western educated men and aimed to change women’s position within the family.

30.3.3 The Arya Samaj

The Arya Samaj was founded by Dayanand Saraswati in 1875. Unlike the above two movements the Arya Samaj was a religious revivalist movement. While rejecting Hindu religious orthodoxy, idol worship and the caste society, the slogan of this movement was to go back to the vedic period. Painting a glorious position of women in ancient India, it advocated reform in the caste system, compulsory education for both men and women, prohibition of child marriage by law, remarriage of child widows. It was opposed to divorce and
widow remarriage in general, and emphasised separate school for girls and boys. Several Arya Kanya Pathashalas were set up which later became colleges and contributed to the cause of women’s education. Though mainly an urban movement, its influence also extended to semi-urban and rural areas. While rejecting the caste system it never demanded its abolition. Preference for arranged marriages within the caste group and emphasis on home-making roles of women limited its contribution to the cause of women’s emancipation.

Social reformers (like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, M.G. Ranade and Swami Dayanand Saraswati) eulogised the position of women in ancient India. However, the radicals like Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Jyotirao Phule and Lokhitvadi Gopal Hari Deshmukh attacked the caste system, which they said was responsible for the subjugation of women. Phule said that Sudras and women had been denied education so that they would not understand the importance of human rights of equality and freedom and would accept the low position accorded to them in law, custom and traditions.

30.3.4 Muslim Women and Social Reform

Similar movements began, within the Islamic community in the late nineteenth century. However, emphasis on purdah system and slow spread of education among women delayed the development of a progressive movement to improve the opportunities for Muslim women. People like Begum of Bhopal, Syed Ahmad Khan and Sheikh Abdullah in Aligarh and Karmat Hussain in Lucknow spearheaded a movement to improve women’s education. In 1916 Begum of Bhopal formed the All-India Muslim Women’s Conference. The traditionalists disapproved such activities and were enraged by the resolution passed by the Muslim Women’s Conference in 1917 that polygamy should be abolished. In the later years several Muslim women joined the nationalist struggle and non-cooperation movement against the British.

Similar movements also emerged among other communities in different regions. A few women leaders like Pandita Ramabai and Vidyagouri Neelkant faced bitter opposition for marrying out of caste or obtaining education.

All these movements had a very limited perspective of changing the position of women within the family without challenging the social structure and caste inequalities, which perpetuated women’s lower position. Their appeal was limited to urban middle class. The gender bias of the reform movement was most pronounced in the argument that education would improve women’s efficiency as housewives and mothers. Gender equality was not on their agenda.

The movement was not conceived as a radical onslaught on the religious orthodoxy, which subjugated women. Social reformers viewed women’s question as a social problem.

Check Your Progress 1

i) What were the major objectives of the social and religious movements of the nineteenth century? Answer in about four lines.

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ii) What were the major women issues raised by the Brahmo Samaj? Answer in about four lines

iii) Tick mark the correct answer of the following question.

Which of the following movements pointed out the glorious position of women in the ancient India?

a) Arya Samaj
b) Prarthana Samaj
c) Brahmo Samaj
d) All of the above

30.4 WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

During the freedom movement, the struggle for Women’s right and equality was seen as an integral part of the struggle for national Independence. Many women who fought for the country’s freedom were also active on the issues of women’s rights. In 1885 the Indian National Congress was founded. In its 1889 Bombay Session, ten women participated. With the spread of women’s education among middle class by the last part of the nineteenth century, several women became active in the social and political life of India. Gandhiji’s call to women and large scale participation of women in India’s freedom movement brought about changes in the perception of nationalist leaders.

30.4.1 Role of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru

Mahatma Gandhi played the most significant role in involving large number of women in the nationalist movement. Hence it is important to understand the impact of Gandhian ideology on women’s movement. He proclaimed: “Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details of activities of men and she has the same right to freedom and / liberty as he... By sheer force of vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have”. He said “I am uncompromising in the matter of women’s rights”. However, at the same time he idealised mythical figures like Sita, Damyanti who were symbols of women’s sufferings. He stressed that participation of women in the freedom struggle was an integral part of women’s dharma (duty). He felt that women were most suited for Satyagraha (protest) as they have qualities
appropriate for non-violent struggle and for constructive social uplift programmes of the Congress. He said women had great qualities for self-sacrifice and tolerance and an ability to endure suffering, which were needed for non-violent struggle. He saw women’s role as complementary to men.

Jawaharlal Nehru was influenced by the Western suffragettes and was exposed to liberal views on women’s question in the West. He believed that ‘without economic freedom other aspects of women’s equality would not be realised’. He disagreed with the limited view that women’s education alone can bring about the desired changes and he wanted women trained in all human activities. He said that “if women’s struggles remained isolated from the general political, economic and social struggles, the women’s movement would not gain strength and will remain confined to the upper classes”.

There cannot be any doubt that a single factor which contributed to the transformation of women’s roles and status in the Indian society was their massive participation in the national freedom movement. Equality between men and women was accepted as one of the objectives in the Fundamental Rights Resolution of the Indian National Congress in 1931.

### 30.4.2 Women’s Organisations and Issues

The emergence of women’s organisation was closely linked with both social reform movement and the nationalist movement. During the early twentieth century several women’s organisations were formed. The Women’s India Association (WIA) was formed in 1917 by Margaret Cousins, an Irish and an Indian nationalist. This was followed by the formation of the National Council of Indian Women (NCIW) in 1926 and All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) in 1927. Jyoti Singh in Gujarat (1934) played an active role in harnessing energies of women. Several women active in the nationalist movement became founders of women’s organisations.

i) **Women’s Suffrage**

For the first time in 1917, the demand for women’s right to vote was raised. A deputation of women including Sarojini Naidu and Margaret Cousins met the Viceroy to put forward the demand for female **franchise**. The Indian National Congress supported the idea and the constitutional reforms in 1919 allowed provincial legislatures to decide the issue. Madras was the first province to allow women to vote. Women also became legislative councillors. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy was the first woman to become legislative councillor in Madras in 1927. The demand for women’s suffrage was later changed to adult franchise within the national movement.

ii) **Question of Participation in the Freedom Movement**

Despite women’s active participation in the freedom movement and demand for voting rights, when the civil disobedience movement began in 1930 some of the women leaders took a position that women’s organisations should keep away from party politics as women were concerned with social issues and British Government’s help was necessary to bring about social change in women’s position through education and legislation. There were other women leaders, however, who believed that they should align themselves with the national movement. They believed that sitting on the fence served no purpose and women will progress only with political emancipation.
The gradual change in looking at women’s issues, from social and educational to political perspectives, occurred with a closer link between the Congress and women’s groups and mass participation of women in the freedom movement. Many advocates of women’s rights looked upon freedom for women as dependent on freedom for the country. In the 1920s and 1930s women participated actively in the Civil Disobedience movement. Women were more active in Swadeshi movement (campaign to wear home spun Khadi) and picketing of shops selling foreign goods and liquor.

Advocates of women’s participation in the freedom movement, however, stressed that though Indian culture approved women’s equality, it recognised their goals as separate from that of men.

### 30.4.3 Forms of Women’s Participation in the Freedom Movement

Women participated in the freedom movement in various ways. They participated in political protests, picketed shops selling foreign goods and organised Prabhat Pheri (singing patriotic songs). Women all over the country provided food and shelter for underground political activists and carried messages to political prisoners. In 1930, women in large number participated in Salt March (Gandhiji urged people to break the salt law by making salt themselves). Thousands of women were jailed.

Within the Indian nationalist groups, however, there were a few more militant groups, which were active in Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra as well as abroad. Some foreign women also worked with Indian revolutionaries abroad. Bhikaiji Cama, Perm D S Captain, Saraladevi Choudhurani (Bengal), Sushila Devi and Durga Devi (Punjab), Roopavati Jain (Delhi), Kalpana Dutt and Kamala Dasgupta (Calcutta), Lakshmi Sahgal (who was in charge of the Rani Jhansi Women’s regiment, part of the Indian National Army formed by Subhas Chandra Bose) were involved in revolutionary activities.

Women’s participation in the national movement helped in breaking several of the old barriers of tradition and custom. Women’s organisation side by side raised their voices for removal of social and legal disabilities; however, these organisations were dominated by urban middle and upper classes. Women from poor working class families and their problems hardly came into the picture.

### Check Your Progress 2

i) What were the two opposite positions, taken by the women’s organisations, on the question of their participation in the Nationalist movement? Answer in eight lines.

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ii) Write a note on Nehru’s views on women’s equality and women’s movement in Indian society. Answer in about ten lines.

30.5 INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES AND WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN THE POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

In the post Independence period a series of institutional initiative has been introduced for the emancipation of women in the society. The most important of these pertain to the constitutional provisions and social legislation for women and planned economic development. Women’s movement has been widely influenced by these broad socio-economic and political processes of this period. Let us examine briefly a few important aspects of these processes and the manner they have affected women’s movement in the latter half of the twentieth century.

30.5.1 Constitutional Provisions and Social Legislations

The Constitution of independent India followed the basic principle of women’s equality as accepted in the Fundamental Rights Resolution of the Karachi Congress. The provision of Article 15(3), which empowered the state to make special provisions for women and children, suggests that there was a realisation of women’s disadvantaged position and the need for the state to enact special measures to bring them at par with men.

During freedom movement it was felt that with the nation’s Independence would disappear many of the disabilities, and problems of women attributed to colonial rule. The national government undertook to remove the legal disabilities suffered by women and initiated major reforms in Hindu family laws. The legal reforms in the 1950s sought to provide greater rights to Hindu
women in marriage, inheritance and guardianship. However, they failed to bridge the gap between legal and social realities. Similar changes in the family laws of other communities like Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews, have not yet come up due to political resistance despite the Directive Principle of State Policy clearly stating the need for uniform laws for all the communities.

With these legislative measures in the fifties women’s organisation became passive and lost the vigour shown during the pre-Independence period. Several of these organisations received government grants and their activities were shaped by the grants they received for activities like adult education, nutrition programmes for children, tailoring classes under vocational training programmes and family planning programmes. Most of these organisations were urban-based and the leadership came from the educated middle and upper class women.

In the post-Independence period, two important organisations for rural women were set up, i.e., Kasturba Memorial Trust and Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh (Indian Rural Women’s Organisation). Their main objective was to assist the rural women in developing leadership potential.

30.5.2 Planned Development and Women’s Issues

In the post-Independence period it was assumed that economic development policies i.e., agriculture development and modernisation, industrialisation, technological development etc., will bring about better life for everyone including women. The overall growth strategies failed to take note of the existing class, caste and gender inequalities. Planned development in India increased socio-economic inequalities. Let us discuss the observation in more detail.

i) Thrust of Development Policies

The main thrust of development policies for women was provision of education, health and welfare. The continued absence of concern for women’s economic roles till the Sixth Five-Year Plan shows that women’s economic independence was given a low priority. In the Sixth Plan a separate chapter on women and development was included in the Plan document for the first time. It reviewed the status and situation of women in general and came to the conclusion that in spite of legal and constitutional guarantees, women had lagged behind men in almost all sectors. For the first time it clearly spelt out that the economic independence would improve the status of women and suggested setting up of cells at the district level for increasing women’s participation through employment. The successive five-year plans continued suggesting programmes for the improvement of the status of women. The Ninth Plan stressed the need for national policy for the empowerment of women for empowering women as the agents of social change. It also discussed the need for reservation of seats for women in the Parliament and State legislative assemblies. However, it must be said that women are as yet nowhere near receiving their due share of the planned development (Seth 2001). Apart from this the nature of economic development in the post-Independence India benefited only a small section of urban educated middle and upper class women whose visibility as legislators, administrators, doctors, lawyers, teachers etc. led to an erroneous belief that women have made great strides and have achieved equality.
ii) Women’s Educational and Economic Status

The report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1974) was a watershed in the debate on women’s issues in India. The Committee provided evidence of the decline in women’s employment due to technological changes, biases on the part of employers to ‘replace women by men and machines’. High illiteracy among women particularly among the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and poor rural and urban women coupled with inadequate training facilities for them. In the year 1981 the rate of female literates was around 29 percent and in the years 1991 and 2001 this rates was 39.29 and 54.16 respectively. In the rural areas the female literacy rates was around 21 percent and 30 percent in 1981 and 1991 respectively.

The Committee on the Status of Women in India was of the view that planners, government officials, employers and trade union leaders perpetuated the middle class perceptions of women’s primary role as the homemaker and not as the bread winner. Such a view ignores the realities of millions of women in the poorer sections in rural and urban areas, who work for the survival of the family. Millions of rural women work hard on family farms and within the home as unpaid workers, collect fuel, fodder and water, work as artisans, craftworkers (weaving, cane and bamboo works etc.) with their men but are recognised as helpers and not as workers. When they work as wage labourers they are invariably paid less wages than men. The Government passed the Equal Remuneration Act (1976), however, it remains ineffective.

The neglect of women’s economic roles, which you will study in greater detail in unit 31 of this Block, results in exploitation of women workers, unequal wages between men and women, higher unemployment due to loss of jobs in traditional sectors like textiles, mining, manufacturing and household industries.

30.5.3 Women’s Political Representation

Several women leaders, who had actively participated in the freedom movement, occupied important positions in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha (the two houses of Parliament), state legislatures. They became governors, chief ministers, cabinet ministers and held other position within major political parties. Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister. Despite the prominence and high visibility of a few women at all levels of political leadership women remain underrepresented. Their number has never gone beyond seven per cent in the Lok Sabha or State Assemblies. Forty eight women MPs were members of the thirteenth Lok sabha.

One of the weaknesses in the political strategies of women’s organisations in the 1950s and 1960s was their inability to mobilise ordinary women and issues that concerned them. The lack of efforts to reach to the masses and expand the base of women’s movement limited its effectiveness and agenda for action. The position of peasant and working class women deteriorated and only a small minority of women benefited. The 73rd and 74th amendments in the Constitution have, however, brought reservation of 33.33 percent for women in local governance at the Panchayat level. More on this point will be discussed later in this unit.
Check Your Progress

i) What is the constitutional provision for women’s upliftment? Answer in about four lines.
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ii) Point out one weakness of the political strategies of women’s organisations in the fifties and sixties. Answer in two lines.
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30.6 RESURGENCE OF WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN THE 70S: ISSUES AND ACTIONS

The late 1970s and 1980s was marked by a resurgence of women’s struggle and emergence of new women’s groups and organisations. After their participation in nation’s independence struggle women again withdrew from public life and the debate on women’s issues also faded out from the public arena. Several scholars have talked about the absence of women’s movement in the 1950s and 1960s in India and the slow erosion of concern for women’s issues. The growth of ‘protest polities’ and breaking out of a limited perspective of legislation and education as the main instrument for improving women’s position marked the women’s movement in the 1970s. Even the older women’s organisations set up during the pre-Independence or during the 1950s which were mainly engaged in ‘welfare’ and ‘charity’ work, gradually started changing their stand on several issues concerning women. There were various issues that inflamed women’s movement in India. Figure 30.1 depicts some of them.

However, many women activists, who were working with political parties, trade unions, peasant and workers movements, realised that they were hesitant to take up issues which concerned women exclusively. The issues women raised were the retrenchment of women from textile mills and other industries due to technological changes and replacing them by men who received training on new machines, lack of maternity benefit to women workers, lack of provision of children at work place, wage discrimination between men and women, inadequate education and training facilities for women workers and discrimination at work places. These led to the emergence of separate women’s organisations in various parts of the country, which seriously attempted to organise poor women for change.
30.6.1 Emergence of New Organisations and Approaches

The growing economic hardships of poor rural and urban women (fifty per cent of the households were below poverty level at the end of the Sixth Five Year Plan) and failure to take up women’s issues by the general agrarian and industrial workers’ movements resulted in women labourers organising separately. Let us now look at the new organisations and approaches in more detail.

i) Organisation

Such new organisations as Self-Employment Women’s Association (Gujarat), Working Women’s Forum (Tamil Nadu), Sramik Mahila Sangathna (Maharashtra) concerned themselves with the plight of women workers in the unorganised sector. Organising women labour and taking up the issues of their wages, working conditions, exploitation and health hazards became an important task for these women’s organisations. Research on women in the unorganised sector helped in developing new strategies for dealing with the problems of poor rural and urban workers.

Anti-price rise movement in 1973-74 was a united front of women’s organisations belonging to several parties.

ii) Approaches

In the late nineteen seventies several women’s organisations emerged which were not affiliated to political parties or to trade unions. They were called ‘autonomous women’s organisations’. They rejected the ‘welfarist’ approach adopted by the previous women’s organisations, many of which were set up during the pre-Independence period, and adopted ‘protest polities’ for mobilising women on specific issues.
30.6.2 Deforestation and Ecological Movement

Economic hardships faced by women in the Himalayan region due to cutting down of forests resulted in spontaneous mobilisation of women. They hugged the trees to prevent the contractors from felling them. This is popularly known as Chipko movement. The disappearance of forests means acute hardships to women who are primarily responsible for the collection of fuel, fodder, fruits, herbs for medicine and other forest produce which give them income and employment. This is why we find that women are even now in the forefront of these ecological agitations.

30.6.3 Issue Based Movements in the 1970s and 1980s

The ineffectiveness of social legislation at reform is clearly indicated by several studies in the 1970s. The autonomous women’s organisations took up issues related to women’s oppression like dowry, violence within the family, alcoholism among men and wife-beating, discrimination at the work place etc. to mobilise women for collective action. For the first time some groups in Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Patna etc. raised issues such as sexual exploitation of poor scheduled castes and scheduled tribe women by upper caste landlords. Issues of rape, dowry murders, crime and violence against women were taken up. All India anti-dowry and anti-rape movements were launched by women’s organisations and Civil liberties and democratic rights organisations also joined them. They launched important issue based movements. Let us examine few of these movements.

i) Anti-dowry Movements

Dowry murders have witnessed a sustained campaign by several women’s organisations and civil rights groups. Journalists wrote extensively about the dowry problem. In the 1980s several women’s and other progressive organisations formed a joint front in Delhi called “Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manch”. Organisations in other major cities also campaigned through protest, demonstrations, discussions, street theatre, posters etc. against the ghastly murders of young brides for dowry. The Law Commission and the Parliamentary Committee also looked into the problem. After a sustained campaign, finally a Bill was introduced in the Parliament in 1984, which made certain changes in the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act of 1961. The Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 1984 was passed. The Act sets a limit to the amount given in dowry but does not ban dowry. While cruelty by the husband and his relatives leading to suicide or death has become an offence, punishable with imprisonment, still dowry deaths continue. In 1986 alone 1,285 dowry deaths were reported but there were few convictions. In 1998, as many as 6917 dowry deaths were reported throughout India (National Human Development Report 2002).

ii) Anti-sati Movement

In 1829 the practice of Sati was abolished through a legislation which marked the culmination of a debate initiated by the British.

The burning of a young widow Roop Kanwar in 1988 on the funeral pyre of her husband in Deorala, Rajasthan, sparked off strong protests by women’s organisations. The delayed response of the government came in the wake of mounting agitation in the shape of Commission of Sati (Prevention) Bill, which
was hurriedly passed in the Parliament. The Act assumes that it is a practice sanctioned by the custom. It does not seek to punish those who profit by raising money by selling photographs and raising donations in the name of so called ‘sati’. There is nothing on preventive action. The pre-sati feeling within the community mounted a counter agitation against the so called attack on their religious custom. It is strange that the barbaric practice, against which social reformers raised their voices, still persists in a country, which reveres mother goddesses.

iii) Anti-rape Movement

An anti-rape movement was launched in the last decade demanding review of the Supreme Court judgment in a rape case, which acquitted the culprit. Women activists forced the government to review Rape Laws. Several women’s organisations and legal and social activists held discussions with the Law Commission to amend the law and in 1983 Criminal Law (Amendment) Act was passed.

In the 1990s women took up the issue of communalism and globalisation through a wider networking both at the national and international level. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the women’s organisations in India are linked together through networks on different issues and campaigns. While former methods of protest and advocacy are still used, new methods of resistance and mobilisation for change are also being evolved.

30.6.4 The Emerging Trends and Government’s Response

One should not get the impression that women’s movement in India is largely urban based. We find that it has also involved middle class educated women. There are several active grassroot organisations of poor rural and urban working class women, tribal, self-employed women who are fighting against all forms of oppression, injustice and exploitation. Various national and regional political parties and trade unions have also set-up women’s wings.

As a response to women’s movement that began in the late 1970s, the government set up women’s cells within a few ministries (Rural Development, Labour and Human Resource Development). In government’s programme for rural poor 30 per cent women beneficiaries are to be selected for training and income generation programmes. In the late 1980s the government prepared a National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000 A.D.), which has made several recommendations relating to legal, economic, social and political status of women. The government also appointed a National Commission on self-employed women and women in the informal sector to look into the specific problems of unorganised women labour who constitute eighty seven per cent of women workers but do not get any protection from Labour Laws like equal wages, maternity benefits, childcare facilities and better working condition. The 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution prepared in the late 1980s was passed in 1993 and it contained an across the board reservation of 33.33 percent in panchayats, panchayat samitis, zilla parishads and local body institutions for women. The National Commission for Women was set up in 1992 envisaging to cover all facets of issues relating to safeguarding women’s rights and promotion of their empowerment. It was visualised as an expert body to advice the government on women’s issues and be a powerful advocate of their rights and hence a statutory body to lend it independence (Annual
Report of Women and Child development Department, Ministry of Human Resources, 2002). Besides this the government has come out with various programmes such as Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY), Balika Samriddhi Yojana (BSY), Swasakthi Project etc. for the benefit of the women.

The shift in issues and agenda for action within the women’s movement and response from the government are also due to the fact that research on women’s problems, particularly on women in the working class and other weaker sections especially during the 1970s and 1980s has thrown several challenges for the women’s movement as well as the government.

The new knowledge, being generated by scholars to understand the subordination and oppression of women and their points of strength, is broadly termed as ‘women’s studies’ or ‘gender studies’. It is gradually finding a place in universities, colleges and schools as teaching material. ‘Women’s Studies’ scholars and women’s organisations see a strong link between ‘Women’s Studies’ and action for change. The women’s movement during 1970s and 1980s while being effective in bringing women’s issues back into the arena of public debate, was only a beginning of the long struggle ahead for equality, justice and dignity to all women.

**Activity 1**

Read section 30.6 again very carefully and list the issues that have led to agitation among women in the 1980s. Now write an essay comparing these issues with the issues prevalent in your society. Compare your note, if possible, with the notes prepared by other learners in your Study Centre.

**Check Your Progress 4**

Tick mark the correct answers to the following questions.

i) Which one of the given issues is not raised by the women’s organisations in the post-Independence period?

a) Lack of maternity benefits

b) Wage discrimination between men and women

c) Replacement of male workers by trained female workers

d) Lack of provisions of childcare

ii) What was responsible for the shift in responses of the government regarding women’s issues in the post-Independent period?

a) Shift in issues and agenda for actions within women’s movement

b) Research on women’s problems

c) Both of the above

d) None of the above
This unit began with a brief discussion on women’s movement as an important variant of social movement. Then we discussed how women’s issues were focused in the reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries especially in the Brahmó Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Arya Samaj movements and in the social reform movements among the Muslim women. We have also discussed in detail the aspects of women’s issues and women’s participation in the nationalist movement. The broad socio-economic and the political processes, which have affected women’s movement in the post-Independence period, are also discussed in this unit. Lastly, we have discussed the resurgence of women’s movement in the 1970s and 1980s.

30.8 KEY WORDS

**Evolutionary Process**  
A process of gradual change in a society from one stage to the other

**Franchise**  
Right to cast vote

**Metropolitan city**  
Urban places with more than one million population

**Polygyny**  
A form of marriage in which a husband has more than one wife at the same time

30.9 FURTHER READING

Jayawardena, K. 1986. *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*. Kali for Women; New Delhi (Chapter 6)


30.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Check Your Progress 1**

i) The broad objectives of these movements were caste reform, improvement in the status of women, promoting women’s education and an attack on social practices whose roots were in social and legal inequalities and religious traditions of different communities.

ii) The restrictions and prejudices against women which had their roots in religion. These included child marriage, polygamy, limited rights to inherit property and, seclusion of women. Education of women was seen as the major instrument to improve women’s position.

iii) a) Arya Samaj
Check Your Progress 2

i) Some of the women leaders took position that women’s organisation should keep away from the party politics as women were concerned with social issues. They also thought that the British Government’s help was necessary to bring about changes in women’s position through education and legislation. There were other women leaders, who believed that they should align themselves with the national movement, as they will progress only with political emancipation.

ii) Nehru believed that without economic emancipation, it is not possible to realise equality for women. He disagreed with the limited view that women’s education alone can bring about the desired changes and he wanted women trained in all human activities. He said that if women’s struggle remained isolated from the general political, economic and social struggles, the women’s movement would not gain strength and will remain confined to upper classes.

Check Your Progress 3

i) Article 15(3) of the Constitution of India empowers the state to make special provision for women and children. It also suggests that there is a realisation of women’s disadvantaged position and need for the State to enact special measures to bring them on par with men.

ii) Their inability to mobilise the ordinary women and to understand the issues which concerned these women.

Check Your Progress 4

i) C

ii) C
31.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the various social aspects of women’s work. After studying this unit you should be able to

- describe the distinctive features of women’s work
- describe the nature of paid and unpaid work within and outside the household
- explain the factors which determine women’s work
- discuss the social, political and economic processes which transform women’s work roles.

31.1 INTRODUCTION

In unit 29 of this Block we discussed how traditional expectations and concept of women’s role have affected their status in our society. Work participation is an important indicator of one’s status in the society. Women’s work participation
has been affected by various socio-economic factors and traditional role expectations. Besides a significant amount of their work has remained invisible and unrecognized. In this unit we discuss some of the important aspects of women’s work. This unit begins with a discussion on the nature, range and patterns of women’s work within and outside the household. Here we will introduce you to the concept of ‘work’ and why much of the work which women do is not included while accounting for working population. The unit is divided into three major sections.

The first section (31.2) describes what women do and their direct and indirect contribution to the family and society both as paid and unpaid workers. An understanding of the determinants of women’s work will help you understand the differentiation in men’s and women’s work roles in different socio-economic categories. The second section (31.3) of the unit provides an in-depth view of how such factors as sexual division of labour, differential socialisation of girls and boys and different role expectations, differential investment in their education, training and skill development, directly and indirectly lead to gender inequalities. The last section (31.4) discusses the processes, which transform women’s work role in society.

31.2 NATURE, RANGE AND PATTERNS OF WOMEN’S WORK

In this section we shall be dealing with the various components of women’s work. Women do various types of work. Their household work remains mostly invisible and unrecognised. Here it is essential to categorise various types of work done by women in terms of paid and unpaid work. This will give us a broad idea to understand the significance of women’s work both in the family and in the society. Let us begin with the nature of women’s work.

31.2.1 What is Women’s Work?

According to anthropologists and some historians, women were the major producer of food, textiles and handicrafts throughout human history and continue to provide a major labour input where production is still in the small scale subsistence sector.

Defining the exact nature, scope and magnitude of women’s work remains a problem area because a good deal of women’s work is either invisible or is only partially accounted for in the data on workforce participation.

Components of women’s work include housework, paid and unpaid work related to home-based craft activities, family enterprise or business and paid work outside home. You must have observed differential work participation of men, women and children within the family both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The kind of work women do is determined by women’s position in the society and family’s location in the social hierarchy. Figure 31.1 shows various forms of women’s work.

The basic elements of women’s work within the home are related to the division of labour between men and women. Activities included under ‘housework’ broadly differ according to age, gender, income, occupational group, location (rural/urban), size and structure of the family.
Economists distinguish between production for self-consumption and production for the market. Only the latter is counted as ‘work’. The parameters of work used in official data reflect this bias. Much of the work that women do in household industries and processing of agricultural products, if unpaid, is not recognised as ‘work’ in the data systems.

In rural areas the women from the poorer households engage in various activities such as cooking, processing of food for household consumption, storing grains, childcare, fetching fuelwood, fodder and water, collection of forest produce, preparation of cow dung cakes, care of livestock and cattle and house repair and maintenance. Much of this work, which is important for the maintenance of families, is largely done by women. However, this work is unpaid and is not accounted for as productive work as it is meant for self-consumption. The conventional definition of ‘work’ does not include activities, which are of use-value and do not have exchange-value.

In the agricultural sector small and marginal farmer households utilise family labour as they cannot hire labour like big landlords. In the non-agricultural sector such as handicrafts, handloom weaving, pottery, food preservation and processing etc., a large proportion of women are home-based workers.

Activities like dairying, small animal husbandry (poultry, piggery, goatery etc.) fisheries, weaving, handicrafts, are family activities and every member assists
in some aspects of production. A major part of the work is done within the home and yet a woman is not accorded the status of a worker. Non-valuation of women’s unpaid work within the home results in non-recognition of women’s crucial economic contribution.

### 31.2.3 Female Child Labour

Girls continue to provide free labour in home-based production. Studies on rural girl child labour show that she works nine hours a day providing goods and services, which keep her out of school. She works on an average 318 days a year in the fields and at home providing free labour.

The 1981 Census reported that there were 1.4 crore child workers in India constituting 4.3 per cent of girls and 2.1 per cent of boys under fourteen years of age. Between 1971-81 while the percentage of working boys in rural areas declined, the percentage of working girls increased. This means that more girls are being inducted into work while more boys are sent to school thus widening the gap between boy’s and girl’s opportunities. According to the 1991 census figures there were 4.3 million female child labourers, out of which a vast majority (eighty one percent) were engaged in agriculture and related activities.

Girls are also employed in large numbers in carpet industry of Kashmir, in lock making in Aligarh, in gem polishing in Jaipur, in match industry in Sivakasi and in bidi rolling. In match industry of Sivakasi, ninety per cent child workers are girls under the age of fourteen. They work under hazardous condition. Female children working in home based industries are beyond the purview of child labour laws. These laws are not enforced even in factory based industries. Even in piece-rate system, her labour is seen as an extension of her mother’s labour and is not given an independent value.

Such work cuts them off from schooling, literacy, learning technical skills and improving their job prospects. These handicaps remain insurmountable throughout the life.

### 31.2.4 Paid Work

Women also work for wages in fields, forests, mines, factories, offices, small scale and household industries. The nature and extent of such work differs according to the location of family in the social hierarchy. In the rural sector the subsistence work burden falls heavily on women, while in higher castes and higher income groups ‘non-work’ of women is given more value. Many micro studies have reported inverse relationship between income level of the household and nature of women’s work participation. Women in the subsistence sector have no option but to work. However, their options are limited as they are non-entrants or drop-outs from school. They are often the primary breadwinners of the family, but the ideological bias views men as the primary breadwinner of the family. Let us examine some other important aspects of women’s paid employment.

i) **Education, Paid Employment and Household Responsibilities**

The spread of education among the middle and upper class women has opened up new avenues of employment. However, we are to keep in mind here that education does not necessarily lead to employment. On the one hand, illiteracy
among the majority of women in the lower socio-economic group constitutes a major barrier to increasing and diversifying work and training opportunities. On the other hand, pre-defined roles, ideology and labour market forces in a labour surplus economy effectively restrict women’s work opportunity among educated women of certain sectors. (Studies have shown wastage of skill and ability among women scientists and degree holders.)

In middle class families, women work for improving or maintaining the standard of living of the family or to provide a cushion against rising cost of living. Working outside home on the same terms and conditions, as men, does not absolve them from their domestic responsibilities. The dual burden of work creates physical, mental and emotional strain. Very few women may be lucky to get domestic help or kin-support. One of the consequences of double burden may be delayed promotions or sacrificing new job opportunities due to family responsibilities. Employment by itself does not guarantee equal sharing of work at home or better status of women.

ii) Agricultural and Industrial Sectors

Gender inequalities exist in all sectors. Inequalities are reflected in distribution of women workers in different sectors, in job hierarchies and in wages and earnings between men and women.

In the latter half of the twentieth century there was very little structural change in women’s employment. The proportion of female agricultural workers which was less than one-third of the total workforce in 1951 rose to more than fifty per cent, which means greater dependence on agriculture sector. In 1993-94,

Figure 31.2 Work participation rate by sex in different sector of economy during 1971-1991
as many as 86.2 percent female workers were engaged in the primary sector, which includes agriculture and allied sector such as forestry, livestock etc., in the rural areas. Agriculture accounts for eighty seven percent of women work force in the rural areas and 17.5 percent in the urban areas. Within agriculture they mostly work as agricultural labourers or cultivators (NSSO 1996). Figure 31.2 shows the work participation of both men and women in different sectors of economy during 1971-1991 and figure 31.3 the work participation rate of the total population by sex and place of residence during 1961-2001.

Industrialisation has created more work opportunities for a small section of educated women but at the same time has reduced work opportunities for unskilled women workers who were the traditional workers in textiles, jute, mines etc.
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Women workers are concentrated in plantations (seventy two per cent), food products, tobacco and textiles, cane and bamboo work, silk worm, rearing coir products, domestic services, education and health services. The high concentration of women in household industries rather than factory-based production affects their status as workers with no control on their labour and earnings.

iii) Women in Services and Professions

As far as women in services and professions are concerned there is no wage discrimination but they are concentrated in certain types of jobs like teachers, nurses, typists and stenographers and very few occupy higher positions in administration, business, technical jobs and professions.

Despite impressive increase in the number of educated women in urban areas the gap between men and women in the services and professions is large. The reasons are many. Some of them are given below.

a) Girls are generally socialised for their domestic roles
b) Less investment in the vocational and technical training of girls and female and male stereotypes determine attitude to work and differential expectations from girls education, which is rarely seen as an investment for future. In the middle class families it is seen as a contingency to be drawn on in times of need.
c) Higher concentration of girls is found in humanities and social sciences rather than vocational and technical courses.
d) There is less physical mobility among women after marriage.

iv) Earning Differentials

Earning differential has been a crucial feature of women’s paid employment. The division of labour between men and women works against women. An expression of discrimination against women in labour market is wage differential. They not only get unequal pay for equal work but many jobs that women do are categorised as low skilled jobs for which lower wages are paid. For example, men usually do weaving which is better paid while spinning, usually done by women, is low paid. In construction also men are supposed to do skilled jobs and women do unskilled work and get lower wages. Sexual divisions of labour and lower duration of women’s work are reflected into lower wages for women. Women workers on an average are found to earn only sixty percent of male wage for full time work. Wage differentials exist in both agricultural and non-agricultural occupations. The ratio of male to female real wage rates in agriculture is calculated as around 1.3 in 1995, i.e. for every one rupee earned by a female, the male earns 1.3 (thirty three percent) more (NSSO, 1996). Earning differentials also reflect differences in skill acquisition, education and training.

31.2.5 Women Workers and the Growth of Unorganised Sector

A majority of women (eighty seven per cent) are working in the rural and urban unorganised sector without the protection of labour legislation regarding
wages, hours of work, working conditions, health and maternity benefits and childcare services. Those women workers include agricultural and construction labourers, women in dairying, small animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry, handlooms and handicrafts, small vendors and hawkers selling vegetables and food items, washer-women, scavengers, domestic servants, crafts workers and piece rate workers in home based production. The labour force in this sector is characterised by higher incidence of casual labour and intermittent nature of work, low wages, and low capital incentives.

In 1988, a National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector carried out a comprehensive analysis of the problem of these workers and suggested to undertake concrete actions for their protection and organisation. According to an estimate of the Commission ninety four percent of the total women labour force were in the unorganised sector. The Commission produced a report entitled ‘Shram Shakti’, which made a number of important recommendations for legislative changes for the benefit of women.

Check Your Progress 1

i) What are the major components of women’s work? Use three lines to answer.

ii) Write a short note on the types of unpaid work done by the women from the poor households in the rural areas. Use seven lines to answer.

iii) Briefly narrate in about five lines, the impact of industrialisation on women.
31.3 DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN’S WORK

There are various factors, which determine women’s work. We can classify them under two broad headings: structural factors and socio-cultural factors. In this section we shall be examining these factors in detail. Let us begin with the structural ones.

31.3.1 Structural Factors

The key structural variables, which determine women’s work, are: i) the family, caste, class and community, ii) regional differences, iii) labour market iv) environmental changes; and v) the growth of unorganised sectors.

i) Family, Caste, Class and Community: The inequalities in our social structure based on caste, class and community have a significant influence on women’s work roles.

As you have already noted the basic elements of women’s work within the family are related to division of labour between men and women. Learning role ideology is not only confined to family but to the world of school, media and work which also play an important role in perpetuating attitudes and beliefs regarding women’s work roles.

Women from upper caste in rural areas do not engage in out of home wage employment, as ‘non-work’ is linked to the notion of ‘higher status’ and prestige. There are some caste-based occupations also such as smithery, pottery, weaving, leather work etc. where there is a well-defined sexual division of labour.

There are different notions among different classes, castes and community about ‘appropriateness’ or ‘suitability’ of certain types of work for women. For example, teaching and nursing are considered to be suitable jobs for women. So also in agriculture the tasks of sowing, threshing, breeding transplanting etc. are women’s job. Differential access of women to education, training, and resources and skills among different classes also determines the types of work women do.

Majority of the schedule castes and schedule tribes have been socially and economically deprived. The Indian Constitution has made special provision for them and government has followed the policy of reservation of seats in educational institutions and jobs. However, majority of them are not able to take advantage of these provisions. Within these groups women are more deprived. The enrolment of girls is far below that of boys. In the year 2000-01, out of 10,995 students enrolled in the primary school only 4665 were girls. The reasons are both socio-economic and environmental constraints. Large number of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe women are landless labourers.

ii) Regional Differences: Another structural factor affecting women work participation in India is the regional variation. In the South, North-East and Central tribal belt, women’s work participation is high in comparison to North India. Women’s work participation is higher in rice growing areas than in wheat growing areas. The reasons are both cultural and economic.
iii) **Labour Market:** The family ideology which determines ‘suitability’ and ‘unsuitability’ of certain jobs for women is also reflected in job stereotyping in labour market. For example, in agriculture women do not plough, they do weeding, transplanting and harvesting. In industries like electronics women are mostly employed in assembly jobs. Similarly, in services women are concentrated in teaching, nursing and office jobs.

Activity 1
Observe the daily activities of two employed women preferably from different socio-economic backgrounds, continuously for one week. While observing please note the types of work done by them inside the house and, if possible, at the work place. Now write an essay in about 20 lines on the double burden of work regularly undertaken by them. Exchange your notes, if possible, with your co-learners at your Study Centre.

iv) **Environmental Changes and Women’s Work:** You have read earlier that women in poorer households spend a great deal of time in providing goods and services for family’s needs. Many studies have shown that in the areas hit by water scarcity and deforestation, women spend long hours in collecting fuelwood for cooking, fodder for cattle and water for home consumption. In the hill areas of Uttar Pradesh women actively participate in the *Chipko* movement to prevent destruction of forest as it resulted in increasing difficulties in the collection of fuel, fodder and water and other daily requirements of their life (see Jain 1984).

### 31.3.2 Socio-cultural Factors

Values, institutions, norms, attitudes, customs, family ideology, process of socialisation, sexual division of labour, and self-perception are important socio-cultural variables affecting women’s employment. Let us examine these variables briefly.

i) **Values, Norms, Attitudes and Customs:** Values, norms, attitudes and customs governing women’s work are not static and keep changing over time and space, however these exercise greater control over women’s work than in the case of men. For example, agricultural development has brought significant changes in the life style of the villagers in many agricultural developed areas. It has changed the values and attitudes to work among certain caste groups. Hence the obvious result has been that of the withdrawal of women from manual agricultural activities among these caste groups. Similarly, the process of Sanskritisation leads to the withdrawal of women from manual activities in the families moving up in the social hierarchy. Besides change in the values, norms and attitudes, existing social customs also affect women’s work. For example, *purdah* system restricts women’s mobility and work pattern.

ii) **Family Ideology and Socialisation of Girls:** Family ideology expresses itself in so many ways i.e. control over girls and women by defining sex roles, notions of family prestige/status, de-value women’s work, girl’s entitlement to family resources (health, nutrition, education) and structures of male dominance, supportiveness and conflict. Girls are socialised from their childhood to accept the family ideology. The traditional social isolation...
process introduces gender stereotyping. It not only affects the women’s work roles, but also determines the self-perception and role expectation. We have already discussed these aspects in unit 29 of this Block.

iii) **Gender-based Division of Labour**: The gender-based of labour not only defines the nature of work to be done by the women, it also imposes discriminatory work norms for them. It is one of the important reasons for the high concentration of women workers in the low paid jobs.

iv) **Self-Perception of Need to Work-choice vs. Compulsion**: Women internalise the ideology of gender roles. Their own perception of work and their attitude to work stems from the link seen between education, earnings and family’s status and the importance of their economic contributions to the family. For middle class women in white-collar employment and for women in higher professions, work or employment has a different meaning than for agricultural labourers or factory workers or domestic workers. Clearly there is a difference in attitude to work depending on whether women are working for subsistence or for social mobility. The rationale for work is different in different sections. In poorer households women have no options but to work, yet their choices are severely restricted.

**Check Your Progress 2**

i) Narrate in six lines how caste values and sexual division of labour affect women’s work participation.

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ii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Tick mark T if it is true or F if it is false.

- Women’s work participation is higher in the rice growing areas than in the wheat growing areas. **True/False**
- In India, eighty-seven percent of the women working force is engaged in the rural and urban organised sector. **True/False**

### 31.4 PROCESSES WHICH TRANSFORM WOMEN’S WORK ROLES

Social, economic and political processes transform women’s work roles. In this section we shall discuss how these processes transform women’s work role in society.
31.4.1 Education and Training

There are strong links between education, training and better-paid jobs. It is argued that women’s education can help them to seek higher quality employment. Such evidence is visible among middle class educated working women in large cities.

There are a few problems still to be tackled. You must have noted that quality of education and access to professional and higher educational institutions differ according to caste and gender.

The problem of retaining girls in school and high drop-out rate is due to the fact that poor families rarely see education from the point of view of better prospects or investment for the future. The compulsions of daily living deprive girls of any meaningful investment in their education.

Only a small section of educated girls among middle and upper classes plan their careers. Sometimes their education is viewed as ‘deferred’ investment to be utilised when the need arises. Women opt for liberal arts, humanities and home science due to sex stereotyping of roles and sometimes reluctance on the part of families to make a long-term investment in technical and vocational education and training of girls and for various other reasons. This is clear from the enrolment figures of girls in vocational and technical institutions.

31.4.2 Technological Changes

Questions of technological changes and women’s work cannot be studied without considering the issues of division of labour, ownership of means of production and inequality between men and women in control over resources and access to education and training.

For reasons stated earlier and class and gender bias in technical education, women are often at a disadvantaged position when technical changes are of labour-replacing type.

Agricultural modernisation and industrialisation have displaced women unskilled workers. For example, in green revolution areas mechanisation of farm operations like weeding, harvesting, threshing etc. has replaced women from their traditional jobs.

Data from several studies on the impact of technology on women industrial workers (in food, tobacco, textiles and minerals) demonstrates that capital intensive industries had adverse effect on female labour absorption. Introduction of technology needs new skills and training and women are often disadvantaged.

31.4.3 Access to Land and Other Productive Resources

In a culture with a universal preference for sons and a predominantly male inheritance system, gender often determines women’s access to productive resources (Land, Capital and Technology). A combination of socio-economic factors determine women’s access to resources further strengthening the barriers to their access to credit, technology and skill development to improve their earning opportunities. For example, women have low access to land. Since most of the land is owned by the male members of the family, institutional credits including technological know-how are sanctioned by the development agencies in the name of the male members of the household. Thus, deprived
of the productive resources, women become increasingly dependent on men. However, the dimension of this problem varies in different classes.

31.4.4 Women Producers and Worker’s Organisation as Pressure Groups

Poor working women largely in the unorganised sector have gained very little from the trade union movement. Over the years the participation of women has not only decreased in the organised workforce but also within the trade unions. It is only since the nineteen seventies that efforts to organise women workers had slowly begun. Women workers organised to protect their rights and demanded access to resources, land, credit, market, raw material and training.

### Activity 2

Interview five women, preferably from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Enquire from them about the form and extent of their ownership of land, household assets and the other productive resources. Now based on your findings write a note on women’s assets and other productive resources. Compare your note, if possible, with the notes of your co-learners at the Study Centre.

31.4.5 Macro Processes and State Policies

Changes in and expansion of work opportunities for women may be brought about through government policies in different sectors of economy and employment share of various sectors. For example, growing need for women doctors, teachers, nurses and functionaries for development programmes, i.e., health, education, welfare, rural development etc. will expand women’s work opportunities. Similarly, location of industries or promotion and credit support for handicrafts, handlooms, dairy and fisheries etc. can bring about expanded work opportunities for women. Modernisation of industries or agriculture operations where women were employed earlier may, on the other hand, cause displacement. Policies of economic development relying on technological progress, export promotion and capital intensive industries have serious implications for women workers in the factory sector, if they do not have adequate training opportunities.

Within these given social processes women’s work has to take into account the interconnections between gender-based division of labour, household work, access to resources, education and skill development and their economic roles. All women workers carry double burden. However, their family maintenance work remains invisible and unaccounted for. In poorer households the distinction between subsistence work and economic activity is very thin and is largely a matter of subjective judgement.

Most women work in the unorganised or informal sector marked by low wages, occupational segregation, exploitative working conditions and insecure employment. Only a small section of educated middle and upper class working women has benefited from expanding educational and employment opportunities.
Most of the women workers face varying degrees of discrimination (overt or covert) and forms of control due to gender-based division of labour and cultural factors. Gender-based role ideology of the patriarchal family restricts women’s options by accentuating gender inequalities in education, vocational training and diversified job opportunities. Labour market discrimination partly reflects these differences, which is itself a consequence of discrimination within the family.

The year 2001 was declared by the government of India as ‘women’s year of empowerment’, which had promised to ensure for women their rightful place in nation’s social, political and economic life apart from equitable distribution of resources and a just social order (India 2003). But in contradiction to this promise of the government, more and more women are pushed to the labour market for survival mainly to the informal sector market which is highly exploitative and with little labour protection. The Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) was adopted by the government in 1991 as a part of the wider economic reforms, designed to open up the economy to the international competitiveness. Among other policy changes it included privatisation of public enterprises, devaluation of rupee, progressive abolition of subsidies, and financial cuts to the social programmes. Privatisation and export oriented production have given rise to a major increase in unemployment and the women are the worst affected since they are the ones to be sacked first. They find it hard to re-enter the organised work force. In the emerging scenario more and more women enter the unorganised sector, which is notorious for its exploitative labour, flouting of labour laws and hazardous to health.

Check Your Progress 3

i) What has been the impact of modern technology on women’s employment?
   Answer in four lines.

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ii) Write in five lines about the ways to bring about changes and expansions in women’s work opportunities.

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31.5 LET US SUM UP

Work participation is an important indicator of status of an individual or a group in society. In this unit, we discussed the nature, range and patterns of
women’s work participation in India. We discussed that women’s work incorporates unpaid work in home-based production and family farm, women’s work participation is affected by various structural and socio-cultural factors. Lastly, this unit examined the social, economic and political processes that may transform women’s work roles in society.

31.6 KEY WORDS

**Dual burden of work**  
Burden of unpaid household chores and paid employment

**Exchange value**  
Price of a commodity or a service

**Earning differentials**  
Difference in the earnings based on certain socio-economic attributes

**Piece-rate system**  
Money paid per piece or for a fixed job

**Self-consumption**  
Goods and services produced and consumed by a person or a family

**Use-value**  
Intrinsic value of a commodity or service, which is not exchanged for money in the market

31.7 FURTHER READING


31.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i) The components of women’s work include housework, paid and unpaid work related to home-based craft, activity, family enterprise or business and paid work outside home.

ii) In rural areas women from the poorer households engage in activities such as cooking, processing food for household consumption, storing grains, childcare, fetching fuelwood, fodder and water, collection of forest produce, preparation of cow-dung cakes, care of livestock and cattle and house repair and maintenance. Much of this work which is important for
the maintenance of families is largely done by women is unpaid and is not accounted for production work as it is for self-consumption.

iii) The impact of industrialisation on women’s work has not been uniform one. Though industrialisation has created work opportunities for a small section of educated women at the same time it has reduced work opportunities for unskilled women workers who were the traditional workers in textile, jute, mines etc.

Check Your Progress 2

i) Women from upper caste in rural areas do not engage in out of home wage employment as the state of ‘non-work’ is linked to the notion of higher status and prestige. The basic elements of women’s work within the family are related to division of labour between men and women. There are some caste-based occupations such as smithery, pottery, weaving, leather work etc. where there is well defined sexual divisions of labour.

ii) True, True

Check Your Progress 3

i) Agricultural modernisation and industrialisation have displaced women unskilled workers. For example, in green revolution areas mechanisation of farm operations like weeding, harvesting and threshing etc. have replaced what were primarily women’s jobs.

ii) Changes and expansion of women’s work opportunities may be brought about through government policies in different sectors of economy and changes in employment share of various sectors. For example, growing need for women doctors, teachers, nurses and functionaries for development programmes will expand women’s work opportunities.
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WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Structure

32.0 Objectives
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32.2 Education and Gender Inequality: An Overview
32.3 Factors Affecting Female Enrolment and Retention
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  32.3.2 Limitations of Structures and Delivery Systems
  32.3.3 Content and Ideology of Education
32.4 Women’s Education through Non-formal Education and Adult Literacy Programme
32.5 Let Us Sum Up
32.6 Key words
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32.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you should be able to

● describe briefly the nature of gender inequality in education in India
● identify and describe the important reasons for the low educational participation of girls
● analyse shortcomings of the educational system
● discuss alternatives to the formal school.

32.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit begins with an overview of the educational status of women and the aspect of gender inequality attached to it. We discuss these aspects in section 32.2. Female enrolment and retention in the educational institutions are affected by various factors. A broad description of these factors is given in section 32.3. In section 32.4 we have discussed the familial and social factors affecting women’s education. Here we have discussed in detail the factors, like early marriage, purdah and other social customs, social and familial expectations and high opportunity cost of education. These factors have affected women’s education adversely. In section 32.5 we have examined the limitations of the structures and the delivery systems. In this section, we discuss in detail how distance from homes, inflexible school schedules, absence of women teachers, incentives, buildings and equipment and inadequate childcare facilities have critically affected women’s educational status. Content and ideology of education in the form of teaching methods and gender biases among teachers, in the textbooks and in the syllabi have also adversely affected women’s
education. We discuss these issues in section 32.6. The Government of India has made various efforts for the rapid eradication of illiteracy through non-formal education and adult literacy programmes. We have examined these aspects of women’s education in section 32.7.

### 32.2 EDUCATION AND GENDER INEQUALITY: AN OVERVIEW

Education is the most important instrument for human resource development. Education of women, therefore, occupies top priority amongst various measures taken to improve the status of women in India. However, in India education is constrained by the socio-economic conditions of the people, their attitude, values and culture. During the pre-British era, education was linked to socio-religious institutions, reinforcing a repressive and limiting social structure. During the British period, education became a tool of colonial power, enabling a small minority to have access to education and all the benefits it entailed. The social reformers of the nineteenth century raised the demand for women’s education. Since Independence, policy makers have argued for universal education and for making education a tool for bringing about social equality. However, in spite of the efforts made so far the education system has not been able to make sufficient contribution towards women’s equality (NPPW 1988).

#### i) Female Literacy

During 1951 and 1981 women’s literacy rate improved from 7.93 percent to 24.82 percent. However, the absolute number of illiterate women shot up from 15.7 million to 241.7 million (excluding Assam) in the same period. If we go further Census reports shows that in 1911, there were 1,055 illiterate women to 1,000 illiterate men, in 1981 the figure for women had gone up to 1,322. The census figures of 1981 showed that women comprised 57 percent of the illiterate population and 70 percent of the non-enrolled children of school stage were girls. The female literacy rate for the year 1991 was 39.28 percent and in 2001 it had become 54.28 percent. In 1991 out of the total illiterates 60.8 percent were women and this rate was higher in the rural area (69.7 percent). And in 2001 out of the total illiterates 64 percent were women. The gap between male-female literacy rates of 18.30 percentage points in 1951 increased to 26.62 percent in 1981. In 1991 this gap was marginally reduced to 24.84 and in 2001 it has gone down to 21.70 percentage points. Figure 32.1 shows the progress of literacy separately for male and female, during 1901-2001.

#### ii) Regional Variations

Inequality in education between women and men varies region wise. In 1981, in Kerala a state known for its general level of awareness, female literacy was as high as 73 percent, whereas in Rajasthan, one of the nine states officially recognised as being educationally backward, less than 12 percent women were literate. States like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were also lagging behind in girl’s education. Again, though the overall female literacy figure according to the 1981 Census was 24.8 percent, in rural areas it was around 18 percent while in the towns and cities women’s literacy had gone up to 47.8 percent. Kerala continues to occupy the top spot in female
Women and Society

Fig. 32.1: Progress of literacy (1901-2001)

literacy with 87.86 percent even in the year 2001 and Bihar recorded lowest rate (35.57 percent) of female literacy. The States or Union Territories having less than 50 percent literacy rates are Rajasthan (44.34 percent), Arunachal Pradesh (44.24 percent), Dadra and Nagar Haveli (42.99 percent), Uttar Pradesh (42.98 percent), Jammu and Kashmir (41.82 percent) and Jharkhand (33.57 percent). In 2001 the female literacy rate for the rural area was 46.58 percent which was much less than the urban area (72.99 percent). The States with low female literacy rates are shown in the figure 32.2.
iii) **Enrolment**

1981 census figures showed that 93.6 percent of the total population in the age group 6-11 years was in school. It is also observed that as all boys at this level were enrolled, universalisation was hindered by the lower participation of girls. It is also true when we look at later data. In the year 1997-98 while the rate of enrolment of the boys was almost cent percent, only 81.2 percent girls were enrolled at the primary level (*Annual Report*, Ministry of Human Resources 1999). However, it is necessary for us to view enrolment targets and figures somewhat critically from three points of view: first, under- and over-age children would account for about 20 percent of total enrolments, in a specific category, thus inflating the actual figure. Second, this set of official figures needs to be compared with the figure of almost 50 million children in the labour force. Even if it is accepted, for purposes of argument, that most working children were from the older age groups, where enrolments were lower, we cannot overlook the existence of a certain percentage of whole-time under-ten year old workers. It would thus be more realistic to keep in mind that actual attendance was in fact much lower. Names may figure on school registers without children ever attending school. Third, in 2005 it is possible that all girls in the 6-11 years age group would be enrolled in school. It is of
Fig. 32.3 Statewise percentage of female literacy
equal importance to see where these children are going to be in 2010 A.D. Are they still on the school rolls or are they back at work in the fields, homes or in various occupations? In the following sections we shall look at why girls either do not go to school or leave after a few years. Figure 32.3 shows the state wise percentage of female literacy rates in 1991 and 2001.

**Check Your Progress 1**

i) Write a short note in about four lines on the educational system of the pre-British and British period.

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ii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Tick mark T if it is true or F if it is false.

a) In 2001 the female literacy rate was lowest in Bihar. (True/False)

b) Women comprised only 25 percent of the illiterate population in the year 2001. (True/False)

### 32.3 FACTORS AFFECTING FEMALE ENROLMENT AND RETENTION

Though various efforts are made to improve girl’s enrolment and provide adult education for women, their enrolment in the educational institutions is much lower than that of men. The drop-out rates are significantly higher among the females. Factors affecting enrolment and retention of girls in the educational institutions are many. These can be categorised under three broad headings a) familial and social factors, b) limitations of the structure and delivery systems, and c) content and ideology of education. Before examining these factors in detail let us have a glance at the various aspects of these broad factors given below.

a) **Familial and Social Factors**

   i) Family traditions and early marriage

   ii) Purdah and social customs

   iii) Social and familial expectations

   iv) The high opportunity cost of education

b) **Limitations of Structures and Delivery System**

   i) Distance of school from homes

   ii) Inflexible school schedules
iii) Absence of women teachers
iv) Absence of girls’ schools
v) Insufficient number of teachers
vi) Insufficient incentives such as scholarships, mid-day meals, free books
vii) Insufficient facilities such as physical structures and equipment
viii) Inadequate childcare facilities.

c) **Content and Ideology of Education**

i) Teaching methods

ii) Biases among teachers and in textbooks and syllabi.

In the following three sub-sections of this unit we shall deal with these factors in detail.

### 32.3.1 Familial and Social Factors

In this sub-section, we shall discuss the major familial and social factors affecting women’s education in general.

i) **Family Traditions and Early Marriage**

By and large, irrespective of socio-economic background, the notion of what it means to be a girl comes into conflict with the ideal of education. For their survival and unity families build on the nurturant and docile aspects of womanliness. These often run counter to a value system which stresses a certain degree of independence of thought, spirit of enquiry, learning by rote, and at a more mundane level, relating to peers and developing non-familial loyalties. While, as shall be seen later, middle class families strike a balance by allowing girls access to certain kinds of courses. Among the large majority, withdrawing a girl from the family’s labour force to go to school is viewed as illogical and pointless. The distribution of functions within the household, or what is now known as the gender-based division of labour at home, allots a number of tasks to women and girls. It is seen to be a girl’s inherent nature to tend and care for others and not waste time on self-oriented activities such as going to school or playing with friends.

Related to notions of feminity are traditions of early marriage, and *purdah* or the seclusion of women. The Child Marriage Restraint Act (popularly known as the Sarada Act) which was enacted in 1929 and enforced in 1930, fixed the minimum age of marriage for boys at 18 and for girls at 14. The Act was subsequently amended in 1949 and in 1956, raising the minimum age for girls to 18 and that of boys to 21. Yet, a study conducted in late 1980s by the Family Planning Foundation of India found that one crore girls below the age of 11 years were married. Rural women tended to be married by 15, and at a year later in the cities. According to the 1991 census among the currently married women 53.3 percent married below 18 years of age. And as per the National Family Health Survey (1993-94) almost 33 percent women were married by the age of 15.
On “Akha Teej”, annually over 50,000 children are married in Rajasthan, many of whom are mere babies. Other studies reported in newspapers from Belgaum district in Karnataka and Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh indicate that child marriages are common in those areas. According to official statistics, of the 4.5 million marriages that take place annually, at least 3 million brides are in the age group of 15-19 years, many of whom come from Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. These are also the states where low educational enrolment of girls is coupled with high female and maternal mortality.

ii) **Purdah and Social Customs**

By and large, throughout the country, the time span between the onset of puberty and betrothal, if not marriage, is regarded as one of potential danger for sexually vulnerable girls. It is also a phase when girls first experience *purdah* or seclusion as well as restraints on activities within the home during menstruation. The link between a family’s *izzat* or honour and control of its women’s sexuality results in not only limits on physical activities but also taboos associated with purity and pollution such as regarding women as unclean at specific times. At the same time, girls have to be kept chaste and pure so as to be acceptable in the marriage market. Apart from affecting school enrolments, these constraints and values have led to the acceptance or internalisation of a negative self-image among girls. Such an attitude works counter to the school culture, which should ideally aim at developing healthy competition and a questioning mind.

iii) **Social and Familial Expectations**

Since the nineteenth century, in the West as well as India, whether girls should have access to the same body of knowledge or not has been an area of major ideological and pedagogic debate. In the post-Independence period all major Committees and Commissions have concluded that girls should have access to the same kind and extent of education as boys. Nonetheless, it is only a small minority of girls who are free to exercise choices in this vital area. A look at enrolments after class X indicate that girls tend to go into the Arts and Vocational Educational streams in large numbers. What is interesting is that given their results, a far greater number could study Science and Engineering. The fact that they do not is a direct reflection of familial expectations and an internalisation of these expectations. A similar pattern is repeated at the higher education level.

While girls comprise 24 to 50 per cent of those enrolled in higher education in 1981, there were 23 girls to 100 boys in Science courses, and only 6 to a 100 boys in Engineering and Technology courses. By the year 1998 while the percentage of girls who selected science stream for higher education was around 25 percent only, there was an improvement in the percentage of girls who selected engineering and technology courses for higher education. Thus, far fewer girls do, in fact, go in for Science and Technology than would be reasonable to expect from their school-leaving results. Clearly then there are important non-academic factors and situations which influence choices at the age of sixteen or seventeen. These are related to social and familial expectations of what a girl’s basic role in life is to be. In the majority of cases, it is assumed that she is to be a good wife and devoted mother, who may, if she has time,
work as a teacher or as a clerk. There seems little point in investing time and energy on a career in science and other related areas. Again, if it is a question of investment of scarce family resources, these are invariably spent on the technical education of a boy. Even if his sister has similar aptitudes, she more often than not, redirects them to traditional feminine-oriented courses. Underlying many of these decisions is, of course, a deep-seated conviction that a woman’s basic nature equips her to perform better in certain areas than in others. Even when school results point to the contrary, families and indeed girls themselves choose to believe that there can be no true fulfillment in combining too many roles, or in competing to enter male-dominated disciplines. The percentage of faculty-wise enrolment for both men and women is given in the figure 32.4.

A survey of parents, conducted in a private co-educational school in New Delhi, found that 25 percent said that they would not discriminate in role distribution between sons and daughters. On the other hand, work outside the home such as fetching eggs and bread from the market, taking the dog for a walk or running an errand at the neighbours’ were regarded as the boy’s legitimate area of activity. Thus only 1 percent of the parents expected their sons to help in the kitchen, while 58 percent felt that this was a daughter’s function. She was also expected to sweep the floor, dust furniture and wash the occasional dish in many more instances than was the case for a son. Another questionnaire (Parthasarthi 1988) circulated among 66 teachers (44 women and 22 men) indicated that “male teachers display a traditional expectation of role-behaviour from girls, whereas the women teachers believe in a definite personhood being given to girls and ascribe roles to girls that are incongruent

![Figure 32.4: Facultywise enrolment 1970-71 TO 1990-91](image-url)
with our society’s expectations”. Interestingly, though teachers of both sexes expected girls to be good at studies, there was greater variance regarding their social role.

iv) **High Opportunity Cost of Education**

You have earlier read about the high opportunity cost of education. Most poor families do not consider it worthwhile to educate their children who can work at home or for a wage. It is clear from the figures on child labour that the existence of poor families is heavily dependent on the labour of children and of women. In such a situation, the returns on education, which normally means a few years of schooling, are low. Being in school means foregoing the opportunity to earn or help in the home, thereby releasing adults for productive activity. In a poverty situation, the cost of education in real terms are too high and schooling is seen as a poor investment, which provides no sure access to better employment.

One of the main areas involving the labour of girls is that of sibling care. While their brothers play marbles or go to school, young girls, either in the villages or in urban slums are initiated early into the maternal role. This releases mothers and older female kin for productive work both within the house and in the wider economy. At present, it is estimated that at least 4.5 crore children need childcare services. Yet, government sponsored schemes and those in the organised sector cover a mere 3 lakh children.

Most working girl children also are in the rural areas (see section 2.3 of unit 31 of this Block). It is estimated that almost half of the women’s share in agricultural operations is covered by female child labour. In the Sivakasi match industry, of the 45,000 working children, at least 90 percent are girls below 14 years of age. Girl children work in large numbers in the coir industry in Kerala, and in the home-based production of incense and papads, beedi rolling, gem polishing, and in the making of paper bags, the stitching and embroidering of readymade garments and linen as well as in the assembling of electrical and electronic goods. Again, as is the case with adult women, girls are concentrated in more tiring, monotonous and time-consuming tasks (Burra 1989).

**Activity 1**

Interview 15 housewives from your neighbourhood. Ask each of them:

i) age at her marriage

ii) upto which class has she studied?

iii) if a drop out, ask why she gave up school or college?

Based on the collected information write a note in about 20 lines stating the manner in which familial and social factors have affected these women’s education. If possible, compare your notes with the notes of other students at your Study Centre.

### 32.3.2 Limitations of Structures and Delivery Systems

Women’s education has been affected by various non-familial factors, especially by the structure and the delivery system of education. By delivery system we mean availability of education to the population. Let us examine these factors in detail.
i) **Distance of School from Homes:** In a situation where families impose restrictions on girls, particularly after a certain age, easy accessibility to a school is essential to ensure at least a few years’ of schooling. Well over 90 percent of the population have access to primary school within a kilometre of the habitation. Yet, the Fifth All-India Educational Survey published in 1989 showed that 32,000 habitations with a population of 300 or more had yet to be provided with primary schools. This figure accounted for 6 percent of habitations with a population of 300 or more. At the time of Sixth All India Educational Survey the rate of habitations having 300 or more population not served by primary school increased slightly to 6.97 percent. As per the government policy, a habitation should have a minimum population of 300 for opening a primary school. The Sixth All India Educational Survey (1997) shows that there were 5,80,590 habitations with a population of 300 or more out of which 93.03 percent habitations have access to primary school facility upto a distance of one kilometre. Out of 6.97 percent (40467) habitations which do not have primary school facility within one kilometre, 2.09 percent did not even have upto two kilometres.

ii) **Inflexible School Schedules:** The existence of daily as well as yearly school time tables which do not take into account the work patterns of households deter the participation of children. It is interesting that though the demand for a more environmentally sensitive school-schedule was mooted first by the Hartog Committee (1929) and has been mentioned often by other Committees and Commissions, the issue has not been given adequate time or thought.

iii) **Absence of Women Teachers:** That the education of girls is substantially dependent on whether they are taught by women or not, has, over the years, been clearly established. From 1983 onwards the Government of India has sponsored a new scheme for financial assistance to encourage the appointment of women teachers in the nine educationally backward states. Yet the supply of women teachers continues to be inadequate for the country’s requirement. Despite the fact that teaching is a preferred option for a majority of the middle class working women, only 26 percent of primary school teachers were women in 1981. Interestingly at the middle and secondary school levels, the figure had risen from 15 percent in 1951 to 30 percent in 1981. In 1991 there were only 29 percent women teachers at the primary school level and 33 percent at the middle school and 32 percent at the secondary school level. In 2001 while there was an improvement in the rate of women teachers at the primary and middle level (35 percent and 38 percent respectively), there was no difference at the secondary level (*Annual Report*, Ministry of Human Resources 2002-03).

iv) **Absence of Girls’ Schools:** The issue of co-education versus single sex schools involves certain specific pedagogic principles and points of view. In the Indian context among certain social categories and in parts of the country co-education at any level is unacceptable, and affects girls’ enrolment adversely. Though the financial viability of co-educational institutions is undoubtedly much higher than running several single sex institutions with low rates of enrolment, by and large, the present situation
demands segregation as a pre-condition for the mass schooling of girls. Yet, some figures show that the ratio of such institutions to all institutions is only about 10 to 15 percent, when the overall enrolment of girls is approximately 35 percent.

v) **Insufficient Number of Teachers:** Under the Operation Blackboard (National Policy of Education, 1986) it was stipulated that in primary schools, “at least two teachers, one of whom a woman, should work in every school, the number increasing as early as possible to one teacher per class”. Figures from the Fifth All-India Educational Survey indicate that 2,628 schools in the country have no teachers; fifty per cent of these institutions were in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. It is possible that teachers were absent on the day of the Survey; nonetheless, the time lag involved in transfer as well as situations where teachers are unwilling to take up postings in remote areas need to be taken into account. Further, 23.91 percent schools have only one teacher, and most of these are in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Meghalaya and Rajasthan. According to the Sixth All India Educational Survey out of the 5,70,455 primary schools in the country 20.12 percent are single teacher schools and another 0.77 percent do not have any teacher at all. There is a decrease in the percentage of single teacher schools since Fifth Survey. The National Educational Policy of 1986 envisaged that each primary school should be provided with two teachers under the Operation Black Board scheme. The aforesaid decrease may be due to the impact of this scheme. The problems of zero teacher and single teacher school are acute in rural areas. There are more than one third of primary schools in Andhra Pradesh (33.49 percent), Arunachal Pradesh (45.46 percent), Jammu and Kashmir (35.26 percent), Meghalaya (37.13 percent) are single teacher schools. Dependence on one individual means that in the event of his or her illness, absence or even transfer, children are left on their own. Again, in such situations parents would be reluctant to expose their daughters to a potentially ‘unprotected’ environment.

vi) **Insufficient Incentives such as Scholarships, Mid-day Meals, Free Books:** The midday meal scheme which has been introduced in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa has succeeded in attracting children to school, as well as keeping them on for more years. It is also in these states that the scholarships and free books schemes have been encouraged. As per the Sixth All India Educational Survey, out of the 8,22,486 schools in the country 14.39 percent has provisions for midday meals. And 52.60 percent provide free book facility. Nonetheless, delivery systems are not free from snags. A study of Scheduled Caste children, in 1980s, in the Ballia and Azamgarh districts of Uttar Pradesh found that as supplies of stationery and freeships rarely arrived on time, parents did not have the resources to support their children in the interim period. Further, small fees had to be paid to the teaching staff for transfer and pass certificates known as pass *karahi* fees. In Maharashtra where schooling has been made free for girls, teachers have reported two kinds of responses: while the principal of a rural school in Dhulia district said that enrolments had doubled with free education, the experience from a suburban Bombay school was less positive. Boys now teased girls as being inferior, and similar to the Scheduled Castes, who,
they said, basically studied phukat or without paying fees. This negative attitude in a previously more or less egalitarian atmosphere resulted in girls becoming withdrawn and resentful. In both cases the Principals reported that they had discussed at length with their teachers strategies to cope with a not unexpected situation. (based on interaction with school teachers and Principals)

vii) Insufficient Facilities such as Physical Structures and Equipment:
Over 90 percent of educational expenditure go to the salaries of teaching and other administrative staff. Consequently, very little is left for buildings and equipment. The Fifth All-India Educational Survey points out that 13.50 percent (71,495) primary schools in the country are without buildings and operated out of thatched huts, tents and open spaces. And this has increased to 14.18 percent at the time of Sixth All India Educational Survey. Another 7.69 percent have no classroom and almost 40 percent have only one classroom. An earlier document showed out that almost 40 percent schools have no blackboards and 54.72 percent have no drinking water. The Sixth All India Educational Survey states that 63.08 percent schools do not have adequate number of class rooms. And 25 percent schools have no black board and 52.59 percent have no drinking water facility.

viii) Inadequate Childcare Facilities: Studies have shown that school enrolments go up when facilities for childcare are available in or near primary schools. Children, in particular girls, can then sit in class knowing that their younger siblings are being taken-care of. However, as we have seen, childcare facilities are very inadequate, and despite recommendations from individuals, groups and committees, the State has yet to take the issue of child minding seriously.

Check Your Progress 2
i) Mention five limitations of structures and delivery systems affecting women’s education.
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ii) Write a note on the opportunity cost of education for a girl child of a poor family. Use about seven lines to answer.
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32.3.3 Content and Ideology of Education

The content and ideology of education has also contributed enormously towards the low educational status of women. In this section we shall be discussing how the teaching methods and sex biases in text book, which form the basis of the content and ideology of education, have affected the educational status of women in India.

i) Teaching Methods

The institution of the school is based on specific norms regarding age at enrolment, sequential promotion on the basis of examinations, teaching from prescribed textbooks within a certain time period and a policy of punishment and reward. These norms assume a certain level of receptivity, awareness and judgment within an age cohort or age group. In most cases, as educational planners and administrators as well as authors of text-books have been and continue to be from middle class urban backgrounds, their assumptions are based on the experience of children from the same environment. In India, where a majority of schools and pupils are in the rural areas, the validity of these premises needs to be re-examined. A lack of imagination and initiative in teaching methods is usually combined with a rigid admissions policy. The single-point entry system which permits entry into school only at class I and by a certain age is generally followed in India. In this context, debarring a child merely because he or she is over-aged keeps potential students away from school.

Due to the factors discussed earlier, a number of those who left out are often girls. At the same time, it is true that a 9 year old tribal girl would possibly find it difficult to relate to 6 and 7 year olds in class II. Her sense of alienation and feeling different may mean that she would leave school within a few months. The problem can in part be solved by the introduction of multiple-point entries at different ages in specially based on primary schools where teaching is based on using innovative techniques for those with a greater degree of maturity.

ii) Biases Among Teachers, in Text Books and in Syllabi

We find that teacher assessments can be influenced by variables such as caste, class and religious background, as well as sex of the child. Quite apart from the inherent injustice of categorising a child as a low achiever merely because he or she wears torn clothes or is unable to pronounce words with the correct intonation, there is the equally important issue of how the boy or girl reacts to such a situation. It is not unlikely that the 10 year old girl who leaves school to look after her younger brother often does so unwillingly. Her inability to relate to textbooks, which talk about unfamiliar situations in an alien dialect, heightens her sense of inferiority. She feels more at home gathering firewood, chatting to her mother about known experiences and characters and doing jobs she has grown up with. For this young girl the situation is compounded by the fact that textbooks and indeed teachers perpetuate ideas about a woman’s basically dependent and inferior status. In so doing the school merely reinforces common familial attitudes towards a girl’s, and later woman’s role in life. These are particularly relevant
when they influence decisions on subject and career choices of that small minority of girls who qualify to go in for higher education.

Textbook writing often reflects a middle class, urban, male viewpoint. This comes through in the style of writing, choice of subjects and stories. Awareness among textbook writers could result in material, which is sensitive to girls and their dilemmas in a stratified society. We find that irrespective of whether a child studied English or Mathematics, the text can convey ideas on gender equality and justice.

Textbook revision and in-service orientation programmes for teachers have been initiated in several parts of the country, with a view to understanding the issues in girls’ education better. Nonetheless, these constructive measures have to contend with a basically conservative teaching force and problems associated with large-scale syllabi and textbook reforms. In addition teachers and educational administrators have genuine problems relating to finishing unwieldy courses within an inflexible time schedule. This results in a somewhat single-minded and unimaginative focus on the content of books encouraging learning by rote.

### Activity 2

Interview 15 girls from your locality. Enquire about the major problems faced by them in continuing their studies.

Classify these problems in terms of the familial and social factors, limitations of structure and delivery systems and content and ideology of education. Now write a note on the factors affecting girls’ education in contemporary society based on your findings. Compare your note, if possible, with the notes of other students at your Study Centre.

### 32.4 WOMEN’S EDUCATION THROUGH NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMME

An awareness that the formal school system alone can not solve the problem of illiteracy led to an early expansion of the non-formal education programme. In addition, the need to reach out to adult illiterates with relevant learning schemes was also recognised. The target groups of non-formal education are those children who have to work either for a living or within the home. The underlying assumption of the programme is that when not at work, with the right type of encouragement, children will find their way to functional literacy and non-formal education classes. Though there have not been enough follow-up studies on the impact of non-formal education on girls, there are sufficient indications that this scheme, like all those affecting children who have to combine productive work with other roles, will suffer until the issue of childcare facilities is solved.

i) **The National Adult Education Programme**: The National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) was launched by the Janata Government in 1978 with the aim of bringing those in the age groups of 15 to 35
years within the ambit of literacy within the next five years. In the Sixth Five Year Plan, adult education was included as a part of the Minimum Needs Programme and the National Literacy Mission (NLM, 1988) in the beginning has aimed at the eradication of illiteracy in the 15-35 year age group by 1995. When they couldn't reach the objective by the targeted time, they further extended the target. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the goal of National Literacy Mission is to attain full literacy, i.e., a sustainable threshold of 75 percent by 2007 by imparting functional literacy to non-literates in 15-35 years. Out of the 600 districts in the country, 587 districts have been covered by the National Literacy Mission under the literacy programmes. Its focus is to be on women and backward communities living primarily in the rural areas. About 60 percent of participants or beneficiaries are women. These targets continue to be out of tune with reality. Nonetheless, there are indications that well-run programmes may well benefit entire families.

ii) Few Evidences of Change: An extensive study in a backward part of Andhra Pradesh shows that an integrated programme of education with basic maternal and child health and nutritional services resulted in a high degree of awareness and receptiveness to modern health practices. Follow up studies on programmes built around women in various stages of pregnancy and early childhood showed that knowledge on nutrition, health and general development through the Mother Child Centres (MCCs) and Functional Literacy Classes (FLITs) has increased considerably. The minor ailments were dealt with more competently and dietary practices of both pregnant women as well as infants appeared to have been influenced by government-run programmes. What is important is receptivity to change.

Organisers of income generating schemes for rural women in Punjab reported that some familiarity with numeracy helps in learning simple counting exercises. While calculating aggregates for a number of days at a time was difficult, women easily learned how to compute their daily earnings. This helped them in dealing with exploitative middlemen as well as with family members who were interested in appropriating most of their earnings. Various alternatives for the advancement of women’s educational status is shown in figure 32.5.

iii) Alternative Schemes: We find that a major criticism against the adult education programmes for women is that they reflect by and large a middle class world view and rarely take into account the vital role of their client groups in income generation and other productive activities. Such programmes stress the role of home-maker and provide training in conventional areas such as health, nutrition, childcare, home economics, sewing, embroidery and so on. While these are undoubtedly important, it is equally relevant to train such women - most of whom are earners - on how to increase productivity as well as provide information on alternative channels of employment and create awareness of their rights as workers.
These are also areas where non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) have provided alternative models and schemes. Two case studies of the Kasturba Vanvasi Kanya Ashram (KVKA) in Madhya Pradesh and the Kumaon Mahila Utthan Mandal (KMUM) in Kausani, Uttar Pradesh, indicate that community participation helps in keeping little girls in the educational system. Both are Gandhian organisations, and in Madhya Pradesh the Ashram is the focal point. Attraction to the Ashram led in turn to an involvement with the school, which was perceived as “a place which provides the necessary strength to the members of their families in coping with local pressures”. The centre in Kumaon functions more informally providing balwadi services to pre-school children and non-formal programmes for older girls with “little access to primary schools in the hilly areas”. All the staff are local persons, and “the daily routine is close to home life – not too ‘schoolish’ whether it is ‘living’ or food or other aspects”. Both organisations are successful because of community involvement with a curriculum, which is relevant and at the same time provides “linkages with mainstream education” (Based on newspaper reports).
Check Your Progress 3

i) How ‘single point entry’ policy affects girls education? Answer in about five lines.
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ii) What is the main objective of the National Adult Education Programme? Use three lines to answer.
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iii) Write a note on the alternative models or schemes of women’s education in India in about six lines.
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32.5 LET US SUM UP

We find that within the broader theme of equality of educational opportunity, women and girls’ education needs special attention. In this unit, we have discussed that the social environment, attitudes towards women and more specifically, familial expectations limit the nature and extent of girls’ education. We have looked at some of the factors responsible for such a situation and at the inter-linkages between the State, society and the individual. You would also have noted growing disillusionment with the existing system; that alternatives are being thought about outside the formal structure is indicative of the desire for change and positive action. It is important to note that such action can easily fall into established patterns of inequality. Educational reform can be meaningful when concerned individuals and organisations work towards influencing attitudes by demonstrating the possibilities of alternatives. Hence, besides analysing the content and ideology of contemporary education, we have also discussed alternatives to the contemporary system.
32.6 KEY WORDS

**Alienation**  
The inability of an individual (or group) to relate to an environment, workplace or even family situation. This is due to situational factors or the individual/group’s own misgivings, hesitations and perhaps failures or a combination of both.

**Aptitude**  
To have tendency or flare in a particular area. For instance, pupils are put into different streams (Arts, Science) on the basis of their aptitudes, which are reflected in their examination results.

**Curriculum**  
Course of study; extra and co-curricular activities such as games, music, theatre, when these are not a part of the formal curriculum.

**Ideology**  
The beliefs, attitudes, opinions that guide and direct a system, political party, group, family or individual.

**Literacy**  
It is defined as the acquisition of the basic skills of reading and writing, through the formal school system or non-formal learning.

**Pedagogy**  
Methods of teaching particularly through the formal system of education.

32.7 FURTHER READING


Check Your Progress 1

i) During the pre-British era, education was linked to the socio-religious institutions, reinforcing an oppressive and limiting social structure. During the British period, education became a tool of colonial power, enabling a small minority to have access to education and all the benefits it entailed.

ii) a) True  b) False

Check Your Progress 2

i) a) Inflexible school schedules
   b) Absence of women teachers
   c) Absence of girl’s school
   d) Distance of school from home
   e) Insufficient number of teachers

ii) The existence of the poor families is heavily dependent on the labour of children and of women. In such a situation, the returns on education, which normally means a few years of schooling, are low. Being in the school means forgoing the opportunity to earn or to help the family, thereby releasing adults for productive activity. In a poverty situation, the cost of education in real terms is too high and schooling is seen as a poor investment, which provides no sure access to better employment.

Check Your Progress 3

i) In India, a vast majority of the schools and pupils are in the rural areas. The single point entry system permits entry into school only at class I and by a certain age. In this context, debarring a child because he or she is over-age, keeps potential students away from school. Hence, the majority of those left-outs are often girls.

ii) It was launched by the Janata Government in 1978 with the aim of bringing those in the age groups of 15 to 35 years within the ambit of literacy within the next five years.

iii) Non-governmental organisations and voluntary agencies have provided alternative models and schemes. These indicate that community participation helps in keeping little girls in the educational system. The community participation led to an involvement with the school that was seen as a place, which provides the necessary strength to the members of their families in coping with local pressures.
CONTEMPORARY WOMEN’S ISSUES: HEALTH AND LEGAL ASPECTS

Structure
33.0 Objectives
33.1 Introduction
33.2 Women’s Issues: Concept and Content
   33.2.1 The Concept of Women’s Issues
   33.2.2 Gender Role Stereotyping and Women’s Issues
   33.2.3 Emergence of Women’s Studies
33.3 Women and Health
   33.3.1 Sex-ratio and Life Expectancy
   33.3.2 Early Marriage and Women’s Health
   33.3.3 Pregnancy and Women’s Health
33.4 Women and Law
   33.4.1 Marriage, Dowry and Divorce
   33.4.2 Property and Inheritance
   33.4.3 Work, Remuneration and Maternity Benefits
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33.5 Let Us Sum Up
33.6 Key Words
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33.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

33.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to

- state and explain the concept and content of women’s issues
- describe aspects of women’s health as an important dimension in contemporary women’s issues
- describe the legal status of women.

33.1 INTRODUCTION

You will find that this unit begins with a brief discussion on the concept of women’s issues. Here we shall describe women as a social category, analyse the nature of their issues, and the aspects related to the emergence of women’s studies. There are a series of women’s issues in terms of low access to productive resources, medical facilities, educational and employment opportunities and various other social and economic discriminations faced by them. In the earlier
units of this Block we discussed some of the important issues like education, work and employment and the socio-cultural conditions which are responsible for the discrimination against women in the society. The latent discontent of women has been manifested in the form of women’s movements in various parts of the country in the last few decades. We have discussed this aspect in unit 30. Issues pertaining to women’s health and legal status have emerged as crucial in the contemporary women’s movement. In the section on women’s health we have looked at the causes of low female sex ratio, the problems of early marriage and pregnancy. In the section on women’s legal status we have reviewed the laws related to marriage, age at marriage, dowry, divorce, property and inheritance, sati and violence against women. We have examined some legal measures related to work, sex determination test and indecent representation of women. Lastly, we have tried to understand the problems related to the implementation of these laws and have suggested the ways for better legal status of women in society.

### 33.2 WOMEN’S ISSUES: CONCEPT AND CONTENT

This section introduces you to the concept of women’s issues and their content. Besides these, we shall also be dealing with the aspects pertaining to the emergence of women’s studies.

#### 33.2.1 The Concept of Women’s Issues

Women form an important social category. The basis of this category is not simply the biological entity but also the socio-cultural construct. Social status and roles of women are defined not only in terms of the gender dimension but also in terms of the norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and customs of the society. Women as a social category cut across the boundary of caste, class, race, estate etc. social groupings. Please keep it in mind that women do not form a homogeneous category. They belong to diversified socio-economic groups and are also divided in terms of spatial considerations like rural and urban. However, women are frequently an especially oppressed group within each unit of socio-economic stratification (Agarwal 1983: 1).

The concept of women’s issues does not pertain to women alone because it neither exclusively belongs to the domain of women nor is it totally an outcome of injustices meted out to women by men. In our society, we find several instances in our religious traditions, which relegate women to an inferior status in comparison to men. However, we cannot simplify women’s issue as a conflict between men and women, or the women’s movements as a crusade against men. Indeed, these issues are an outcome of the prevailing social system. The norms, values, customs and old socialisation processes govern each member of society, over generations to form his/her attitudes and behavioural patterns. Similarly, these also formulate expectations of each member of society. The structural arrangement of the society provides women low position. They are economically exploited and discriminated, socially subjugated and politically rendered a powerless group in the society. Women’s issues are thus perceived to be linked to social issues. These issues are especially focussed on women’s unequal access to productive resources,
decision-making bodies, health care facilities, education, employment opportunities and social justice. In this respect, the study of women’s issues needs to be incorporated within the discussion of wider social issues, concerning the rights of underprivileged sections of society.

### 33.2.2 Gender Role Stereotyping and Women’s Issues

The institutional arrangements, the values, norms and customs of the society create and sustain female role stereotypes. For example, within this sociocultural set up, with the concept of marriage as the true destiny of a woman and with her important obligation to bear a son, the roles of wife and mother emerge as proper to women (CSWI, 1974). Hence, by eulogising her motherhood, religion binds a woman to the home and to her role of creating and nurturing children (Anklesaria, 1985: 141).

Women play crucial roles both in the productive and reproductive activities. However, in the process of rapid economic development and social change women’s contributions have remained invisible and unrecognised within the given process of role stereotyping and traditional role expectations. Women have been subjected to marginality in all realms of life. In the earlier units, of this Block (especially unit 29), we have discussed how traditional concepts of role and status generate gender role stereotype and expectations of women affecting women’s status adversely in society. While these issues have remained in the society since the ages, these have come into sharp focus only in the latter half of 1970s with the resurgence of women’s movements and women’s studies. In unit 30, we discussed women’s movement. Here let us have some idea on the emergence of women’s studies.

### 33.2.3 Emergence of Women’s Studies

The interest in women’s studies spurted during the 1960s in the West, with the emergence of a broad heterogeneous women’s protest movements.

In India, the area of women studies emerged in 1980s. It was in the seventies that, after the United Nation’s General Assembly Declaration of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1967), and the subsequent UN request to its member states to submit report on the status of women in their countries, the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) was set up. The Committee submitted its report in 1974 (Mazumdar 1983: 24). Again in response to the U.N. Call for Action (1975) and on the basis of the findings of the CSWI report, the Government of India has drawn up a Draft National Plan of Action for Women. The Plan accords priority to the need of purposive research in “education, health, welfare and employment of women with special emphasis to the weaker section of women whose conditions have most adversely affected the process of social change” (ICSSR 1975: 7). The ICSSR has recognised the status of women as the priority area of research. The University Grant Commission (UGC) has also opened Women’s Studies Centres in some Universities all over the country. Besides the ICSSR and UGC, various research organisations and Universities, like Centre for Women’s Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, SNDT University have also taken women issues as the focal point of their study.

In India a large body of literature has emerged on women studies since the 1980s. These have covered various aspects including their social status,
economic roles in agriculture, industry and plantation, political participation in the national movement, peasant movements and industrial unrest. Some recent studies have also touched upon their legal and medical status. Besides the social science studies various national committees and commissions have also produced important reports stating the status of women in contemporary Indian society. The most important of these have been that of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974, National Commission on Self-Employed Women, 1988, National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988, National Commission for Women, 1992 etc.

While the social scientists, policy planners and the media generated enormous data on women’s issues in India, since late nineteen seventies there have emerged numerous women’s organisations in various parts of the country. These organisations have made their presence felt through various mass mobilisations and protests against women’s discrimination in the society. Since the beginning of 1980s there has been increasing awareness among the women, both in the rural and urban areas, though in varying degrees. They have raised the issues related to the socio-economic injustice faced by them in the society. With the growing awareness women’s issues have came into sharp focus in literature, media, discussion and policy formulation. Hence, women’s health and legal status have emerged to be crucial contemporary women’s issues in India. In the following sections we shall be discussing these issues in detail.

**Check Your Progress 1**

i) What do you mean by women’s issues? Answer in six lines.

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ii) Write a note on the priority of research as accorded by the National Plan of Action for Women. Use four lines for your answer.

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### 33.3 WOMEN AND HEALTH

In India, within the given socio-cultural matrix women get low access to medical care. Women belonging to the low strata of the socio-economic hierarchy and to the rural areas have been the critical manifestation of this aspect. Women’s health is affected by a series of interrelated economic and
socio-cultural factors, viz. levels of earnings and educational background, and “the attitudes to marriage, age of marriage, value attached to fertility and sex of the child, the pattern of family organisations and the ideal role demanded of Women by social conventions” (Government of India 1988: 97). Hence we are to examine the question of women’s health within the given context.

In this section we shall be examining some of the important features of women’s health-status in India.

33.3.1 Sex-ratio and Life Expectancy

Sex-ratio (number of female per 1,000 male) is an important indicator of women’s status in the society. The census figures show that while the female population has increased from 117 millions in 1901 to 329 millions in 1981 and 495 million in 2001, the number of females per thousand males is steadily declining. In 1901, there were 972 females per 1,000 males, while by 1971, the ratio had come down to 930 females per 1,000 males. In 1981 there has been only a nominal increase in the female sex-ratio with 934 females to 1,000 males. It has further declined to 927 in 1991. And it has gone slightly up in 2001 to 933.

Similarly, though life expectancy has increased for both the sexes, the gap between the two is widening. In 1921 the expectation of life for both males and females was 26 years. By 1961-71, the male life expectancy increased to 47.1 years, while that of females to 45.6 years only. Life expectancy has increased over the decade from 44.7 years in 1971 to 54.7 in 1980 for women. It was estimated to be slightly higher in 1980 for women than men: 54.7 and 54.1 years at birth respectively. During 1995-2000 the life expectancy for women and men were 64.9 and 61.9 respectively. However, age specific death rates indicate higher mortality for female children and women for every five year period till 35 years of age (Government of India 1988: 97). The low female sex-ratio and the life expectancy of the female are partly due to differential sex-ratio of newly born infants and partly due to high female mortality rate. Female mortality is to a great extent due to neglect during early childhood, death during childbirth and infant mortality. Let us discuss these aspects briefly.

i) Neglect During Early Childhood

The neglect of the girl child starts very early in life. The extent of neglect varies from family to family depending on their economic position. But in comparison to her male counterpart a female child is relatively neglected in most of the socio-economic strata. Throughout the country it has been noticed that when the girl child depends on breast feeding the chances of her survival are relatively more. Data from various sources shows that from infancy till the age of fifteen the death rate far exceeds the mortality rate of male child. There are several causes underlying this. Firstly, the female children are breast fed for a far shorter period than their male counterparts. Secondly, during illness parents show a greater concern towards male children. This neglect is quite often enforced by poor economic condition. Finally, in addition to the intake of insufficient and non-nutritious food the female child is exposed to a greater workload very early in life. Often in families of weaker economic strength the girl child is found attending the household chores as well as taking care of her younger brothers and sisters.
ii) **Death during Childbirth**

Early marriages expose women to longer child bearing period. This means greater health hazards to women and children. Several studies show that teenaged mothers’ risk to health for both themselves and their children. This risk is further enhanced by poor nutrition. Various surveys indicate that women’s caloric content is about 100 calories (per women per day) less than they expend, whereas men show an 800 caloric surplus intake. Women expend a great deal of energy working inside and outside the house, whereas they often have insufficient food. Customarily they often eat after the men and other members of the family have eaten. This is especially true in joint families in both urban and rural areas. This results in complications due to incorrect methods of delivery. Besides these, lack of knowledge and improper care during post natal period, and frequent pregnancies lead to larger foetal wastage, birth of larger number of low weight babies, and death of young women.

iii) **Female Infanticide and Foetal Killing**

This refers to killing the infant soon after its birth or at the foetus stage. The former is common amongst certain tribes and caste groups such as the Kallars of Tamil Nadu. The Kallars live in abject poverty. For livelihood they work in illicit liquor distilleries and coconut groves. Which require more male hands. The birth of a daughter is burden for them for not only there’s insufficient occupation for her, but dowry has to be given for her wedding and other gifts to be given to her husbands family on various occasions after the solemnisation of the marriage.

Foetal killing has been a crucial problem in some urban areas. A medical diagnostic process called, amniocentesis, is used in the U.S.A. to check possible deformities of the unborn child. However, this is fast being used by parents to select the sex of their child. Misuse of the sex determination test has been a crucial issue in some urban places in India. This has resulted in a new type femicide i.e., abortion of female foetuses. A survey carried out in Bombay during 1984 revealed that out of 8,000 abortions 7,999 were female foetuses (Government of India 1988: 98). It is reported that in Dharampuri district of Tamil Nadu, the place where female infant mortality rate as per 1991 census was 100.1, 105 female infants were killed every month in 1997. Testing for sex determination of the unborn child has been now banned in India. The causes and concerns of women’s health hazards are shown in figure 33.1.

### 33.3.2 Early Marriage and Women’s Health

Early marriage affects women’s health status adversely. A vast number of girls are married at the teenage. According to the 1991 census among the currently married women 53.3 percent married below 18 years of age. And as per the National Family Health Survey (1993-94) almost 33 percent women were married by the age of 15. It leads to teenage pregnancy and various physiological problems. In 1981, 7 percent of the girls in the age group of 10-14 and 43 percent in the age group of 15-19 were married (Government of India 1988). Thus, 50 percent of the girls is introduced to the sexual life and to the reproduction processes at the teenage. Because of malnutrition, over-burden of work, illiteracy, ignorance of the sex-behaviour these pregnant girls take high risk of life. Around 10 to 15 percent of the annual births are from these adolescent mothers. However, most of their babies suffer from malnutrition, under weight, and risk of mortality.
33.3.3 Pregnancy and Women’s Health

In India, women have on an average 8-9 pregnancies and they spend around 80 percent of their reproductive years in pregnancy and lactation. Study shows that in the low income group pregnant women have deficiency of 1,100 calories and lactating women 1,000 calories. Women of the lower socio-economic groups gain only around 3-5 kilograms during pregnancy which is far less than the required weight. Anaemia in pregnancy accounts directly 15 to 20 percent of all maternal deaths in India. The maternal-mortality according to official report is 400 to 500 per 1,00,000 births. However, this figure is as high as 1,000 to 1,200 in some rural areas. Again, more than 71 percent and 29 percent of the deliveries in the rural and urban areas took place without trained personnel (Government of India 1988).

In most of the rural areas, Medical Termination of Pregnancy services are not available. Besides, women are not aware about the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 that has made abortion legal. Hence, illegal abortions by incompetent persons continue, resulting in abortion-related mortality and morbidity as serious problems (Government of India 1988).

Check Your Progress 2

Tick mark the correct answers of the following question.

i) Which one of the following is a reason for female mortality?

a) Neglect of female during early childhood

b) Insufficient nutrition during pregnancy

c) Lack of access to medical services

d) High maternal mortality rates in rural areas
b) Death during childbirth
c) Infant mortality
d) All of the above

ii) Which one of the following is a cause of high risk to the life of the adolescent mothers?
   a) Malnutrition
   b) Over-burden of work
c) Illiteracy
d) All of the above

33.4 WOMEN AND LAW

Women’s access to legal equality has been one of serious concerns of the women’s movement. During the social and religious reform movements of the nineteenth century, the movements for women’s rights in India centered around the major problems of infant marriages, widowhood and property rights for women. During the freedom struggle and the discussion on Indian Constitution the major debate on women’s legal equality centered around the Hindu Code Bill. The debate recognises that “women are not accepted as man’s social, economic or political equals and that the discriminations can be effectively reduced, if not eliminated by passing appropriate laws and evolving an effective machinery to implement those laws. And so, after Independence we have the phase of legal reform, progressive, bold, legislative initiatives, which translated constitutional commitments and guarantees into laws to help improve women’s legal status” (Government of India 1988: 135).

In the post-Independence period many laws were enacted with the objective of improving the social status of women and ending discrimination and oppression against women. In the following sub-section we shall be examining some of these laws.

33.4.1 Marriage, Dowry and Divorce

In this sub-section we shall discuss some of the major laws relating to marriage, dowry and divorce. In independent India significant laws and amendments to the existing laws have been introduced in these areas.

i) Marriage

In traditional India, the institution of polygyny where a man could take more than one wife at the same time, was widely prevalent. It is only in the last few decades that polygyny is steadily on the decline. The Government of India has banned polygamy for all the government servants. Monogamy has been accepted in the laws of all other religions except Islam. Muslim law regards marriage as a contract where the husband has the right to have more than one wife and children through other wives. He also has the right to divorce his first wife without having to pay any compensation to her.
This gives rise to a growing sense of insecurity for the wife and the children, who not only have to live at the mercy of the husband and father respectively, but can also be rendered destitute on divorce. Divorce can be obtained among the Muslims by the mere utterance of the term ‘talak’ thrice by the husband.

The Supreme Court has upheld Muslim Women’s right to receive maintenance allowance from her former husband but this does not invalidate the very act of polygyny, as it does not stand legally wrong. According to the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI), it is important to ban polygyny in order to establish social justice and equality for Muslim women. The Committee observed that “full equality of sexes can hardly be possible in a legal system which permits polygamy and a social system which tolerates it. The only personal law, which has remained impervious to the changing trend from polygamy to monogamy, is Muslim law. We are of the firm view that there cannot be any compromise on the basic policy of monogamy being the rule for all communities in India. Any compromise in this regard will only perpetuate the existing inequalities in the status of women”.

ii) Age at Marriage

To curb the practice of getting girls married even before they have attained puberty, the Sarda Act or Child Marriage Restraint Act was introduced in 1929, which fixed the age at marriage for girls to 15 years. This Act applied to all the communities. This was later revised in 1954 when the Special Marriage Act was passed which fixed minimum age of marriage at 21 years for males and 18 years for females. However, investigations show that quite often marriages of the girls are fixed below 18 years.

There are prejudices and certain beliefs underlying this preference for child marriage, especially among rural and backward communities. Dominant is the popular notion of the woman’s role defined in terms of marriage, child bearing and rearing and taking care of all other domestic activities. Thus women are regarded as dependent beings who would ultimately move from the father’s house to the husband’s house. This largely explains the parent’s reluctance in sending girl children for formal education. Instead they tutor the girl child to handle all domestic chores which are to benefit her after marriage.

Added to these above reasons is the loophole in our legislation, which while penalising the performance of child marriage on one hand, recognises the marriage itself is valid (ICSSR 1975: 43).

iii) Dowry

At the beginning of the 1980s, due to spurt in the incidents of deaths of young married women reported as “dowry victims” there has been an increasing concern of many voluntary organisations to raise their voice in protest against the issue of dowry. They have pressurised the government to take strong action against the practice of dowry. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 was amended in 1984 and again in 1986 to make the provision of this law more stringent. Under this law court now has powers to act on its own knowledge or on a complaint by any recognised welfare organisation. The offence has been made cognisable for the purpose of investigation. A new section on dowry-murder is added in Indian Penal Code (IPC). The Indian Evidence Act amended to shift the burden of proof to the husband and his family where dowry is
demanded and the bride dies within 7 years of the marriage otherwise than under normal circumstances. This amendment has also made provision for the appointment of Dowry Prohibition Officers and Advisory Committee to look after the issues pertaining to dowry (Government of India 1988). Anti-dowry cells are also established in some important urban centres to tackle this issue effectively.

iv) Divorce

The personal laws clearly discriminate between the husband’s and the wife’s rights to seek divorce. In the Christian law the husband can seek divorce if the wife has committed adultery. But the wife has to prove a second offence along with adultery (incest, bigamy, cruelty, desertion) in order to obtain a divorce. Similarly, the Muslim law grants absolute power to the husband to dissolve the marriage at his will. The wife on the other hand could seek dissolution only if

a) it’s a divorce on mutual consent.

b) divorce by agreement on the wife’s giving some consideration to the husband;

c) divorce where the husband delegates.

The Muslim women are also not given any compensation besides the trivial mehr or dowry amount. However, the Muslim personal law granted the right to women to keep their children till the age of seven, after the custody cases are decided. But as these cases are dragged on for a long time it became very difficult for the Muslim women and never get the right to keep their children.

However, quite often these laws are not implemented because of sheer ignorance of a majority of the women of their rights to divorce, maintenance and adoption.

It is important to mention here that women and men of all religious communities have the choice of getting married under Special marriage Act, 1954. It has more equitable provisions for marriage and divorce. However, society looks down upon a divorced woman as the ‘culprit’ while man is able to remarry without a stigma. Moreover, most women suffer from lack of education and economic independence and are left in a desperate situation after divorce.

We need to take a note of the amendment in the Hindu Marriage Act as well as the Special Marriage Act in December 2003. It eases the restrictions on judicial jurisdiction in matrimonial matters. Earlier the wife and the husband could file matrimonial proceedings only where they last resided together or where their marriage had been solemnised. The latest amendment allows one to file a case in the family court of one’s current place of residence.

33.4.2 Property and Inheritance

Women are relegated to a secondary status in terms of property and inheritance. The Hindu Laws as well as the Indian Succession Act, 1925, which applies to all minority communities, grant women only negligible ownership rights.

i) The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 was introduced in place of the Mitakshara and the Dayabhaga Schools that had governed Hindu Succession rights for a long time. The position of women was one of the
dependence with barely any proprietary rights. The Act of 1956, brought radical changes in the pattern of succession, the most important being equal rights for male and female heirs. But this was later codified in the face of resistance and a power structure was laid down which excluded women from exercising direct control over family assets. The Act makes discrimination between unmarried, married and widowed daughters. It grants residence rights only to unmarried and widowed daughters or daughters whose husbands have deserted them. Thus immovable property in the form of house and land remains under the direct control of males. This is further supported by the virilocal pattern of residence where women are expected to leave their natal home to reside in their husband’s home after marriage. This practice levels credibility to control property by male members in order to avoid partition of property. In addition, strong filial ties restrain a woman from dragging her brother to the court of laws. On the other hand, in her husband’s house too, the woman does not have direct control over his land and property. This makes her the ultimate loser.

Interestingly, at the level of the central government, there are indications of support from some significant elements within the State and initiated measures towards reforming Hindu inheritance laws in a gender equal direction. But these initiatives remained low key due to the lack of adequate local mobilisation by the civil society (Agarwal, Bina 2002).

ii) Amongst the Muslims too, the son gets two-thirds of the property whereas the daughter gets only one-third. If a man dies leaving only his daughter she gets only half of his estate. The rest goes to distant kindreds. The widows face the worst. If a husband dies without a child, she gets only one fourth of the property. If there are children then she gets only one-eighth.

iii) Among the Christian community if a husband dies without making a will, his widow is entitled to only one-third or Rs. 5000 of his property. The rest is shared by his lineal male descendants, i.e., his father’s brother or his sons. If he dies leaving no lineal descendants, but has kindred, only half his property goes to the widow. The distant relatives can claim the rest.

The Christian law is complicated by the non-applicability of this law in certain areas For instance, the Travancore High Court has upheld that the Indian Succession Act should not apply to Christians of Kerala. The Travancore Succession Act governs Christians in Travancore other than Protestants and Latin Catholics. Similarly, the Cochin Christian Succession Act governs Christians in the former Cochin State but not the Anglo Indian or Tamil Christians.

iv) Among the Parsis too a son’s share to his father’s property is twice that of the daughters. If a woman predeceases her husband, her son is entitled to an equal share of the mother’s property along with the daughter, but the daughter is not entitled to the same rights when she inherits the property of the father.
33.4.3 Work, Remuneration and Maternity Benefits

According to the Equal Remuneration Act, 1973, men and women are to be paid equally for doing the same or similar work. This Act also forbids discrimination on the basis of sex at the time of recruitment and after. However, this Act is not applicable to the unorganised sector where the bulk of the women work.

The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 provides for the maternity leave to women working in the factories, mines, plantations and in the government and semi-government establishments. Provisions are also made for the crèches to care for the children of women working as contract labourers under the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970 and the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979.

33.4.4 Crime against Women

There are various forms of crime against women. Sometimes, it begins even before their birth, sometimes in the adulthood and other phases of life. Let us examine some of the important laws introduced for eradication of crime against women.

i) Sati

So far we have seen that in the Indian society, the position of women is always perceived in relation to the man, from birth onwards and at every stage of life, she is dependent on him. This perception has given birth to various social customs and practices. One important manifestation of these customs and practices has been that of Sati. It is seen as a pinnacle of achievement for a woman. This custom of self-immolation of the widow on her husband’s pyre was an age-old practice in some parts of the country, which received deification. The popular belief ran that the goddess enters into the body of the woman who resolves to become a sati.

The practice of sati has been abolished by law with the initiative of Raja Rammohan Roy in the early decades of nineteenth century. However, there has been a significant revival of the practice of sati in the last few decades. Indeed, Rajasthan has been the focal point for this practice in recent years.

India has witnessed a strong social reaction in the form of organised agitation in the late 1980s against sati following the burning of the young educated Roop Kanwar on the funeral pyre of her husband in Deorala, Rajasthan. In response to the public demand the Parliament passed the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987. This law declares the practice of sati unlawful and “any act towards such commission shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may be extended to six months or with fine or with both....” The Act also prescribes the maximum punishment for the abetment of the commission of sati, to equate it with murder rather than abetment of suicide, as has been done in the earlier cases of sati. The Act also makes glorification of the practice of sati an offence and goes a long way in refuting the myth that sati is a manifestation of the glory of Hindu Women (Government of India 1988: 137-138).
ii) Violence against Women

Violence against women both inside and outside of their home has been a crucial issue in the contemporary Indian society. To respond to the growing incidence of violence against women the Parliament amended the Criminal Law Act, 1983. This amendment gives legal recognition to the domestic violence by making cruelty inflicted by the husband or his relatives an offence. Again the Indian Evidence Act has also been suitably amended to provide that if a married woman commits suicide within seven years of her marriage the assumption in law will be that her husband or his relatives abetted the suicide.

Based on the 84th Report of the Law Commission on Rape and Allied offences the government amended the Criminal Law Act in 1983. This amendment prescribed the protection of the rape victim from the glare of publicity during investigation and trial. It also introduced change in the definition of rape to remove the element of consent. It also enhanced the punishment for this crime (Government of India 1988).

Activity 1

In recent years there has been increasing number of violence against women. Prepare a list of violence against women based on the report of the newspaper or radio or T.V. or any other mass media. Also write down the types of legal measures initiated against these violences. Now based on these collected information, write a note in about 25 lines on the “Violence against women and legal measures in contemporary India”. Compare your note, if possible, with the notes of your co-learners at the Study Centre.

a) Sex Determination Test

You have learnt above the misuse of sex determination test in section 33.3.1 of this unit and also in unit 29 of this Block. Now let us have an idea on the laws related to the foetal killing in India. According to Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 abortion is legal in India. Again the Government of Maharashtra has gone far ahead by passing the Maharashtra Regulation of use of Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1988. This law has made prenatal sex determination test illegal in Maharashtra. Government of India passed the Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (regulation and prevention of misuse) Act in 1994. It was proposed to prohibit pre-natal diagnostic techniques for the determination of sex of foetus leading to foetal infanticide. This Act was again amended in 2001. The government of Tamil Nadu passed a similar law in 1996.

b) Indecent Representation of Women

Indecent representation of women in the media has been a crucial issue in India. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 has been passed by the Parliament. This law seeks to ban the “depiction in any manner of the figure of a woman, her form or body or any part thereof in such a way as to have the effect of being indecent or regatory to, or denigrating women or is likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality or morals” (Government of India 1988).
33.4.5 Problems related to the Implementation of Law

In India, various progressive laws (see figure 32.2) have been passed and significant amendments have been introduced to the existing laws for women’s emancipation. However, within the existing values and norms of the society many of the progressive laws have not got the scope of full expression. The CSWI report points out that certain “pend provisions in the law are definitely influenced by the established patriarchal system, the dominant position of the husband and the social and economic background of women” (CSWI, 1974).

![Figure 33.2: Women and law](image)

Again, there are several loopholes and gender biases in the existing laws. For example, the personal laws pertaining to marriage provides a provision for restitution of conjugal rights and this is equally available to the husband and wife. However, in most of the cases, it is used by the husband against the wife ignoring the fundamental rights of the latter.

On the one hand, women have been subjected to discriminatory traditional norms and values and gender biases and on the other, a vast number of them have remained unaware about the significant provisions of the laws. Hence, there is a great need to educate women about the legal provisions and to make specific provisions for free legal aid to women. The NPPW observes:

“Legal aid programmes for women have to be developed which are not litigation oriented. These must consist of:

i) creating legal awareness amongst the people and especially women,

ii) holding local aid camps ..., 

iii) conducting para-legal training programmes for social workers and voluntary agencies, and

iv) supporting public interest litigation, by which social workers can participate and carry forward the legal aid programmes for women” (Government of India 1988: 144).
Check Your Progress 3

i) Write a note on the CSWI observation on the practice of polygyny in India. Use four lines for your answer.

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ii) Write a note on anti-dowry legislations in about seven lines.

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iii) Tick mark the correct answer of the following question.

In which sector does the Equal Remuneration Act, 1973 stipulate the equal remuneration for man and women doing the same kind of work?

a) The organised sector

b) The unorganised sector

c) Both in organised and unorganised sectors

d) None of the sectors

33.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed women as a social category and the concept of women’s issues at the very outset. We have examined the role and status of women within the given socio-cultural context and the emergence of women’s studies. Women’s health and legal status are important contemporary women’s issues. In the section on women’s health we reviewed the causes of women’s low sex-ratio, and the health problems related to early marriage and pregnancy. In the section on law we discussed women’s legal status in terms of various laws enacted in India related to marriage, dowry, divorce, inheritance, practice of sati, violence against women, work and remuneration and indecent representation of women’s body. We have looked briefly at some of the problems related to the implementation of these laws.
33.6 KEY WORDS

**Filial ties**  Relationship between the parent and their children.

**Kindred**  Relatives of both sides - consanguine and affinal.

**Lineal descendant**  Members of the same descent group.

**Polygyny**  A form of marriage in which a husband has more than one wife at the same time.

33.7 FURTHER READING


33.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Check Your Progress 1**

i) Women’s issues are perceived to be linked with the social issues. These issues are specifically focussed on women’s unequal access to the productive resources, decision-making bodies, health facilities, educational opportunities and social justice. In this respect, the study of women’s issues needs to be incorporated within the discussion of wider social issues, concerning the rights of underprivileged sections of the society.

ii) The Plan accords priority to the need of purposive research in education, health, welfare and employment of women with special emphasis to the weaker sections of women whose conditions have been most adversely affected by the process of social change.

**Check Your Progress 2**

i) d

ii) d
Check Your Progress 3

i) The Committee observed that full equality of sexes could hardly be possible in a legal system, which permits polygamy, and a social system, which tolerates it. The committee strongly suggested that monogamy should be the rule for all communities in India.

ii) Under the present form of the Dowry Prohibition Act the court has been given power to act on its own knowledge or on a complaint by any recognised welfare organisation. A section on dowry murder has been added in Indian Penal Code (IPC). Again the Indian Evidence Act is amended to shift the burden of proof, to the husband and his family where dowry is demanded and the bride dies within 7 years of the marriage otherwise than under normal circumstances.

iii) a
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