UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY

TEXTBOOK FOR CLASS XI

11106

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FOREWORD

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy on Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning. Not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this textbook proves for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater considertation for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The textbook attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) appreciates the hard work done by the textbook development committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the advisory

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group in Social Science, Professor Hari Vasudevan and the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor Yogendra Singh for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this textbook; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G.P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

New Delhi
20 December 2005

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Rationalisation of Content in the Textbooks

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative to reduce content load on students. The National Education Policy 2020, also emphasises reducing the content load and providing opportunities for experiential learning with creative mindset. In this background, the NCERT has undertaken the exercise to rationalise the textbooks across all classes. Learning Outcomes already developed by the NCERT across classes have been taken into consideration in this exercise.

Contents of the textbooks have been rationalised in view of the following:

- Overlapping with similar content included in other subject areas in the same class
- Similar content included in the lower or higher class in the same subject
- Difficulty level
- Content, which is easily accessible to students without much interventions from teachers and can be learned by children through self-learning or peer-learning
- Content, which is irrelevant in the present context

This present edition, is a reformatted version after carrying out the changes given above.

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THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a [1]**[SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC]** and to secure to all its citizens :

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all;

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the [2][unity and integrity of the Nation];

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Sovereign Democratic Republic" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Unity of the Nation" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)

A Note to the Teacher and Students

In the earlier book our task was to introduce sociology. We had thus discussed the emergence of sociology, the key concerns of the discipline, its tools and methods of studying society. A central concern of sociology in its attempt to understand society was to understand the relationship between the individual and society. To what extent is the individual free to act and to what extent is the individual constrained?

In this book we seek to understand this relationship better by exploring the concepts of social structure, social stratification and social processes. We try and understand how groups and individuals are located within the social structure. And how they act and initiate social processes. How do they cooperate, compete and conflict? Why do they cooperate, compete and conflict differently in different kinds of society? Proceeding with the basic questioning approach of sociology dealt with in the earlier book we do not see these processes as natural and unchanging. But as socially constituted. We do not accept a naturalist explanation that may suggest that human beings are 'naturally' competitive or 'naturally' prone to conflict.

The concepts social structure and social processes draw attention to the fact that society is marked both by order and change. Some things remain the same. Some things change. A look at order and change in rural and urban societies help us look at these continuities and changes better.

We then proceed further to look at the fundamental relationship between society and the environment. And drawing from contemporary developments, attempt a sociological understanding of our environment.

In the earlier book we had dealt with the emergence of sociology and its attempt to understand modernity. Here, we are introduced to some of the key concepts that western and Indian thinkers developed to understand the structures and processes of modern societies. The idea is not to deal exhaustively with all their ideas, which would be impossible within the time and space available. But to focus on only some aspect of their work and hopefully communicate some sense of the richness of the ideas that the thinkers were engaging with. For instance we look at Karl Marx's ideas on class conflict, Emile Durkheim's ideas on division of labour and Max Weber's on bureaucracy. Likewise we look at G.S. Ghurye's ideas on race and caste, D.P. Mukerji's ideas on tradition and change and A.R. Desai's on the state and M.N. Srinivas' on the village.

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In keeping with the questioning spirit of sociology, this book like the earlier one continuously engages with the reader to think and reflect, to relate what is happening to society and to us as individuals. The activities built into the text are therefore an intrinsic part of the book. The text and activities constitute an integrative whole. One cannot be done without the other. For the objective here is not just to provide ready made information to be learnt but to understand society. The dates that mark the life and works of the thinkers have been included only to provide a broad sense of the historical context of the thinkers.

This book tries to be interactive and introduces various activities that may help students engage with understanding society in a live manner. However, the most exciting and innovative part rests with the teachers and students. They will perhaps be able to introduce far more apt activities and examples. Indeed the idea is to initiate the interactive debate. This is just a beginning. And much of the most exciting learning process will take place in the classroom. Students and teachers will perhaps think of far better ways, activities and examples. And suggest how textbooks can be bettered.

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Constitution of India

Part IV A (Article 51 A)

Fundamental Duties

It shall be the duty of every citizen of India —

(a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;

(b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;

(c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;

(d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;

(e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;

(f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;

(g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures;

(h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;

(i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;

(j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement;

*(k) who is a parent or guardian, to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.

Note: The Article 51A containing Fundamental Duties was inserted by the Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act, 1976 (with effect from 3 January 1977).

*(k) was inserted by the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, 2002 (with effect from 1 April 2010).

CHAPTER 1

SOCIAL STRUCTURE, STRATIFICATION AND SOCIAL PROCESSES IN SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

You will recall that the earlier book *Introducing Sociology,* Class XI had begun with a discussion on the relationship between personal problems and social issues. We also saw how individuals are located within collectivities such as groups, classes, gender, castes and tribes. Indeed each of you, is a member of not just one kind of collectivity, but many overlapping ones. For instance, you are a member of your own peer group, your family and kin, your class and gender, your country and region. Each individual thus has a specific location in the social structure and social stratification system (see pages 28-35 in *Introducing Sociology*). This also implies that they have different levels and types of access to social resources. In other words the choices an individual has in life in terms of the school s/he goes to — or if s/he goes to school at all — would depend on the social stratum that s/he belongs to. Likewise with the clothes s/he gets to wear, the food s/he consumes, the leisure opportunities s/he avails, the health access s/he has, i.e. her/his lifestyle in general. As in the case of social structure, social stratification constrains individual action.

One of the central concerns of the sociological perspective has been to understand the dialectical relationship between the individual and society. You will recall C.Wright Mill's elaboration of the sociological imagination that seeks to unfold the interplay between an individual's biography and society's history. It is towards understanding this dialectical relationship between the society and individual that we need to discuss the three central concepts of structure, stratification and social processes in this chapter. In the next few chapters we then move on to how social structure in rural and urban societies are different, to broader relationships between environment and society. In the last two chapters we look at western social thinkers and Indian sociologists and their writings that would help us further understand the ideas of social structure, stratification as well as social processes.

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The central question that this chapter seeks to discuss is to what extent the individual constrained by, and to what extent s/he is free of, the social structure? To what extent does one's position in society or location in the stratification system govern individual choice? Do social structure and social stratification influence the manner people act? Do they shape the way individuals cooperate, compete and conflict with each other?

In this chapter we deal briefly with the terms 'social structure' and 'social stratification'. You have already discussed social stratification in some detail in Chapter 2 of the earlier book *Introducing Sociology,* Class XI (NCERT, 2006). We then move on to focus on three social processes namely; cooperation, competition and conflict. In dealing with each of these processes we shall try and see how social structure and stratification impinge themselves on the social processes. In other words how individuals and groups cooperate, compete and conflict depending upon their position within the social structure and stratification system.

Social Structure and Stratification

The term *social structure* points to the fact that society is structured — i.e., organised or arranged — in particular ways. The social environments in which we exist do not just consist of random assortments of events or actions. There are underlying regularities, or patterns, in how people behave and in the relationships they have with one another. It is to these regularities that the concept of social structure refers. Upto a point, it is helpful to think of the structural characteristics of societies as resembling the structure of a building. A building has walls, a floor and a roof, which together give it a particular 'shape' or form (Giddens 2004: 667).

But the metaphor can be a very misleading one if applied too strictly. Social structures are made up of human actions and relationships. What gives these their patterning is their repetition across periods of time and distances of space. Thus, the ideas of social reproduction and social structure are very closely related to one another in sociological analysis. For example, consider a school and a family structure. In a school certain ways of behaving are repeated over the years and become institutions. For instance admission procedures, codes of conduct, annual functions, daily assemblies and in some cases even school anthems. Likewise in families certain ways of behaving, marriage practices, notions of relationships, duties and expectations are set. Even as old members of the family or school may pass away and new members enter, the institution goes on. Yet we also know that changes do take place within the family and in schools.

The above discussion and activity should help us understand human societies as buildings that are at every moment being reconstructed by the very bricks that compose them. For as we saw for ourselves human beings in schools or families do bring changes

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Different types of buildings in rural and urban areas

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Activity 1

Discuss with your grandparents and others of that generation to find out about the ways in which families/schools have changed and the ways in which they have remained the same.

Compare descriptions of families in old films/television serials/novels with contemporary depictions.

Can you observe patterns and regularities of social behaviour in your family? In other words, can you describe the structure of your family?

Discuss with your teachers how they understand the school as a structure. Do students, teachers and the staff have to act in certain ways to maintain or reproduce the structure? Can you think of any changes in either your school or family? Were these changes resisted? Who resisted them and why?

to reproduce the structure even while introducing changes. They cooperate at various levels in their everyday lives towards this reproduction. No less true is the fact that they also compete with each other, often viciously and ruthlessly. The fact remains that along with cooperative behaviour we also witness serious conflict. And as we shall find later in this chapter, cooperation can be enforced and thereby serve to conceal conflict.

A major theme pursued by Emile Durkheim (and by many other sociologists since) is that the societies exert social constraint over the actions of their members. Durkheim argued that society has primacy over the individual person. Society is far more than the sum of individual acts; it has a 'firmness' or 'solidity' comparable to structures in the material environment.

Think of a person standing in a room with several doors. The structure of the room constrains the range of his or her possible activities. The placing of the walls and doors, for example defines the routes of exit and entry. Social structure, according to Durkheim, constrains our activities in a parallel way, setting limits to what we can do as individuals. It is 'external' to us just as the walls of the room are.

Other social thinkers like Karl Marx would emphasise the constraints of social structure but would at the same time stress human creativity or agency to both reproduce and change social structure. Marx argued that human beings make history, but not as they wish to or in conditions of their choice, but within the constraints and possibilities of the historical and structural situation that they are in.

To recall the concept of social strati-fication in Chapter 2 of *Introducing Sociology,* Class XI, *Social stratification refers to the existence of structured inequalities between groups in society, in terms of their access to material or symbolic*

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This point of view is expressed by Durkheim in his famous statement: When I perform my duties as a brother, a husband or a citizen and carry out the commitments I have entered into, I fulfil my obligations which are defined in law and custom and which are external to myself and my actions...Similarly, the believer has discovered from birth, ready fashioned, the beliefs and practices of his religious life; if they existed before he did, it follows that they exist outside him. The systems of signs that I employ to express my thoughts, the monetary system I use to pay my debts, the credit instruments I utilise in my commercial relationships, the practices I follow in my profession, etc. all function independently of the use I make of them. Considering in turn each member of society, the following remarks could be made for every single one of them.

Source: Durkheim, Emile,1933, *The Division of Labour in Society,* pp.50-1, A Free Press Paperback, The MacMillan Company, New York.

Activity 2

Think of examples that reveal both how human beings are constrained by social structure and also of examples where individuals defy social structure and transform it. Recall our discussion on socialisation in *Introducing Sociology* (pages 78-79).

rewards. While all societies involve some forms of social stratification, modern societies are often marked by wide differences in wealth and power. While the most evident forms of stratification in modern societies involve class divisions, others like race and caste, region and community, tribe and gender also continue to matter as bases of social stratification.

You will recall that social structure implied a certain patterning of social behaviour. Social stratification as part of the broader social structure is likewise characterised by a certain pattern of inequality. Inequality is not something which is randomly distributed between individuals in society. It is systematically linked to membership in different kinds of social groups. Members of a given group will have features in common, and if they are in a superior position they will usually see to it that their privileged position is passed on to their children. The concept of stratification, then, refers to the idea that society is divided into a patterned structure of unequal groups, and usually implies that this structure tends to persist across generations (Jayaram 1987:22).

It is necessary to distinguish between different advantages which can be distributed unequally. There are three basic forms of advantage which privileged groups may enjoy:

(i) *Life Chances*: All those material advantages which improve the quality of life of the recipient — this

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may include not only economic advantages of wealth and income, but also benefits such as health, job security and recreation.

(ii) *Social Status*: Prestige or high standing in the eyes of other members of the society.

(iii) *Political Influence*: The ability of one group to dominate others, or to have preponderant influence over decision-making, or to benefit advantageously from decisions.

The above discussion on the three social processes will repeatedly draw attention to the manner that different bases of social stratification like gender or class constrain social processes. The opportunities and resources available to individuals and groups to engage in competition, cooperation or conflict are shaped by social structure and social stratification. At the same time, humans do act to modify the structure and system of stratification that exists.

Two Ways of Understanding Social Processes in Sociology

In the earlier book *Introducing Sociology,* Class XI you have seen the limitations of common sense knowledge. The problem is not that commonsense knowledge is necessarily false, but that it is unexamined and taken for granted. By contrast, the sociological perspective questions everything and accepts nothing as a given. It would therefore not rest content with an explanation which suggests that humans compete or cooperate or conflict as the case may be because it is human nature to do so. The assumption behind such explanations is that there is something intrinsic and universal in human nature that accounts for these processes. However, as we have seen earlier, sociology is not satisfied with either psychological or naturalist explanations (see pages 7-8 of *Introducing Sociology)*. Sociology seeks to explain these processes of cooperation, competition and conflict in terms of the actual social structure of society.

Activity 3

Think of examples of cooperation, competition and conflict in your everyday life

In *Introducing Sociology* we discussed how there are differences and plural understandings of society (pages 24-25, 36). We saw *how functionalist and conflict perspectives varied* in their understanding of different institutions, be it the family, the economy or social stratification and social control. Not surprisingly therefore, these two perspectives seek to understand these processes a bit differently. But both Karl Marx (usually associated with a conflict perspective) and Emile Durkheim (usually identified with a functionalist perspective) presume that human beings

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Different types of processes

have to cooperate to meet their basic needs, and to produce and reproduce themselves and their world.

The conflict perspective emphasises how these forms of cooperation changed from one historical society to another. For instance, it would recognise that in simple societies where no surplus was produced, there was cooperation between individuals and groups who were not divided on class or caste or race lines. But in societies where surplus is produced — whether feudal or capitalist — the dominant class appropriates the surplus and cooperation would necessarily involve potential conflict and competition. The conflict view thus emphasises that groups and individuals are placed differentially and unequally within the system of production relations. Thus, the factory owner and the factory worker do cooperate in their everyday work. But a certain conflict of interests would define their relationship.

The understanding that informs the conflict perspective is that in societies divided by caste, or class or patriarchy, some groups are disadvantaged and discriminated against. Furthermore the dominant groups sustain this unequal order by a series of cultural norms, and often coercion or even violence. As you will see in the next paragraphs, it is not that the functionalist perspective fails to appreciate the role of such norms or sanctions. But it understands their function in terms of the society as a whole, and not in terms of the dominant sections who control society.

The functionalist perspective is mainly concerned with the 'system requirements' of society — certain functional imperatives, functional requisites and prerequisites. These refer to the fulfilment of the broadest conditions which are necessary for a system's existence (and which therefore keep it alive and prevent its destruction) such as:

(i) The socialisation of new members;

(ii) A shared system of communication;

(iii) Methods of assigning individuals to roles.

You are well aware how the functionalist perspective rests upon the assumption that different parts or organs of society have a function or role to play for the broader maintenance and functioning of the whole society. Seen from this perspective, cooperation, competition and conflict can be seen as universal features of all societies, explained as the result of the inevitable interactions among humans living in society and pursuing their ends. Since the focus is on system sustenance, competition and conflict is looked at with the understanding that in most cases they tend to get resolved without too much distress, and that they may even help society in various ways.

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Activity 4

Discuss whether women are cooperating, or refusing to engage in conflict or competition because of a range of normative compulsions. Are they cooperating with the given norm of male inheritance because of the fear of losing the affection of their brothers if they behave otherwise?

Sociological studies have also shown how norms and patterns of socialisation often ensure that a particular social order persists, even though it is skewed in the interests of one section. In other words, *the relationship between cooperation, competition and conflict is often complex and not easily separable.*

In order to understand how cooperation may entail conflict, and the difference between 'enforced' and 'voluntary' cooperation, let us look at the very contentious issue of women's right to property in their natal family. A study was conducted among different sections of society to understand the attitude towards taking natal property (see pages 41-46 of *Introducing Sociology*). A significant number of women (41.7 per cent) evoked the theme of a daughter's love and love for a daughter when speaking about their rights to property. But they emphasised apprehension rather than affection by saying they would not claim full or any share of natal property because they were afraid this would sour relations with their brothers or cause their brothers' wives to hate them, and that as a result they would

Bride leaving for groom's house in a 'Doli'

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no longer be welcome in their natal homes. This attitude represents one of the dominant metaphors mediating women's refusal of property… A woman demanding her share is the greedy shrew or '*hak lene wali*'. There was also a close connection between these feelings and the apparently obverse ones of the desire to continue to be part of the natal family by actively contributing to its prosperity or being available to deal with its crises.

Activity 2 would enable you to appreciate how apparently cooperative behaviour can also be seen as a product of deep conflicts in society. But when these conflicts are not expressed openly or challenged, the impression remains that there is no conflict, but only cooperation. A functionalist view often uses the term *accommodation* to explain situations such as the one described above, where women would prefer not to claim property rights in their natal home. It would be seen as an effort to compromise and co-exist despite conflict.

Activity 5

Think of other kinds of social behaviour which may appear as co-operative but may conceal deeper conflicts of society.

Cooperation and Division of Labour

The idea of cooperation rests on certain assumptions about human behaviour. It is argued that without human cooperation it would be difficult for human life to survive. Further it is argued that even in the animal world we witness cooperation, whether they be ants or bees or mammals. Comparison with the animal world should however be done carefully. We look at two very different theoretical traditions in sociology to illustrate the point, those represented by Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx.

Sociology for the most part did not agree with the assumption that human nature is necessarily nasty and brutish. Emile Durkheim argues against a vision of "primitive humanity whose hunger and thirst, always badly satisfied, were their only passions". Instead he argued:

> They overlook the essential element of moral life, that is, the moderating influence that society exercises over its members, which tempers and neutralises the brutal action of the struggle for existence and selection. Wherever there are societies, there is altruism, because there is solidarity. Thus, we find altruism from the beginning of humanity and even in truly intemperate form. (Durkheim 1933)

For Durkheim solidarity, the moral force of society, is fundamental for our understanding of cooperation and thereby the functioning of society. The role of division of labour — which implies cooperation — is precisely to fulfill certain needs of society. The division of labour is at the same time a law of nature and also a moral rule of human conduct.

Durkheim distinguished between mechanical and organic solidarity that

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characterised pre-industrial and complex industrial societies respectively. Both are forms of cooperation in society. Mechanical solidarity is the form of cohesion that is based fundamentally on sameness. Most of the members of such societies live very similar lives, with little specialisation or division of labour beyond that associated with age and sex. Members feel bonded together essentially by their shared beliefs and sentiments, their common conscience and consciousness. Organic solidarity is that form of social cohesion that is based on division of labour and the resulting interdependence of members of society. As people become more specialised, they also become more dependent upon each other. A family engaged in subsistence farming may survive with little or no help from similar homesteaders. But specialised workers in a garment or a car manufacturing factory cannot survive without a host of other specialised workers supplying their basic needs.

Karl Marx too distinguishes human life from animal life. While Durkheim emphasised altruism and solidarity as distinctive of the human world, Marx emphasised consciousness. He writes:

> Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their material life (Marx 1972:37).

The above quote from Marx may appear difficult but will help us understand how cooperation in human life is different from cooperation in animal life. For humans not only adjust and accommodate to cooperate but also alter society in that process. For example, men and women over the ages had to adjust to natural constraints. Various technological innovations over time not only transformed human life but in some sense nature too. Humans in cooperating thus do not passively adjust and accommodate but also change the natural or social world to which they adjust. We had discussed in the Chapter on Culture and Socialisation in earlier book, *Introducing Sociology* how Indians had to adjust and accommodate and co-operate with the English language because of our experience with British Colonialism. But also how in that process Hinglish has emerged as a living social entity (page 72).

While both Durkheim from a functionalist view and Marx from a conflict perspective emphasise cooperation, they also differ. For Marx cooperation is not voluntary in a society where class exists. He argues, "The social power, i.e., the multiplied productive force, which arises through the cooperation of different individuals as it is caused by the division of labour, appears to these individuals, since their cooperation is not voluntary but

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has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them…" (Marx 1972: 53). Marx used the term *alienation* to refer to the loss of control on the part of workers over the concrete content of labour, and over the products of their labour. In other words, workers lose control over how to organise their own work; and they lose control over the fruits of their labour. Contrast, for example, the feeling of fulfillment and creativity of a weaver or potter or ironsmith with that of a worker involved in a factory whose sole task may be to pull a lever or press a button throughout the day. Cooperation in such a situation would be enforced.

Competition as an Idea and Practice

As in the case of cooperation, discussions on *the concept of competition* often proceed with the idea that competition is universal and natural. But going back to our discussion on how sociological explanation is different from naturalistic ones, it is important to understand competition as a social entity that emerges and becomes dominant in society at a particular historical point of time. In the contemporary period it is a predominant idea and often we find it difficult to think that there can be any society where competition is *not* a guiding force.

An anecdote of a school teacher who recounted her experience with children in a remote area in Africa draws attention to the fact that competition itself has to be explained sociologically and not as a natural phenomena. The anecdote refers to the teacher's assumption that the children will naturally rejoice at the idea of a competitive race where the winner would get a chocolate as a prize. To her surprise, her suggestion not only did not evoke any enthusiasm but instead seemed to cause considerable anxiety and distress. On probing further they express their distaste for a game where there would be 'winners' and 'losers'. This went against their idea of fun, which meant for them a necessarily cooperative and collective experience, and not a competitive one where the rewards necessarily exclude some and reward one or few.

In the contemporary world however competition is the dominant norm and practice. Classical sociological thinkers such as Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx have noted *the growth of individualism and competition* respectively in modern societies. Both developments are intrinsic to the way modern capitalist society functions. The stress is on greater efficiency and greater profit maximisation. The underlying assumptions of capitalism are:

(i) expansion of trade;
(ii) division of labour;
(iii) specialisation; and
(iv) hence rising productivity.

And these processes of self-sustaining growth are fuelled by the

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central theme of capitalism: rational individuals in free competition in the marketplace, each striving to maximise profits.

The ideology of competition is the dominant ideology in capitalism. The logic of this ideology is that the market operates in a manner that ensures greatest efficiency. For example competition ensures that the most efficient firm survives. Competition ensures that the students with higher marks or best students get admission into prestigious colleges. And then get the best jobs. In all cases the "best" refers to that which ensures the greatest material rewards.

Activity 6

India has recently witnessed intense debates on the government's decision to ensure 27 per cent reservation for OBCs and 10 per cent reservation for economically weaker sections among the upper castes. Collect the different arguments for and against these decisions in newspapers, magazines and television programmes.

Collect information about the drop-out rate in schools, and primary schools in particular (see pages 57-59 in the earlier book)

Given that mostly lower caste students drop-out of school, and most higher educational institutions are dominated by the upper castes, discuss the concepts of cooperation, competition and conflict in the above context.

Views that humans *naturally* like to compete has to be understood critically like all other naturalist explanations (see page 8 of earlier book). Competition as a desirable value flourished with the onset of capitalism. Read the extracts in the box and discuss.

Liberals like J.S. Mill felt that the effects of competition were generally harmful. However, he felt that though modern competition 'is described as the fight of all against all, but at the same time it is the fight for all'; this in the sense that economic competition is directed toward maximum output at minimum cost. Furthermore, 'given the breadth and individualism of society, many kinds of interest, which eventually hold the group together throughout its members, seem to come alive and stay alive only when the urgency and requirements of the competitive struggle force them upon the individual.'

Competition, and the whole laissez-faire economy of 19th century capitalism, may have been important in promoting economic growth. The exceptionally rapid development of the American economy may be attributable to the greater scope of competition in the United States. But still we cannot produce any exact correlations between the extent of competition, or the intensity of the competitive spirit, and the rate of economic growth in different societies. And on the other hand, there are grounds for supposing that competition has other less welcome effects (Bottomore 1975: 174-5).

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Activity 7

Organise a debate for and against the idea that competition is a necessary good in society and is a must for development. Draw upon school experience to write an essay on the manner that competition impacts on different students.

This ideology assumes that individuals compete on an equal basis, i.e. that all individuals are positioned equally in the competition for education, jobs, or resources. But as the earlier discussions on stratification or inequality showed, individuals are placed differentially in society. If the greater number of children in India do not go to school or drop-out sooner rather than later, then they remain out of the competition entirely.

Activity 8

Identify different occasions when individuals have to compete in our society. Begin with admission to school onwards through the different stages of life.

Conflict and Cooperation

The term conflict implies clash of interests. We have already seen how conflict theorists believe that scarcity of resources in society produces conflict as groups struggle to gain access to and control over those resources. The bases of conflict vary. It could be class or caste, tribe or gender, ethnicity or religious community. As young students you are well aware of the range of conflicts that exist in society. The scale and nature of different conflicts that occur are however different.

Activity 9

Think of the different kinds of conflicts that exist in the world today. At the widest level there are conflicts between nations and blocs of nations. Many kinds of conflicts also exist within nations. Make a list of them and then discuss in what ways they are similar and in what ways different.

A widely held commonsense perception is that conflicts in society are new. Sociologists have drawn attention to the fact that conflicts change in nature and form at different stages of social development. But conflicts have always been part of any society. Social change and greater assertion of democratic rights by disadvantaged and discriminated groups make the conflict more visible. But this does not mean that the causes for conflict did not exist earlier. The quote in the box emphasises this.

> Developing countries are today arenas for conflict between the old and the new. The old order is no longer able to meet the new forces, nor the new wants and aspirations of the people, but neither is it moribund — in fact, it is still very much alive. The conflict produces much unseemly argument, discord, confusion, and on occasion, even

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bloodshed. Under the circumstances, it is tempting for the sociologist to look to the good old peaceful days in sheer nostalgia. But a moment's reflection should convince him that the old order was not conflict-free and that it perpetrated inhuman cruelties on vast sections of the population. A theoretical approach that regards conflict as abnormal, or that invests equilibrium with a special value in the name of science, can be a handicap in studying developing societies.

Source: Srinivas, M.N., 1972, Social *Change in Modern India*, pp.159-160, Orient Longman, New Delhi.

It is also important to understand that conflict appears as a discord or overt clash only when it is openly expressed. For example, the existence of a peasant movement is an overt expression of a deep rooted conflict over land resources. But the absence of a movement does not imply the absence of a conflict. Hence, this chapter has emphasised the relationship between conflict, involuntary cooperation and also resistance.

Let us examine some of the conflicts that exist in society, and also the close relationship that exists between competition, cooperation and conflict. We just take two instances here. The first is the family and household. The second is that of land based conflict.

Traditionally the family and household were often seen as harmonious units where cooperation was the dominant process and altruism the driving principle of human behaviour. The last three decades have seen a great deal of questioning of this assumption by feminist analysis. Scholars such as Amartya Sen have noted the possibility of enforced cooperation.

> Not only do the different parties have much to gain from cooperation; their individual activities have to take the form of being overtly cooperative, even when substantial conflicts exist... Although serious conflicts of interests may be involved in the choice of 'social technology', the nature of the family organisation requires that these conflicts be moulded in a general format of cooperation, with conflicts treated as aberrations or deviant behaviour (Sen 1990:147).

Since conflict is often not overtly expressed, it has been found that subaltern or subordinate sections, whether women in households or peasants in agrarian societies, develop different strategies to cope with conflict and ensure cooperation. Findings of many sociological studies seem to suggest that covert conflict and overt cooperation is common. The extract below draws from many studies on women's behaviour and interaction within households.

> Material pressures and incentives to cooperate extend to distribution and there is little evidence of overt conflict over distributional processes. Instead there is a hierarchy of decision-making, needs and priorities (associated with age, gender and lifecycle), a hierarchy to which both men and women appear to subscribe.

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Thus, women appear to acquiesce to — and indeed actively perpetuate — discriminatory practices in intra-household distribution in order to assure their own longer-term security. Denied access to extra-household relationships and resources, it is in their material interests to subscribe to the general son-preference which characterises this culture, and they invest in a great deal of 'selfless' devotion in order to win their sons as allies and insurance against an uncertain future. 'Maternal altruism' in the northern Indian plain is likely to be biased towards sons and can be seen as women's response to patriarchal risk. Women are not entirely powerless, of course, but their subversion of male decision-making power tends to be covert. The use of trusted allies (relatives or neighbours) to conduct small businesses on their behalf, the secret lending and borrowing of money, and negotiations around the meaning of gender ideologies of *purdah* and motherhood, are some of the strategies by which women have resisted male power (Abdullah and Zeidenstein, 1982; White, 1992). That their resistance takes this clandestine form reflects their lack of options outside household cooperation and the concomitant high risks associated with open conflict (Kabeer 1996:129).

In keeping with the sociological tradition of questioning taken for granted commonsense assumptions, this chapter has critically examined the processes of cooperation, competition and conflict. The sociological approach does not see these processes as 'natural'. It further relates them to other social developments. In the following paragraphs you will read from a sociological study done on land relations and the *Bhoodan-Gramdan movement in India*. Read box and see how cooperation in society can be sociologically related to technology and the economic arrangements of production.

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Land Conflicts

Harbaksh, a Rajput had borrowed Rs100 from Nathu Ahir (Patel) in the year 1956, by mortgaging (informally) 2 acres of land. In the same year Harbaksh died and Ganpat, his successor, claimed the land back in 1958 and he offered Rs 200. Nathu refused to return the land to Ganpat. Ganpat could not take to legal proceedings as this exchange was not codified in the revenue records. Under the circumstances Ganpat had resorted to violence and forcefully cultivated the land in 1959 (one year after Gramdan). Ganpat, being a police constable, could influence

the police officials. When the Patel went to Phulera (the police thana headquarters) he was taken to the police station and was forced to agree that he will give the land back to Ganpat. Later a meeting of the villagers was convened when the money was given to Patel and Ganpat received the land back.

Source: Oommen, T.K., 1972: *Charisma, Stability and Change; An Analysis of Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement in India*, p.84. Thompson Press, New Delhi.

The advent of technology had also reduced the necessity for cooperation. For instance, for the operation of a *Charas,* an indigenous device of well irrigation, one requires 2 pairs of bullocks and four men. An ordinary peasant cannot afford the cost of four bullocks or an average household may not have the required manpower. In such situations they resort to borrowing bullocks and men from other households (kin, neighbours, friends, etc.) assuring similar services in return. But if a *Charas* is replaced by a *Rehat* (persian wheel) for irrigation which calls for a heavier capital investment, one needs only one pair of bullocks and one person for its operation. *The necessity of cooperation in the context of irrigation is reduced by a heavier capital investment and an efficient technology*. Thus, the level of technology in a system may determine the need for cooperation between men and groups.

Source: Oommen, T.K., 1972, *Charisma, Stability and Change; An Analysis of Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement in India,* p.88. Thompson Press, New Delhi.

Activity 10

Read the following account of land conflict. Identify the different social groups within it and notice the role of power and access to resources.

Conclusion

The effort in this chapter is to understand the relationship between structure and stratification on the one hand and the social processes of cooperation, competition and conflict on the other. You would have noticed that the three social processes are different, yet they often co-exist, overlap and sometimes exist in a concealed fashion, as evident in the above discussion about forced cooperation.

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GLOSSARY

Altruism: The principle of acting to benefit others without any selfishness or self-interest.

Alienation: Marx used the term to refer to the loss of control on the part of workers over the nature of the labour task, and over the products of their labour.

Anomie: For Durkheim, a social condition where the norms guiding conduct break down, leaving individuals without social restraint or guidance. A situation of normlessness.

Capitalism: An economic system in which the means of production are privately owned and organised to accumulate profits within a market framework, in which labour is provided by waged workers.

Division of Labour: The specialisation of work tasks, by means of which different occupations are combined within a production system. All societies have at least some rudimentary form of division of labour especially between the tasks allocated to men and those performed by women. With the development of industrialism, however, the division of labour became more complex than in any prior type of production system. In the modern world, the division of labour is international in scope.

Dominant Ideology: Shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups. Such ideologies are found in all societies in which they are systematic and engrained inequalities between groups. The concept of ideology connects closely with that of power, since ideological systems serve to legitimise the differential power which groups hold.

Individualism: Doctrines or ways of thinking that focus on the autonomous individual, rather than on the group.

Laissez-faire Liberalism: A political and economic approach based on the general principle of non-interference in the economy by government and freedom for markets and property owners.

Mechanical Solidarity: According to Durkheim, traditional cultures with a low division of labour are characterised by mechanical solidarity. Because most members of the society are involved in similar occupations, they are bound together by common experience and shared beliefs.

Modernity: A term designed to encapsulate the distinctiveness, complexity and dynamism of social processes unleashed during the 18th and 19th centuries which mark a distinct break from traditional ways of living.

Organic Solidarity: According to Durkheim, societies characterised by organic solidarity are held together by people's economic interdependence and a recognition

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of the importance of others' contributions. As the division of labour becomes more complex, people become more and more dependent on one another, because each person needs goods and services that those in other occupations supply. Relationships of economic reciprocity and mutual dependency come to replace shared beliefs in creating social consensus.

Social Constraint: A term referring to the fact that the groups and societies of which we are a part exert a conditioning influence on our behaviour. Social constraint was regarded by Durkheim as one of the distinctive properties of 'social facts'.

Structures: Refers generally to constructed frameworks and patterns of organisation, which in some way constrain or direct human behaviour.

EXERCISES

1. Discuss the different tasks that demand cooperation with reference to agricultural or industrial operations.
2. Is cooperation always voluntary or is it enforced? If enforced, is it sanctions or is the strength of norms that ensure cooperation? Discuss with examples.
3. Can you find illustrative examples of conflict drawn from Indian society? Discuss the causes that led to conflict in each instance.
4. Write an essay based on examples to show how conflicts get resolved.
5. Imagine a society where there is no competition. Is it possible? If not, why not?
6. Talk to your parents and elders, grandparents and their contemporaries and discuss whether modern society is really more competitive or conflict ridden than it used to be before. And if you think it is, how would you explain this sociologically?

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CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL ORDER IN RURAL AND URBAN SOCIETY

It is often said that change is the only unchanging aspect of society. Anyone living in modern society does not need to be reminded that constant change is among the most permanent features of our society. In fact, the discipline of sociology itself emerged as an effort to make sense of the rapid changes that Western European society had experienced between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

But though social change seems such a common and obvious fact about modern life, it is – comparatively speaking – a very new and recent fact. It is estimated that human beings have existed on planet earth for approximately 500,000 (five lakh) years, but they have had a civilised existence for only about 6,000 years. Of these civilised years, it is only in the last 400 years that we have seen constant and rapid change; even within these years of change, the pace has accelerated only in the last 100 years. Because the speed with which change happens has been increasing steadily, it is probably true that in the last hundred years, change has been faster in the last fifty years than in the first fifty. And within the last fifty years, the world may have changed more in the last twenty years than in the first thirty…

The Clock of Human History

Human beings have existed on earth for about half a million years. Agriculture, the necessary basis of fixed settlements, is only about twelve thousand years old. Civilisations date back no more than six thousand years or so. If we were to think of the entire span of human existence thus far as a day (stretching from midnight to midnight), agriculture would have come into existence at 11:56 pm and civilisations at 11:57. The development of modern societies would get underway only at 11:59 and 30 seconds! Yet perhaps as much change has taken place in the last thirty seconds of this human day as in all the time leading up to it.
From: Anthony Giddens,2004 *Sociology*, 4th edition, p.40.

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Activity 1

Talk to your elders and make a list of the things in your life that: (a) did not exist when your parents were your age; and (b) did not exist when your grandparents were your age.

Eg: Black & white/colour TV; milk in plastic bags, zip fasteners on clothes; plastic buckets; etc. – did it exist in your parents'/ grandparents' childhood?

Can you also make a list of things that existed in your parents'/ grandparents', time but don't exist in your time?

Social Change

'Social change' is such a general term that it can be, and often is, used to refer to almost any kind of change not qualified by some other term, such as economic or political change. Sociologists have had to work hard to limit this broad meaning in order to make the term more specific and hence useful for social theory. At the most basic level, social change refers to changes that are significant – that is, changes which alter the 'underlying structure of an object or situation over a period of time' (Giddens 2005:42). Thus social change does not include any and all changes, but only big ones, changes which transform things fundamentally. The 'bigness' of change is measured not only by how much change it brings about, but also by the scale of the change, that is, by how large a section of society it affects. In other words, changes have to be both intensive and extensive – have a big impact spread over a large sector of society – in order to qualify as social change.

Even after this kind of specification, social change still remains a very broad term. Attempts to further qualify it usually try to classify it by its sources or causes; by its nature, or the kind of impact it has on society; and by its pace or speed.

For example, evolution is the name given to a kind of change that takes place slowly over a long period of time. This term was made famous by the natural scientist Charles Darwin, who proposed a theory of how living organisms evolve – or change slowly over several centuries or even millenia, by adapting themselves to natural circumstances. Darwin's theory emphasized the idea of 'the survival of the fittest' – only those life forms manage to survive who are best adapted to their environment; those that are unable to adapt or are too slow to do so die out in the long run. Darwin suggested that human beings evolved from sea-borne life forms (or varieties of fish) to land-based mammals, passing through various stages the highest of which were the various varieties of monkeys and chimpanzees until finally the homo sapiens or human form was evolved. Although Darwin's theory referred to natural processes, it was soon adapted to the social world and was termed 'social Darwinism', a theory that emphasised the importance of adaptive change. In contrast to evolutionary change, change that occurs comparatively

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quickly, even suddenly, is sometimes called 'revolutionary change'. It is used mainly in the political context, when the power structure of society changes very rapidly through the overthrow of a former ruling class or group by its challengers. Examples include the French revolution (1789-93) and the Soviet or Russian revolution of 1917. But the term has also been used more generally to refer to sharp, sudden and total transformations of other kinds as well, such as in the phrase 'industrial revolution' or 'telecommunications revolution', and so on.

Activity 2

Refer to the discussions about the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution which you have come across before in your textbooks. What were the major kinds of change that each brought about? Would these changes qualify to be called 'social change'? Were these changes fast enough and far reaching enough to qualify as 'revolutionary change'? What other kinds of social change have you come across in your books which might not qualify as revolutionary change? Why would they not qualify?

Types of change that are identified by their nature or impact include structural change and changes in ideas, values and beliefs. Structural change refers to transformations in the structure of society, to its institutions or the rules by which these institutions are run. (Recall the discussion of social structure from the previous chapter.) For example, the emergence of paper money as currency marked a major change in the organisation of financial markets and transactions. Until this change came about, most forms of currency involved precious metals like gold and silver. The value of the coin was directly linked to the value of the gold or silver it contained. By contrast, the value of a paper currency note has no relationship to the value of the paper it is printed on, or the cost of its printing. The idea behind paper money was that a medium or means for facilitating the exchange of goods and services need not itself be intrinsically valuable. As long as it represents values convincingly — i.e., as long as it inspires trust — almost anything can function as money. This idea was the foundation for the credit market and helped change the structure of banking and finance. These changes in turn produced further changes in the organisation of economic life.

Changes in values and beliefs can also lead to social change. For example, changes in the ideas and beliefs about children and childhood have brought about very important kinds of social change, there was a time when children were simply considered small adults — there was no special concept of childhood as such, with its associated notions of what was right or wrong for children to do. As late as the 19th century for example, it was considered good and proper that children start to work as

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soon as they were able to. Children were often helping their families at work from the age of five or six; the early factory system depended on the labour of children. It was during the 19th and early 20th centuries that ideas about childhood as a special stage of life gained influence. It then became unthinkable for small children to be at work, and many countries passed laws banning child labour. At the same time, there emerged ideas about compulsory education, and children were supposed to be in school rather than at work, and many laws were passed for this as well. Although there are some industries in our country that even today depend on child labour at least partially (such as carpet weaving, small tea shops or restaurants, match-stick making, and so on), child labour is illegal and employers can be punished as criminals.

But by far the most common way of classifying social change is by its causes or sources. Sometimes the causes are pre-classified into internal (or endogenous) and external (or exogenous) causes. There are five broad types of sources or causes of social change: environmental, technological, economic, political and cultural.

Students in a classroom

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Students in a Vocational Training Lab

Source: https//www.msde.gov.in/sites/default/files/2019-09/National%20Skill%20Development %20Mission.pdf

Environment

Nature, ecology and the physical environment have always had a significant influence on the structure and shape of society. This was particularly true in the past when human beings were unable to control or overcome the effects of nature. For example, people living in a desert environment were unable to practise settled agriculture of the sort that was possible in the plains, near rivers and so on. So the kind of food they ate or the clothes they wore, the way they earned their livelihood, and their patterns of social interaction were all determined to a large extent by the physical and climatic conditions of their environment. The same was true for people living in very cold climates, or in port towns, along major trade routes or mountain passes, or in fertile river valleys. But the extent to which the environment influences society has been decreasing over time with the increase in technological resources. Technology allows us to overcome or adapt to the problems posed by nature, thus reducing the differences between societies living in different sorts of environments. On the other hand, technology also alters nature and our relationship to it in new ways (see the chapter on environment in this book). So it is perhaps more accurate to say that the effect of

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The earth caves in after heavy floods

nature on society is changing rather than simply declining.

But how, you might ask, does this affect social change? The environment may have shaped societies, but how did it play any role in social change? The easiest and most powerful answer to this question can be found in natural disasters. Sudden and catastrophic events such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, or tidal waves (like the tsunami that hit Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Andaman Islands and parts of Tamil Nadu in December 2004) can change societies quite drastically. These changes are often irreversible, that is, they are permanent and don't allow a return to the way things were. For example, it is quite possible that many of those whose livelihoods were destroyed by the tsunami will never be able to return to them again, and that many of the coastal villages will have their social structure completely altered. There are numerous instances of natural disasters leading to a total transformation and sometimes total destruction of societies in history. Environmental or ecological factors need not only be destructive to cause change, they can be constructive as well. A good example is the discovery of oil in the desert regions of West Asia (also called the Middle East). Like the discovery of gold in California in the 19th century, oil reserves in the Middle East have completely transformed the societies in which they were found. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait or the United Arab Emirates would be very different today without their oil wealth.

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Technology and Economy

The combination of technological and economic change has been responsible for immense social changes, specially in the modern period. Technology affects society in a wide variety of ways. As seen above, it can help us to resist, control, adapt to or harness nature in different ways. In combination with the very powerful institution of the market, technological change can be as impressive in its social impact as natural factors like a tsunami or the discovery of oil. The most famous instance of massive and immediately visible social change brought about by technological change is the Industrial Revolution itself, which you have already read about.

You will surely have heard of the massive social impact made by the steam engine. The discovery of steam power allowed emerging forms of large scale industry to use of a source of energy that was not only far stronger than animals or human beings, but was also capable of continuous operation without the need for rest. When harnessed to modes of transport like the steam ship and the railway, it transformed the economy and social geography of the world. The railroad enabled the westward expansion of industry and trade on the American continent and in Asia. In India too, the railways have played a very important role in shaping the economy, specially in the first century after their introduction in 1853. Steamships made ocean voyages much faster and much more reliable, thereby changing the dynamics of international trade and migration. Both these developments created gigantic ripples of change which affected not only the economy but also the social, cultural and demographic dimensions of world society.

The importance and impact of steam power became visible relatively quickly; however, sometimes, the social impact of technological changes becomes visible only retrospectively. A technological invention or discovery may produce limited immediate effects, as though it were lying dormant. Some later change in the economic context may suddenly change the social significance of the same invention and give it recognition as a historic event. Examples of this are the discovery of gunpowder and writing paper in China, which had only limited impact for centuries until they were inserted into the context of modernising Western Europe. From that vantage point, given the advantage of enabling circumstances, gunpowder helped to transform the technology of warfare and the paper-print revolution changed society forever. Another example closer to home is the case of technological innovations in the textile industry in Britain. In combination with market forces and imperial power, the new spinning and weaving machines destroyed the handloom industry of the Indian subcontinent which was, until then, the largest and most advanced in the world.

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Activity 3

Have you noticed other such technological changes which have social consequences in your own life? Think of the photo-copying machine and its impact. Have you ever thought of what things were like before photo-copying became so cheap and freely available? Another example could be the STD telephone booths. Try to find out how people communicated before these telephone booths had appeared and very few homes had telephone connections. Make a list of other such examples.

Sometimes changes in economic organisation that are not directly technological can also change society. In a well-known historical example, plantation agriculture — that is, the growing of single cash crops like sugarcane, tea or cotton on a large scale — created a heavy demand for labour. This demand helped to establish the institution of slavery and the slave trade between Africa, Europe and the Americas between the 17th and 19th centuries. In India, too, the tea plantations of Assam involved the forced migration of labour from Eastern India (specially the Adivasi areas of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh). Today, in many parts of the world, changes in customs duties or tariffs brought about by international agreements and institutions like the World Trade Organisation, can lead to entire industries and occupations being wiped out or (less often) sudden booms or periods of prosperity for other industries or occupations.

Politics

In the old ways of writing and recounting history, the actions of kings and queens seemed to be the most important forces of social change. But as we know now, kings and queens were the representatives of larger political, social and economic trends. Individuals may indeed have had roles to play, but they were part of a larger context. In this sense, political forces have surely been among the most important causes of social change. The clearest examples are found in the history of warfare. When one society waged war on another and conquered or was conquered, social change was usually an immediate consequence. Sometimes, conquerors brought the seeds of change and planted them wherever they went. At other times, the conquered were actually successful in planting seeds of change among the conquerors and transformed their societies. Although there are many such examples in history, it is interesting to consider a modern instance — that of the United States and Japan.

The United States won a famous victory over Japan in the Second World War, partly through the use of a weapon of mass destruction never seen before in human history, the nuclear bomb. After the Japanese surrender, the United States occupied and ruled over Japan for several years, bringing about lots of changes, including land reform in Japan. Japanese industry, at that time, was

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trying very hard to copy American industry and learn from it. By the 1970s, however, Japanese industrial techniques, specially in fields like car manufacturing, had gone far ahead of the Americans. Between the 1970s and 1990s, Japanese industry dominated the world and forced changes in the industrial organisation of Europe and specially the United States. The industrial landscape of the United States in particular was decisively altered by the impact of Japanese industrial technology and production organisation. Large, traditionally dominant industries like steel, automobiles and heavy engineering suffered major setbacks and had to restructure themselves according to Japanese technological and management principles. Emerging fields like electronics were also pioneered by the Japanese. In short, within the space of four decades, Japan had turned the tables on the United States, but through economic and technological means rather than warfare.

Political changes need not only be international — they can have enormous social impact even at home. Although you may not have thought of it this way, the Indian independence movement did not only bring about political change in the form of the end of British rule, it also decisively changed Indian society. A more recent instance is to be found in the Nepali people's rejection of monarchy in 2006. More generally, political changes bring about social change through the redistribution of power across different social groups and classes.

Considered from this viewpoint, universal adult franchise — or the 'one person, one vote' principle — is probably the single biggest political change in history. Until modern democracies formally empowered the people with the vote, and until elections became mandatory for exercising legitimate power, society was structured very differently. Kings and queens claimed to rule by divine right, and they were not really answerable to the common people. Even when democratic principles of voting were first introduced, they did not include the whole population — in fact only a small minority could vote, or had any say in the formation of the government. In the beginning, the vote was restricted to those who were born into high status social groups of a particular race or ethnicity, or to wealthy men who owned property. All women, men of lower classes or subordinated ethnicities, and the poor and working people in general were not allowed to vote.

It is only through long struggles that universal adult franchise came to be established as a norm. Of course, this did not abolish all the inequalities of previous eras. Even today, not all countries follow democratic forms of rule; even where elections are held, they can be manipulated; and people can continue to be powerless to influence the decisions of their government. But despite all this, it

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cannot be denied that universal adult franchise serves as a powerful norm that exerts pressure on every society and every government. Governments must now at least appear to seek the approval of the people in order to be considered legitimate. This has brought massive social changes in its wake.

Culture

Culture is used here as a short label for a very wide field of ideas, values, beliefs, that are important to people and help shape their lives. Changes in such ideas and beliefs lead naturally to changes in social life. The commonest example of a socio-cultural institution that has had enormous social impact is religion. Religious beliefs and norms have helped organise society and it is hardly surprising that changes in these beliefs have helped transform society. So important has religion been, that some scholars have tended to define civilisations in religious terms and to see history as the process of interaction between religions. However, as with other important factors of social change, religion too is contextual — it is able to produce effects in some contexts but not in others. Max Weber's study 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' showed how the religious beliefs of some Christian Protestant sects helped to establish the capitalist social system. It remains one of the most famous examples of the impact of cultural values on economic and social change. In India too we find many examples of religion bringing about social change. Among the best known are the impact of Buddhism on social and political life in ancient India, and the widespread influence of the Bhakti Movement on medieval social structure including the caste system.

A different example of cultural change leading to social change can be seen in the evolution of ideas about the place of women in society. In the modern era, as women have struggled for equality, they have helped change society in many ways. Women's struggles have also been helped or hindered by other historical circumstances. For example, during the Second World War, women in western countries started to work in factories doing jobs that they had never done before, jobs which had always been done by men. The fact that women were able to build ships, operate heavy machinery, manufacture armaments and so on, helped establish their claims to equality. But it is equally true that, had it not been for the war, they would have had to struggle for much longer. A very different instance of change produced by the position of women can be seen in consumer advertising. In most urban societies, it is women who take most of the everyday decisions about what to buy for their households. This has made advertisers very sensitive to the views and perspectives of women as consumers. Significant proportions

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of advertising expenditure are now directed at women, and this in turn has effects on the media. In short, the economic role of women starts a chain of changes which can have a larger social impact. For example, advertisements may tend to show women as decision-makers and as important people in ways that would not have been considered or encouraged before. More generally, most advertisements used to be addressed to men; now they are addressed as much to women, or, in some sectors like household appliances and consumer goods, mainly to women. So it is now economically important for advertisers and manufacturers to pay attention to what women think and feel.

Yet another instance of cultural change bringing about social change can be found in the history of sports. Games and sports have always been expressions of popular culture that sometimes acquire a lot of importance. The game of cricket began as a British aristocratic pastime, spread to the middle and working classes of Britain, and from there to British colonies across the world. As the game acquired roots outside Britain, it often turned into a symbol of national or racial pride. The very different history of intense rivalry in cricket shows the social importance of sport in a very telling manner. The England-Australia rivalry expressed the resentment of the socially subordinated colony (Australia) against the dominant upper class centre of authority (England). Similarly, the complete world dominance of the West Indies cricket team during the 1970s and 1980s, was also an expression of racial pride on the part of a colonised people. In India, too, beating England at cricket was always seen as something special, particularly before independence. At another level, the immense popularity of cricket in the Indian sub-continent has altered the commercial profile of the game which is now driven by the interests of South Asian fans, specially Indians.

As will be clear from the above discussion, no single factor or theory can account for social change. The causes of social change may be internal or external, the result of deliberate actions or accidental events. Moreover, the causes of social change are often interrelated. Economic and technological causes may also have a cultural component, politics may be influenced by environment. It is important to be aware of the many dimensions of social change and its varied forms. Change is an important subject for us because the pace of change in modern and specially contemporary times is much faster than what it used to be before. Although social change is better understood retrospectively — after it has already occurred — we also need to be aware of it as it happens, and to prepare for it in whatever ways we can.

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Social Order

The meaning of social events or processes often becomes clear through contrasts, just as the letters on the page that you are reading become legible because they contrast against the background. In the same way, social change as a process acquires meaning against the backdrop of continuity or lack of change. It may sound odd, but change makes sense as a concept only if there are also some things that are not changing, so that they offer the possibility of comparison or contrast. In other words, social change has to be understood together with social order, which is the tendency within established social systems that resists and regulates change.

Another way of looking at the relationship between social change and social order is to think about the possible reasons why society needs to prevent, discourage, or at least control change. In order to establish itself as a strong and viable social system, every society must be able to reproduce itself over time and maintain its stability. Stability requires that things continue more or less as they are — that people continue to follow the same rules, that similar actions produce similar results, and more generally, that individuals and institutions behave in a fairly predictable manner.

Activity 4

We are used to thinking of sameness as boring and change as exciting; this is also true, of course — change can be fun and lack of change can be really dull. But think of what life would be like if you were forced to change all the time... What if you never, ever got the same food for lunch — every day something different, and never the same thing twice, regardless of whether you liked it or not? Here is a scarier thought — what if every time you came back from school there were different people at home, different parents, different brothers and sisters...? What if whenever you played your favourite game — football, cricket, volleyball, hockey and so on — the rules were different each time? Think of other areas of your life where you would like things to not change too quickly. Are there areas of your life where you want things to change quickly? Try to think about the reasons why you want or don't want change in particular instances.

The above argument was an abstract and general one about the possible reasons why societies may need to resist change. But there are usually more concrete and specific reasons why societies do in fact resist change. Remember what you read about social structure and social stratification in Chapter 1. Most societies most of the time are stratified in unequal ways, that is, the different

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strata are differently positioned with respect to command over economic resources, social status and political power. It is not surprising that those who are favourably placed wish for things to continue as they are, while those who are suffering disadvantages are anxious for change. So the ruling or dominant groups in society generally resist any social changes that may alter their status, because they have a vested interest in stability. On the other hand, the subordinated or oppressed groups have a vested interest in change. 'Normal' conditions usually favour the rich and powerful, and they are able to resist change. This is another broad reason why societies are generally stable.

However, the notion of social order is not restricted to the idea of resistance to change, it also has a more positive meaning. It refers to the active maintenance and reproduction of particular pattern of social relations and of values and norms. Broadly speaking, social order can be achieved in one of two ways — when people spontaneously wish to abide by a set of rules and norms; or when people are compelled in various ways to obey such norms. Every society employs a combination of these methods to sustain social order.

Spontaneous consent to social order derives ultimately from shared values and norms which are internalised by people through the process of socialisation. (Revisit the discussion of socialisation in Introducing Sociology). Socialisation may be more or less efficient in different contexts, but however efficient it is, it can never completely erase the will of the individual. In other words, socialisation cannot turn people into programmed robots — it cannot produce complete and permanent consent for all norms at all times. You may have experienced this in your own lives: rules or beliefs which seem very natural and right at one point of time, don't seem so obviously correct at other times. We question things we believed in the past, and change our minds about what we regard as right or wrong. Sometimes, we may even return to beliefs we once held and then abandoned, only to rediscover them afresh at some later stage of life or in different circumstances. So, while socialisation does take on much of the burden of producing social order, it is never enough by itself.

Thus, most modern societies must also depend on some form of power or coercion to ensure that institutions and individuals conform to established social norms. Power is usually defined as the ability to make others do what you want regardless of what they themselves want. When a relationship of power is stable and settled, and the parties involved have become accustomed to their relative positions, we have a situation of domination. If a social entity (a person, institution or group) is routinely or habitually in a position of power, it is said to be dominant. In normal times, dominant institutions, groups or individuals

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exercise a decisive influence on society. It is not as though they are never challenged, but this happens only in abnormal or extraordinary times. Even though it implies that people are being forced to do things they don't necessarily want to do, domination in normal times can be quite 'smooth', in the sense of appearing to be without friction or tension. (Revisit the discussion of 'forced cooperation' from Chapter 1. Why, for example, did women not want to claim their rights in their families of birth? Why did they 'consent' to the patriarchal norm?)

Domination, Authority and Law

How is it that domination can be non-confrontational even when it clearly involves unequal relationships where costs and benefits are unevenly distributed? Part of the answer we have already got from the discussion of the previous chapter — dominant groups extract cooperation in unequal relationships because of their power. But why does this power work? Does it work purely because of the threat of the use of force? This is where we come to an important concept in sociology, that of legitimation.

In social terms, legitimacy refers to the degree of acceptance that is involved in power relations. Something that is legitimate is accepted as proper, just and fitting. In the broadest sense, it is acknowledged to be part of the social contract that is currently prevailing. In short, legitimacy implies conformity to existing norms of right, propriety and justice. We have already seen how power is defined in society; power in itself is simply a fact — it can be either legitimate or not. Authority is defined by Max Weber as legitimate power — that is, power considered to be justified or proper. For example, a police officer, a judge, or a school teacher all exercise different kinds of authority as part of their jobs. This authority is explicitly provided to them by their official job description — there are written documents specifying their authority, and what they may and may not do.

The fact that they have authority automatically implies that other members of society — who have agreed to abide by its rules and regulations — must obey this authority within its proper domain. The domain of the judge is the court room, and when citizens are in the court, they are supposed to obey the judge or defer to her/his authority. Outside the courtroom, the judge is supposed to be like any other citizen. So, on the street, S/he must obey the lawful authority of the police officer. When on duty, the policeman or woman has authority over the public actions of all citizens except her/his superior officers. But police officers do not have jurisdiction over the private activities of citizens as long as they are not suspected of being unlawful. In different way — different because the nature of the authority involved is less strictly or explicitly defined — the teacher has authority over her/his

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pupils in the classroom. The authority of the teacher does not extend into the home of the pupil where parents or guardians have primary responsibility and authority over their children.

There may be other forms of authority that are not so strictly defined, but are nevertheless effective in eliciting consent and cooperation. A good example is the authority wielded by a religious leader. Although some institutionalised religions may have partly formalised this authority, but the leader of a sect or other less-institutionalised minor religious group may wield enormous authority without it being formalised. Similarly reputed scholars, artists, writers and other intellectuals may wield a lot of authority in their respective fields without it being formalised. The same is true of a criminal gang leader — he or she may exercise absolute authority but without any formal specifications.

The difference between explicitly codified and more informal authority is relevant to the notion of the law. A law is an explicitly codified norm or rule. It is usually written down, and there are laws that specify how laws are to be made or changed, or what is to be done if someone violates them. A modern democratic society has a given body of laws created through its legislature, which consist of elected representatives. The laws of the land are enacted in the name of the people of that land by the people's representatives. This law forms the formal body of rules according to which society will be governed. Laws apply to all citizens. Whether or not I as an individual agree with a particular law, it has binding force on me as a citizen, and on all other citizens similarly regardless of their beliefs.

So, domination works through power, but much of this power is actually legitimate power or authority, a large part of which is codified in law. Consent and cooperation are obtained on a regular and reliable basis because of the backing of this structure of legitimation and formal institutional support. This does not exhaust the domain of power or domination — there are many kinds of power that are effective in society even though they are illegitimate, or if legitimate are not codified in law. It is the mix of legitimate, lawful authority and other kinds of power that determines the nature of a social system and also its dynamics.

Contestation, Crime and Violence

The existence of domination, power, legitimate authority and law does not imply that they always meet with obedience and conformity. You have already read about the presence of conflict and competition in society. In a similar way, we need to recognise more general forms of contestation in society. Contestation is used here as simply a word for broad forms of insistent disagreement. Competition and conflict are more specific than this, and leave out other forms of dissent that may not be well described by such terms.

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One example is that of 'counter cultures' among youth or 'youth rebellion'. These are protests against or refusal to conform to prevalent social norms. The content of these protests may involve anything from hairstyles and clothing fashions to language or lifestyle. More standard or conventional forms of contestation include elections — which are a form of political competition. Contestations also include dissent or protest against laws or lawful authorities. Open and democratic societies allow this kind of dissent to different degrees. There are both explicit and implicit boundaries defined for such dissent; crossing these boundaries invites some form of reaction from society, usually from the law enforcement authorities.

As you know very well, being united as Indians does not prevent us from disagreeing with each other. Different political parties may have very different agendas even though they may respect the same Constitution. Belief in or knowledge of the same set of traffic rules does not prevent heated arguments on the road. In other words, social order need not mean sameness or unanimity. On the other hand, how much difference or dissent is tolerated in society is an important question. The answer to this question depends on social and historical circumstances but it always marks an important boundary in society, the boundary between the legitimate and the illegitimate, the legal and the illegal, and the acceptable and the unacceptable.

Although it generally carries a strong moral charge, the notion of crime is strictly derived from the law. A crime is an act that violates an existing law, nothing more, nothing less. The moral worth of the act is not determined solely by the fact that it violates existing law. If the existing law is believed to be unjust, for example, a person may claim to be breaking it for the highest moral reasons. This is exactly what the leaders of the Freedom Movement in India were doing as part of their 'Civil Disobedience' campaign. When Mahatma Gandhi broke the salt law of the British government at Dandi, he was committing a crime, and he was arrested for it. But he committed this crime deliberately and proudly, and the Indian people were also proud of him and what he stood for. Of course, these are not the only kinds of crime that are committed! There are many other kinds of crime that cannot claim any great moral virtue. But the important point is that a crime is the breaking of the law — going beyond the boundary of legitimate dissent as defined by the law.

The question of violence relates at the broadest level to the basic definition of the state. One of the defining features of the modern state is that it is supposed to have a monopoly over the use of legitimate violence within its jurisdiction. In other words, only the state (through its authorised functionaries) may lawfully use violence — all other instances of violence are by definition illegal. (There

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are exceptions like self defense meant for extraordinary and rare situations). Thus, technically, every act of violence is seen as being directed against the state. Even if I assault or murder some other individual, it is the state that prosecutes me for violating its monopoly over the legitimate use of violence.

It is obvious that violence is the enemy of social order, and an extreme form of contestation that transgresses not only the law, but important social norms. Violence in society is the product of social tensions and indicates the presence of serious problems. It is also a challenge to the authority of the state. In this sense it also marks the failure of the regime of legitimation and consent and the open outbreak of conflicts.

Social Order and Change in Village, Town and City

Most societies can be divided into rural and urban sectors. The conditions of life and therefore the forms of social organisation in these sectors are very different from each other. So also, therefore, are the forms of social order that prevail in these sectors, and the kinds of social change that are most significant in each.

We all think we know what is meant by a village and by a town or city. But how exactly do we differentiate between them? (see also the discussion in Chapter 5 on Village Studies in the section on M.N. Srinivas). From a sociological point of view, villages emerged as part of the major changes in social structure brought about by the transition from nomadic ways of life based on hunting, gathering food and transient agriculture to a more settled form of life. With the development of sedentary forms of agriculture — or forms that did not involve moving from place to place — social structure also changed. Investment in land and technological innovations in agriculture created the possibility of producing a surplus – something over and above what was needed for survival. Thus, settled agriculture meant that wealth could be accumulated and this also brought with it social differences. The more advanced division of labour also created the need for occupational specialisation. All of these changes together shaped the emergence of the village as a population settlement based on a particular form of social organisation.

In economic and administrative terms, the distinction between rural and urban settlements is usually made on the basis of two major factors: population density and the proportion of agriculture related economic activities. (Contrary to appearances, size is not always decisive; it becomes difficult to separate large villages and small towns on the basis of population size alone.) Thus, cities and towns have a much higher density of population — or the number of persons per unit area, such as a square km — than villages. Although they are smaller in terms of absolute numbers

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of people, villages are spread out over a relatively larger area. Villages are also distinguished from towns and cities by the larger share of agricultural activities in their economic profile. In other words, villages will have a significant proportion of its population engaged in agriculture linked occupations, much of what is produced there will be agricultural products, and most of its income will be from agriculture.

The distinction between a town and city is much more a matter of administrative definition. A town and city are basically the same sort of settlement, differentiated by size. An 'urban agglomeration' (a term used in Censuses and official reports) refers to a city along with its surrounding sub-urban areas and satellite settlements. A 'metropolitan area' includes more than one city, or a continuous urban settlement many times the size of a single city.

Given the directions in which modern societies have developed, the process of urbanisation has been experienced in most countries. This is the process by which a progressively larger and larger proportion of the country's population lives in urban rather than rural areas. Most developed countries are now overwhelmingly urban. Urbanisation is also the trend in developing countries; it can be faster or slower, but unless there are special reasons blocking it, the process does seem to occur in most contexts. According to United Nations report (2014), 54 per cent of the world's population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to 66 per cent by 2050 (United Nations, Department of Economc and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2014, World Population prospects). Indian society is also experiencing urbanisation: the percentage of the population living in urban areas has increased from a little less than 11 per cent in 1901 to a little more than17 per cent in 1951, soon after independence. The 2001 Census shows that almost 28 per cent of the population lives in urban areas. According to 2011 Census report, 37.7 per cent population of India lives in urban areas.

Social Order and Social Change in Rural Areas

Because of the objective conditions in villages being different, we can expect the nature of social order and social change to be different as well. Villages are small in size so they usually permit more personalised relationships; it is not unusual for members of a village to know all or most other members by sight. Moreover, the social structure in villages tends to follow a more traditional pattern: institutions like caste, religion, and other forms of customary or traditional social practice are stronger here. For these reasons, unless there are special circumstances that make for an exception, change is slower to arrive in villages than in towns.

There are also other reasons for this. A variety of factors ensure that the subordinate sections of society have much less scope for expressing themselves in rural areas than their counterparts in cities. The lack of

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anonymity and distance in the village makes it difficult for people to dissent because they can be easily identified and 'taught a lesson' by the dominant sections. Moreover, the relative power of the dominant sections is much more because they control most avenues of employment, and most resources of all kinds. So the poor have to depend on the dominant sections since there are no alternative sources of employment or support. Given the small population, it is also very difficult to gather large numbers, particularly since efforts towards this cannot be hidden from the powerful and are very quickly suppressed. So, in short, if there is a strong power structure already in place in a village, it is very difficult to dislodge it. Change in the sense of shifts in power are thus slow and late to arrive in rural areas because the social order is stronger and more resilient.

Change of other sorts is also slow to come because villages are scattered and not as well connected to the rest of the world as cities and towns are. Of course, new modes of communication, particularly the telephone and the television have changed this. So the cultural 'lag' between villages and towns is now much shorter or non-existent. Communication links of other sorts (road, rail) have also generally improved over time so that few villages can really claim to be 'isolated' or 'remote', words often unthinkingly attached to villages in the past. This has also accelerated the pace of change somewhat.

For obvious reasons changes associated with agriculture or with agrarian social relations have a very major impact on rural societies. Thus, measures like land reform which alter the structure of land ownership have an immediate impact. In India, the first phase of land reforms after independence took away proprietary rights from absentee landlords and gave them to the groups that were actually managing the land and its cultivation in the village. Most of these groups belonged to intermediate castes, and though they were often not themselves the cultivators, they acquired rights over land. In combination with their number, this factor increased their social status and political power, because their votes mattered for winning elections. M.N. Srinivas has named these groups as the 'dominant castes'. In many regional contexts, the dominant castes became very powerful in economic terms and dominated the countryside and hence also electoral politics. In more recent times, these dominant castes are themselves facing opposition from the assertive uprisings of castes further below them, the lowest and the most backward castes. This has led to major social upheavals in many states like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

In the same way, changes in the technological organisation of agriculture also has a large and immediate impact on rural society. The introduction of new labour saving machinery or new cropping patterns may alter the demand for labour and thus change the relative bargaining

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strength of different social groups like landlords and labourers. Even if they don't directly affect labour demand, technological or economic changes can change the economic power of different groups and thus set in motion a chain of changes. Sudden fluctuations in agricultural prices, droughts or floods can cause havoc in rural society. The recent spate of farmer suicides in India is an example of this. On the other hand, large scale development programmes aimed at the rural poor can also have an enormous impact. A good example of this is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 (MGNREGA).

Activity 5

Find out more about the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). What does it aim to do? Why is it considered such an important development programme? What problems does it face? What would be the likely consequences if it succeeds?

Social Order and Social Change in Urban Areas

It is well known that though the city itself is very old — even ancient societies had them — urbanism as a way of life for large segments of the population is a modern phenomenon. Before the modern era, trade, religion and warfare were some of the major factors that decided the location and importance of cities. Cities that were located on major trade routes, or had suitable harbours and ports had a natural advantage. So did cities that were well located from the point of view of military strategy. Finally, religious places attracted large numbers of pilgrims and thus supported an urban economy. In India too we have examples of such old cities, including the well known medieval trading towns of Tezpur on the Brahmaputra river in Assam or Kozhikode (formerly known as Calicut) on the Arabian Sea in northern Kerala. We also have many examples of temple towns and places of religious pilgrimage, such as Ajmer in Rajasthan, Varanasi (also known as Benaras or Kashi) in Uttar Pradesh, or Madurai in Tamil Nadu.

As sociologists have pointed out, city life and modernity go very well together; in fact, each may be considered an intimate expression of the other. Though it houses large and very dense populations, and though it has been known throughout history as the site for mass politics, the city is also the domain of the modern individual. In its combination of anonymity and the amenities and institutions that only large numbers can support, the city offers the individual boundless possibilities for fulfillment. Unlike the village, which discourages individuality and cannot offer much, the city nurtures the individual.

But while the many artists, writers, and scholars who have celebrated the city as the haven of the individual are not wrong, it is also true that freedom and opportunity are available only to some individuals. More accurately, only a socially and economically

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privileged minority can have the luxury of a predominantly free and fulfilling life. Most people who live in cities have only limited and relative freedoms within larger constraints. These are the familiar economic and social constraints imposed by membership in social groups of various kinds, already known to you from the previous chapter. The city, too, fosters the development of group identities — based on factors like race, religion, ethnicity, caste, region, and of course class — which are all well represented in urban life. In fact, the concentration of large numbers in a relatively small space intensifies identities and makes them integral to strategies of survival, resistance and assertion.

Most of the important issues and problems of social order in towns and cities are related to the question of space. High population density places a great premium on space and creates very complex problems of logistics. It is the primary task of the urban social order to ensure the spatial viability of the city. This means the organisation and management of things like: housing and residential patterns; mass transit systems for transporting large numbers of workers to and fro for work; arranging for the coexistence of residential, public and industrial land-use zones; and finally all the public health, sanitation, policing, public safety and monitoring needs of urban governance. Each of these functions

A doctor checking a patient

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is a huge undertaking in itself and presents formidable challenges of planning, implementation and maintenance. What adds to the complexity is that all of these tasks have to be performed in a context where the divisions and tensions of class, ethnicity, religion, caste and so on are also present and active.

For example, the question of urban housing brings with it a whole host of problems. Shortage of housing for the poor leads to homelessness, and the phenomenon of 'street people' — those who live and survive on the streets and footpaths, under bridges and flyovers, abandoned buildings and other empty spaces. It is also the leading cause for the emergence of slums. Though official definitions vary, a slum is a congested, overcrowded neighbourhood with no proper civic facilities (sanitation, water supply, electricity and so on) and homes made of all kinds of building materials ranging from plastic sheets and cardboard to multi-storeyed concrete structures. Because of the absence of 'settled' property rights of the kind seen elsewhere, slums are the natural breeding ground for 'dadas' and strongmen who impose their authority on the people who live there. Control over slum territory becomes the natural stepping stone to other kinds of extra-legal activities, including criminal and real estate-related gangs.

A girl child looking after the sibling

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A commercial centre in a city

Women at work in cotton field

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The worldwide phenomenon of 'gated communities' is also found in Indian cities. This refers to the creation of affluent neighbourhoods that are separated from their surroundings by walls and gates, with controlled entry and exit. Most such communities also have their own parallel civic facilities, such as water and electricity supply, policing and security.

Activity 6

Have you come across such 'gated communities' in your town or city, or in one you have visited? Find out from your elders about such a community. When did the gates and fences come up? Was there any opposition, and if so by whom? What reasons might people have for wanting to live in such places? What effects do you think it has on urban society and on the neighbourhoods surrounding it?

Various kinds of transport in an urban area

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Shopping in a city

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Finally, housing patterns are linked to the economy of the city in crucial ways. The urban transport system is directly and severely affected by the location of residential areas relative to industrial and commercial workplaces. If these are far apart, as is often the case, an elaborate mass transit system must be created and maintained. Commuting becomes a way of life and an ever present source of possible disruption. The transport system has a direct impact on the 'quality of life' of working people in the city. Reliance on road transport and specially on private rather than public modes (i.e., cars rather than buses) creates problems of traffic congestion and vehicular pollution. As will be clear to you from the above discussion, the apparently simple issue of distribution of living space is actually a very complex and multi-dimensional aspect of urban society.

Daily long distance commuters can become an influential political constituency and sometimes develop elaborate sub-cultures. For example, the sub-urban trains of Mumbai — popularly known as 'locals' — have many informal associations of commuters. Collective on-train activities include singing *bhajans*, celebrating festivals, chopping vegetables, playing card and board games (including tournaments), or just general socialising.

The form and content of social change in urban areas is also best understood in relation to the central question of space. One very visible element of change is the ups and downs experienced by particular neighbourhoods and localities. Across the world, the city centre – or the core area of the original city – has had many changes of fortune. After being the power centre of the city in the 19th and early 20th century, the city centre went through a period of decline in the latter half of the 20th century. This was also the period of the growth of suburbs as the affluent classes deserted the inner city for the suburbs for a variety of reasons. City centres are experiencing a revival now in many major western cities as attempts to regenerate community life and the arts bear fruit. A related phenomenon is 'gentrification', which refers to the conversion of a previously lower class neighbourhood into a middle and upper class one. As real estate prices rise, it becomes more and more profitable for developers to try and effect such a conversion. At some point, the campaign becomes self-fulfilling as rental values increase and the locality acquires a critical minimum of prosperous businesses and residents. But sometimes the effort may fail and the neighbourhood goes back down the class scale and returns to its previous status.

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Activity 7

Have you noticed any 'gentrification' or 'up-scaling' taking place in your neighbourhood? Do you know of such instances? Find out what the locality was like before this happened. In what ways has it changed? How have these changes affected different social groups and classes? Who benefits and who loses? Who decides about changes of this sort — is there voting, or some form of public discussion?

Changes in modes of mass transport may also bring about significant social change in cities. Affordable, efficient and safe public transport makes a huge difference to city life and can shape the social character of a city apart from influencing its economic fortunes. Many scholars have written on the difference between cities based on public transport like London or New York and cities that depend mainly on individualised car-based transport like Los Angeles. It remains to be seen, for example, whether the new Metro Rail in Delhi will significantly change social life in that city. But the main issue regarding social change in cities, specially in rapidly urbanising countries like India, is how the city will cope with constant increase in population as migrants keep streaming in to add to its natural growth.

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Glossary

Customs Duties, Tariffs: Taxes imposed on goods entering or leaving a country, which increase its price and make it less competitive relative to domestically produced goods.

Dominant Castes: Term attributed to M.N. Srinivas; refers to landowning intermediate castes that are numerically large and therefore enjoy political dominance in a given region.

Gated Communities: Urban localities (usually upper class or affluent) sealed off from its surroundings by fences, walls and gates, with controlled entry and exit.

Gentrification: The term used to describe the conversion of a low class (urban) neighbourhood into a middle or upper class neighbourhood.

Ghetto, Ghettoisation: Originally from the term used for the locality where Jews lived in medieval European cities, today refers to any neighbourhood with a concentration of people of a particular religion, ethnicity, caste or other common identity. Ghettoisation is the process of creation of ghettoes through the conversion of mixed composition neighbourhoods into single community neighbourhoods.

Legitimation: The process of making legitimate, or the grounds on which something is considered legitimate, i.e., proper, just, right etc.

Mass Transit: Modes of fast city transport for large number of people.

Exercises

1. Would you agree with the statement that rapid social change is a comparatively new phenomenon in human history? Give reasons for your answer.
2. How is social change to be distinguished from other kinds of change?
3. What do you understand by 'structural change'? Explain with examples other than those in the text.
4. Describe some kinds of environment-related social change.
5. What are some kinds of changes brought about by technology and the economy?
6. What is meant by social order and how is it maintained?
7. What is authority and how is it related to domination and the law?
8. How are a village, town and city distinguished from each other?
9. What are some features of social order in rural areas?
10. What are some of the challenges to social order in urban areas?

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CHAPTER 3

ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

Look around you. What do you see? If you are in a classroom, you may see students in uniform, sitting on chairs with books open on their desk. There are school bags with lunch and pencil boxes. Ceiling fans might be whirring overhead. Have you ever thought about where these things — school clothes, furniture, bags, electricity, come from? If you trace their origins, you will find that the source of each material object lies in nature. Every day, we use objects whose production draws upon natural resources from around the world. The chair in your classroom may be made from wood with iron nails, glue and varnish. Its journey from a tree in a forest or plantation to you depends on electricity, diesel, facilities for trade, and telecommunications. Along the way, it has passed through the hands of loggers, carpenters, supervisors and managers, transporters, traders and those in charge of buying school furniture. These producers and distributors, and the inputs that they provide into chair manufacturing, in turn use a variety of goods and services derived from nature. Try and map these resource flows and you will soon see how complex such relationships are!

In this chapter, we will study social relationships with the environment as they have changed over time and as they vary from place to place. It is important to analyse and interpret such variations in a systematic way. There are many urgent environmental problems that demand our attention. To address these crises effectively, we need a sociological framework for understanding why they occur and how they might be prevented or resolved.

All societies have an ecological basis. The term **ecology** denotes the web of physical and biological systems and processes of which humans are one element. Mountains and rivers, plains and oceans, and the flora and fauna that they support, are a part of ecology. The ecology of a place is also affected by the interaction between its geography and hydrology. For example, the plant and animal life unique to a desert is adapted to its scarce rainfall, rocky or sandy soils, and extreme temperatures. Similar

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ecological factors limit and shape how human beings can live in any particular place.

Over time, however, ecology has been modified by **human action**. What appears to be a natural feature of the environment — aridity or flood-proneness, for example, is often produced by human intervention. Deforestation in the upper catchment of a river may make the river more flood-prone. Climate change brought about by global warming is another instance of the widespread impact of human activity on nature. Over time, it is often difficult to separate and distinguish between the natural and human factors in ecological change.

Activity 1

Did you know that the Ridge forest in Delhi is not the natural vegetation of this region but was planted by the British around 1915? Its dominant tree species is *Prosopis juliflora* (*vilayati kikar* or *vilayati babul*) which was introduced into India from South America and which has become naturalised all over north India.

Did you know that the *chaurs*, the wide grassy meadows of Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand which offer excellent views of wildlife, were once agricultural fields? Villages in the area were relocated in order to create what now appears to be a pristine wilderness.

Can you think of other examples where what seems to be 'natural' is actually modified by cultural interventions?

Alongside biophysical properties and processes that may have been transformed by human action — for example, the flow of a river and the species composition of a forest, there are other ecological elements around us that are more obviously human-made. An agricultural farm with its soil and water conservation works, its cultivated plants and domesticated animals, its inputs of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, is clearly a human transformation of nature. The built environment of a city, made from concrete, cement, brick, stone, glass and tar, uses natural resources but is very much a human artefact.

Social environments emerge from the interaction between biophysical ecology and human interventions. This is a two-way process. Just as nature shapes society, society shapes nature. For instance, the fertile soil of the Indo-Gangetic floodplain enables intensive agriculture. Its high productivity allows dense population settlements and generates enough surpluses to support other, non-agricultural activities, giving rise to complex hierarchical societies and states. In contrast, the desert of Rajasthan can only support pastoralists who move from place to place in order to keep their livestock supplied with fodder. These are instances of ecology shaping the forms of human life and culture. On the other hand, the social organisation of capitalism has shaped nature across the world. The private automobile is one instance of a capitalist commodity

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A dam

A small dam

that has transformed lives and landscapes. Air pollution and congestion in cities, regional conflicts and wars over oil, and global warming are just a few of the environmental effects of cars. Human interventions increasingly have the power to alter environments, often permanently.

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The ecological effects of the Industrial Revolution in Britain were felt all over the world. Large areas of southern North America and the Caribbean were converted to plantations to meet the demand for cotton in the mills of Lancashire. Young West Africans were forcibly transported to America to work as slave labour on the plantations. The depopulation of West Africa caused its agricultural economy to decline, with fields reverting to fallow wastelands. In Britain, smoke from the coal-burning mills fouled the air. Displaced farmers and labourers from the countryside came to the cities for work and lived in wretched conditions. The ecological footprints of the cotton industry could be found all over urban and rural environments.

The interaction between environment and society is shaped by **social organisation**. Property relations determine how and by whom natural resources can be used. For instance, if forests are owned by the government, it will have the power to decide whether it should lease them to timber companies or allow villagers to collect forest produce. Private ownership of land and water sources will affect whether others can have access to these resources and on what terms and conditions. Ownership and control over resources is also related to the division of labour in the production process. Landless labourers and women will have a different relationship with natural resources than men. In rural India, women are likely to experience resource scarcity more acutely because gathering fuel and fetching water are generally women's tasks but they do not control these resources. Social organisation influences how different social groups relate to their environment.

Different relationships between environment and society also reflect different **social values and norms**, as well as knowledge systems. The values underlying capitalism have supported the commodification of nature, turning it into objects that can be bought and sold for profit. For instance, the multiple cultural meanings of a river — its ecological, utilitarian, spiritual, and aesthetic significance, are stripped down to a single set of calculations about profit and loss from the sale of water for an entrepreneur. Socialist values of equality and justice have led to the seizure of lands from large landlords and their redistribution among landless peasants in a number of countries. Religious values have led some social groups to protect and conserve sacred groves and species and others to believe that they have divine sanction to change the environment to suit their needs.

There are many **different perspectives on the environment** and its relationship to society. These differences include the 'nature-nurture' debate and whether individual characteristics are innate or are influenced by environmental factors. For instance, are people poor

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because they are innately less talented or hard-working or because they are born into a situation of disadvantage and lack of opportunity? Theories and data about environment and society are influenced by the social conditions under which they emerge. Thus the notions that women are intrinsically less able than men, and Blacks naturally less able than Whites, were challenged as ideas of equality became more widespread during the 18th century's social and political revolutions. Colonialism generated a great deal of knowledge about environment and society, often systematically compiling it in order to make resources available to the imperial powers. Geology, geography, botany, zoology, forestry and hydraulic engineering were among the many disciplines that were created and institutionalised to facilitate the management of natural resources for colonial purposes.

Environmental management is, however, a very difficult task. Not enough is known about biophysical processes to predict and control them. In addition, human relations with the environment have become increasingly complex. With the spread of industrialisation, resource extraction has expanded and accelerated, affecting ecosystems in unprecedented ways. Complex industrial technologies and modes of organisation require sophisticated management systems which are often fragile and vulnerable to error. We live in **risk societies** using technologies and products that we do not fully grasp. The occurrence of nuclear disasters like Chernobyl, industrial accidents like Bhopal, and Mad Cow disease in Europe shows the dangers inherent in industrial environments.

Bhopal Industrial Disaster: Who was to Blame?

On the night of 3 December 1984, a deadly gas spread through Bhopal, killing about 4,000 people and leaving another 200,000 permanently disabled. The gas was later identified as methyl isocyanate (MIC), accidentally released by a Union Carbide pesticide factory in the city. In its *State of India's Environment: The Second Citizens' Report,* the Centre for Science and Environment analysed the reasons behind the disaster:

'Union Carbide's coming to Bhopal in 1977 was welcomed by all, because it meant jobs and money for Bhopal, and saving in foreign exchange for the country, with the rising demand for pesticides after the Green Revolution. The MIC plant was troublesome from the start and there were several leakages, including one that caused the death of a plant operator, until the big disaster. However, the government steadfastly ignored warnings, notably from the head of the Bhopal Municipal Corporation who issued notice to Union Carbide to move out of Bhopal in the late 1970s. The officer was transferred and the company donated Rs 25,000 to the Corporation for a park.

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The warnings kept coming. In May 1982, three experts from the Union Carbide Corporation, USA, surveyed safety measures and pointed out alarming lapses. These fears were reported in a local weekly *Rapat*, in what was to be a series of prophetic articles in 1982. At the same time, the factory's employees union also wrote to Central ministers and the chief minister warning them of the situation. The state Labour Minister reassured legislators at several times that the factory was safe. Only a few weeks before the gas leak, the factory had been granted an environmental clearance certificate by the state pollution control board. The Central government rivalled its state counterpart in casualness. It ignored the plant's safety record in granting it permission and ignored Department of Environment guidelines on the siting of hazardous plants.

Why the guidelines and warnings were ignored is clear. The company employs the relatives of powerful politicians and bureaucrats. Its legal adviser is an important political leader and its public relations officer is the nephew of a former minister. The company's posh guesthouse was always at the disposal of politicians. The chief minister's wife had reportedly received lavish hospitality from the company during visits to the USA, and the company had donated Rs 1.5 lakh to a welfare organisation in the chief minister's home town.

Union Carbide Corporation also played its full part in the run-up to the tragedy. The Bhopal plant was under-designed and lacked several safety features. It did not have a computerised early warning system, a standard device in the company's factories in the US. The company had not worked out emergency evacuation procedures with the local community. The plant was not being maintained and operated at the requisite level of efficiency. Morale was low because sales were dropping and the plant was running at a third of its capacity. Staff strength had been reduced and many engineers and operators had left, making it impossible for the existing staff to monitor all the tasks. Many instruments were out of order.

Discussion: Which social institutions and organisations play a role in industrial accidents like the Bhopal disaster? What steps can be taken to prevent such disasters?

Major Environmental Problems and Risks

Although the relative importance or urgency of different environmental hazards may vary from country to country and context to context, the following are globally recognized as the main ones:

A. Resource Depletion

Using up non-renewable natural resources is one of the most serious environmental problems. While fossil fuels and specially petroleum hog the headlines, the depletion and destruction of water and land is probably even more rapid. The rapid decline in groundwater levels is an acute problem all over India, especially in the states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Aquifers which have accumulated water over hundreds and thousands of years are being emptied in matter of a few decades to meet the

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growing demands of intensive agriculture, industry and urban centres. Rivers have also been dammed and diverted, causing irreversible damage to the ecology of water basins. Many water bodies in urban areas have been filled up and built upon, destroying the natural drainage of the landscape. Like groundwater, topsoil too is created over thousands of years. This agricultural resource, too, is being destroyed due to poor environmental management leading to erosion, water-logging and salinisation. The production of bricks for building houses is another reason for the loss of topsoil.

Biodiversity habitats such as forests, grasslands and wetlands are the other major resource facing rapid depletion, largely due to the expansion of areas under agriculture. Though various parts of the globe, including some parts of India, appear to have seen some re-forestation or increase in vegetative cover in recent decades, the overall trend is towards the loss of biodiversity. The shrinking of these habitats has endangered many species, several of them unique to India. You may have read of the recent crisis when it was discovered that the tiger population had fallen sharply despite strict laws and large sanctuaries.

B. Pollution

Air pollution is considered to be a major environmental problem in urban and rural areas, causing respiratory and

Deforestation

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other problems which result in serious illness and death. The sources of air pollution include emissions from industries and vehicles, as well as the burning of wood and coal for domestic use. We have all heard of pollution from vehicles and factories, and seen pictures of smoking chimneys and exhaust pipes in cars. But we often don't realise that *indoor pollution* from cooking fires is also a serious source of risk. This is particularly true of rural homes where wood fires using green or poorly burning wood, badly designed fireplaces (*chulhas*), and poor ventilation combine to put village women at serious risk because they do the cooking. WHO reports that in 2012 around 7 million people died — one in eight of total global deaths — as a result of air pollution exposure. This finding more than doubles previous estimates and confirms that air pollution is now the world's largest single environmental health risk. Reducing air pollution could save millions of lives. This has enabled scientists to make a more detailed analysis of health risks from a wider demographic spread that now includes rural as well as urban areas. In 2012, total 3.3 million deaths linked to indoor air pollution and 2.6 million deaths related to outdoor air pollution.*

Industrial Pollution

Water pollution is also a very serious issue affecting surface as well as groundwater. Major sources include not only domestic sewage and factory effluents but also the runoff from farms where large amounts of synthetic

* Weblink: *www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2014/air-pollution/en/*

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Spraying pesticide in a brinjal field

fertilisers and pesticides are used. The pollution of rivers and waterbodies is a particularly important problem.

Cities also suffer from *noise pollution*, which has been the subject of court orders in many cities. Sources include amplified loudspeakers used at religious and cultural events, political campaigns, vehicle horns and traffic, and construction work.

C. Global Warming

The release of particular gases (carbon dioxide, methane and others) creates a 'greenhouse' effect by trapping the sun's heat and not allowing it to dissipate. This has caused a small but significant rise in global temperatures. The resulting climate change is projected to melt polar ice-fields and raise the sea level, thus submerging low-lying coastal areas, and more important, affecting the ecological balance. Global warming is also likely to result in greater fluctuations and uncertainty in climates across the world. China and India are increasingly significant contributors to world carbon and greenhouse gas emissions.

D. Genetically Modified Organisms

New techniques of gene-splicing allow scientists to import genes from one species into another, introducing new characteristics. For instance, genes from Bacillus thuringiensis have been introduced into cotton species, making it resistant to the bollworm, a major pest. Genetic modification may also be done to shorten growing time, increase size and the shelf-life of crops.

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However, little is known about the long term effects of genetic modification on those who eat these foods or on ecological systems. Agricultural companies can also use genetic modification to create sterile seeds, preventing farmers from re-using them, and guaranteeing that seeds remain their profit-yielding property, forcing farmers to be dependent on them.

E. Natural and Man-made Environmental Disasters

This is a self-explanatory category. The Bhopal disaster of 1984 killed about 4,000 people when a toxic gas leaked from the Union Carbide factory, and the tsunami of 2004 killed thousands of people are the most recent examples of man-made and natural environmental disasters.

Why Environmental Problems are also Social Problems

How environmental problems affect different groups is a function of **social inequality**. Social status and power determine the extent to which people can insulate themselves from environmental crises or overcome it. In some cases, their 'solutions' may actually worsen environmental disparities. In Kutch, Gujarat, where water is scarce, richer farmers have invested in deep bore tubewells to tap groundwater to irrigate their fields and grow cash crops. When the rains fail, the earthen wells of the poorer villagers run dry and they do not even have water to drink. At such times, the moist green fields of the rich farmers seem to mock them. Certain environmental concerns sometimes appear to be universal concerns, not particular to specific social groups. For instance, reducing air pollution or protecting biodiversity seem to be in the public interest. A sociological analysis shows, however, that how public priorities are set and how they are pursued may not be universally beneficial. Securing the public interest may actually serve the interests of particular politically and economically powerful groups, or hurt the interests of the poor and politically weak. As the debates over large dams and around protected areas show, the environment as a public interest is a hotly contested arena.

The school of **social ecology** points out that social relations, in particular the organisation of property and production, shape environmental perceptions and practices. Different social groups stand in different relationships to the environment and approach it differently. A Forest Department geared to maximising revenues from supplying large volumes of bamboo to the paper industry will view and use a forest very differently from an artisan who harvests bamboo to make baskets. Their varied interests and ideologies generate environmental conflicts. In this sense, environmental crises have their roots in social inequality. Addressing environmental problems requires changing environment-society relations, and this in turn requires efforts to change relations between different social groups — men

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and women, urban and rural people, landlords and labourers. Changed social relations will give rise to different knowledge systems and modes of managing the environment.

> What literally defines **social ecology** as "social" is its recognition of the often overlooked fact that nearly all our present ecological problems arise from deep-seated social problems. Conversely, present ecological problems cannot be clearly understood, much less resolved, without resolutely dealing with problems within society. To make this point more concrete: economic, ethnic, cultural, and gender conflicts, among many others, lie at the core of the most serious ecological dislocations we face today — apart, to be sure, from those that are produced by natural catastrophes.
> – Murray Bookchin, political philosopher and founder of the Institute for Social Ecology

Two examples of environment-society conflicts are given below:

Sustainable Development

The relation between ecology and economy has been a complex one. But one thing is certain that, unless there is a balance between the two, the future of humanity will remain bleak. Since the last 300 years, the way economic development has been going on, with its emphasis on controlling the nature and exploiting it ruthlessly for the benefit of a section of population, has led to extinction of thousands of species of flora and fauna. The emphasis on non-renewable energy and introduction of large number of new species ostensibly to meet growing demand of industrial world has played havoc with ecology. There is growing concern worldwide that if the present pace of depletion of natural resource and extinction of biodiversity continues for some more time, the future generation will have to pay the price for it.

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs." (Brundtland Report, October 1987).*

Today the basis of capitalist development is consumption. Old things must be destroyed just for the introduction of new things so that people continue to consume new industrial products. "There is growing inequality in the world. No amount of

* Presentation of the report, *Our Common Future*, by Brundtland at a press conference organised by the World Commission on Environment and Development in London, England on 27 April 1987.

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growth and economic prosperity is enough anymore, because aspiration is the new God. This means that anybody who is poor is marginalised simply because they have just not made the grade. There is no longer space for such failure in our brave, newer world. It is about the survival of the fittest, in a way that would have made Darwin insane." (Why shouldn't I be intolerant?, Sunita Narain in *Down to Earth*, 25 January 2016)

We are living in an unequal world where we want to control resources and opportunities. The already existing system of social stratification makes it only too easy for some sections of people to control most of the available resources and opportunities. We have to make the world worth living not only for ourselves but for generations to come. We cannot be ignorant to the needs of the present nor can we be oblivious of the needs of the future. We need to build a society where people are at par; where there is equitable distribution of resources; where the aim is development but one that is inclusive and not exclusive. This is what will make us sustainable.

In this light, spearheaded by the 193 member states of United Nations as well as the global civil society has, through a deliberative process, arrived at the 17 "Global Goals" of sustainable development with 169 targets. These goals to a large extent derive from the sentiment expressed often by former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon in his quote, "there can be no Plan B, because there is no Planet B".

> 'God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism in the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.'
>
> — **Mahatma Gandhi**

> Over the last six years, reports indicate that thousands of farmers in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra have killed themselves, often by drinking pesticide. What drives farmers, people who stoically deal with the uncertainties inherent in agriculture, to this extreme step? The investigation of journalist P. Sainath shows that farmers' recent distress is due to a fusion of environmental and economic factors. Agrarian conditions have become more volatile as farmers are exposed to the fluctuations of the world market and as government support for small farmers declines

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due to liberalisation policies. Cotton farmers grow a high-risk, high-return crop. Cotton needs some irrigation. It is also very susceptible to pest infestation. Cotton growers thus need capital to invest in irrigation and pest control. Both of these inputs have become more expensive over the years: high levels of extraction have depleted water reserves so farmers have to drill deeper, and pests have become resistant to many pesticides, requiring farmers to spray new pesticides, more frequently. Farmers in need of credit to purchase these inputs end up approaching private moneylenders and traders who charge them high rates of interest. If the crop fails, the farmer can't repay the money. Not only can they not feed their families, they cannot fulfil family obligations like arranging children's marriages. Faced with financial and social ruin, many farmers have nowhere to turn. Suicide seems to be the only way out to them.

Discussion: Is water scarcity natural or human-made? What social factors shape how water is allocated among different users? How do different patterns of water-use affect different social groups? How is water depleted through agricultural activity?

Activity 2

Find out how much water your household uses in a day. Try and find out how much water is used by comparable households belonging to different income groups. How much time and money do different households spend on getting water? Within the household, whose job is it to collect water? How much water does the government provide to different classes of people?

As cities grow, the conflict over urban space is becoming more acute. While migrants come to the city in search of work, they cannot afford scarce legal housing and are forced to settle on public lands. This land is now in great demand to build infrastructure for affluent residents and visitors — malls and multiplexes, hotels and tourist sites. As a result, poor workers and their families are being evicted to the outskirts of the city and their homes demolished. Besides land, air and water have also become highly contested resources in the urban environment.

(Taken from: Amita Baviskar in 'Between Violence and Desire: Space, Power and Identity in the Making of Metropolitan Delhi' in) *International Social Science Journal.* 175: 89-98. 2003)

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Discussion: Why do the urban poor often live in slums? Which social groups control landed property and housing in the city? What social factors affect people's access to water and sanitation?

Activity 3

Imagine that you were a fifteen year-old girl or boy living in a slum. What would your family do and how would you live? Write a short essay describing a day in your life.

Glossary

Hydrology: The science of water and its flows; or the broad structure of water resources in a country or region.

Deforestation: The loss of forest area due to cutting down of trees and/or taking over of the land for other purposes, usually cultivation.

Green House: A covered structure for protecting plants from extremes of climate, usually from excessive cold; a green house (also called a hot house) maintains a warmer temperature inside compared to the outside temperature.

Emissions: Waste gases given off by a human-initiated process, usually in the context of industries or vehicles.

Effluents: Waste materials in fluid form produced from industrial processes.

Aquifers: Natural underground formations in the geology of a region where water gets stored.

Monoculture: When the plant life in a locality or region is reduced to a single variety.

Exercises

1. Describe in your own words what you understand by the term 'ecology'.
2. Why is ecology not limited only to the forces of nature?
3. Describe the two-way process by which 'social environments' emerge.
4. Why and how does social organisation shape the relationship between the environment and society?

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5. Why is environmental management a complex and huge task for society?
6. What are some of the important forms of pollution-related environmental hazards?
7. What are the major environmental issues associated with resource depletion?
8. Explain why environmental problems are simultaneously social problems.
9. What is meant by social ecology?
10. Describe some environment related conflicts that you know of or have read about. (Other than the examples in the text.)

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CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCING WESTERN SOCIOLOGISTS

Sociology is sometimes called the child of the 'age of revolution'. This is because it was born in 19th century Western Europe, after revolutionary changes in the preceding three centuries that decisively changed the way people lived. Three revolutions paved the way for the emergence of sociology: the Enlightenment, or the scientific revolution; the French Revolution; and the Industrial Revolution. These processes completely transformed not only European society, but also the rest of the world as it came into contact with Europe.

In this chapter the key ideas of three sociological thinkers: Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber will be discussed. As part of the classical tradition of sociology, they laid the foundation of the subject. Their ideas and insights have remained relevant even in the contemporary period. Of course, these ideas have also been subjected to criticism and have undergone major modifications. But since ideas about society are themselves influenced by social conditions, we begin with a few words about the context in which sociology emerged.

THE CONTEXT OF SOCIOLOGY

The modern era in Europe and the conditions of modernity that we take for granted today were brought about by three major processes. These were: the Enlightenment or dawning of the 'age of reason'; the quest for political sovereignty embodied in the French Revolution; and the system of mass manufacture inaugurated by the Industrial Revolution. Since these have been discussed at length in Chapter 1 of Introducing Sociology, here we will only mention some of the intellectual consequences of these momentous changes.

Activity 1

Revisit the discussion of the coming of the modern age in Europe in Chapter 1 of *Introducing Sociology*. What sorts of changes were these three processes associated with?

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The Enlightenment

During the late 17th and 18th centuries, Western Europe saw the emergence of radically new ways of thinking about the world. Refered to as 'The Enlightenment', these new philosophies established the human being at the centre of the universe, and rational thought as the central feature of the human being. The ability to think rationally and critically transformed the individual human being into both the producer and the user of all knowledge, the 'knowing subject'. On the other hand, only persons who could think and reason could be considered as fully human. Those who could not remained deficient as human beings and were considered as not fully evolved humans, as in the case of the natives of primitive societies or 'savages'. Being the handiwork of humans, society was amenable to rational analysis and thus comprehensible to other humans. For reason to become the defining feature of the human world, it was necessary to displace nature, religion and the divine acts of gods from the central position they had in earlier ways of understanding the world. This means that the Enlightenment was made possible by, and in turn helped to develop, attitudes of mind that we refer to today as secular, scientific and humanistic.

The French Revolution

The French Revolution (1789) announced the arrival of political sovereignty at the level of individuals as well as nation-states. The Declaration of Human Rights asserted the equality of all citizens and questioned the legitimacy of privileges inherited by birth. It signaled the emancipation of the individual from the oppressive rule of the religious and feudal institutions that dominated France before the Revolution. The peasants, most of whom were serfs (or bonded labourers) tied to landed estates owned by members of the aristocracy, were freed of their bonds. The numerous taxes paid by the peasants to the feudal lords and to the church were cancelled. As free citizens of the republic, sovereign individuals were invested with rights and were equal before the law and other institutions of the state. The state had to respect the privacy of the autonomous individual and its laws could not intrude upon the domestic life of the people. A separation was built between the public realm of the state and a private realm of the household. New ideas about what was appropriate to the public and private spheres developed. For example, religion and the family became more 'private' while education (specially schooling) became more 'public'. Moreover, the nation-state itself was also redefined as a sovereign entity with a centralised government. The ideals of the French Revolution — liberty, equality and fraternity — became the watchwords of the modern state.

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The Industrial Revolution

The foundations of modern industry were laid by the Industrial Revolution, which began in Britain in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It had two major aspects. The first was the systematic application of science and technology to industrial production, particularly the invention of new machines and the harnessing of new sources of power. Secondly, the industrial revolution also evolved new ways of organising labour and markets on a scale larger than anything in the past. New machines like the Spinning Jenny (which greatly increased the productivity of the textile industry) and new methods of obtaining power (such as the various versions of the steam engine) facilitated the production process and gave rise to the factory system and mass manufacture of goods. These goods were now produced on a gigantic scale for distant markets across the world. The raw materials used in their production were also obtained from all over the world. Modern large scale industry thus became a world wide phenomenon.

These changes in the production system also resulted in major changes in social life. The factories set up in urban areas were manned by workers who were uprooted from the rural areas and came to the cities in search of work. Low wages at the factory meant that men, women and even children had to work long hours in hazardous circumstances to eke out a living. Modern industry enabled the urban to dominate over the rural. Cities and towns became the dominant forms of human settlement, housing large and unequal populations in small, densely populated urban areas. The rich and powerful lived in the cities, but so did the working classes who lived in slums amidst poverty and squalor. Modern forms of governance, with the state assuming control of health, sanitation, crime control and general 'development' created the demand for new kinds of knowledge. The social sciences and particularly sociology emerged partly as a response to this need.

From the outset sociological thought was concerned with the scientific analysis of developments in industrial society. This has prompted observers to argue that sociology was the 'science of the new industrial society'. Empirically informed scientific discussion about trends in social behaviour only became possible with the advent of modern industrial society. The scientific information generated by the state to monitor and maintain the health of its social body became the basis for reflection on society. Sociological theory was the result of this self-reflection.

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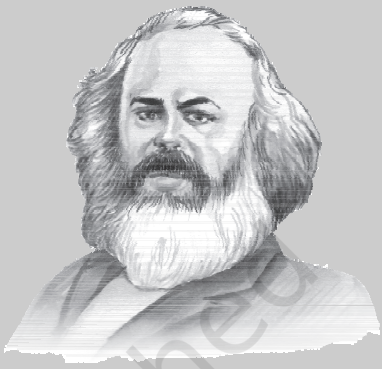
Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Biography



Karl Marx was born on 5 May 1818 in Trier, part of the Rhineland province of Prussia in Germany. Son of a prosperous liberal lawyer.

1834-36: Studied law at the University of Bonn and then at the University of Berlin, where he was much influenced by the Young Hegelians.

1841: Completed his doctoral thesis in philosophy from the University of Jena.

1843: Married Jenny von Westphalen and moved to Paris.

1844: Met Friedrich Engels in Paris, who became a lifelong friend.

1847: Invited by the International Working Men's Association to prepare a document spelling out its aims and objectives. This was written jointly by Marx and Engels and published as the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1948)

1849: Exiled to England and lived there till his death.

1852: *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (published).

1859: *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (published).

1867: *Capital,* Vol. I, published.

1881: Death of Jenny von Westphalen.

1883: Marx dies and is buried in London's Highgate Cemetery.

Karl Marx was from Germany but spent most of his intellectually productive years in exile in Britain. His radical political views led him to be exiled from Germany, France and Austria. Though Marx had studied philosophy he was not a philosopher. He was a social thinker who advocated an end to oppression and exploitation. He believed that scientific socialism would achieve this goal. To that end he engaged in a critical analysis of capitalist society to expose its weaknesses and bring about its downfall. Marx argued that human society had progressed through different stages. These were: primitive communism, slavery, feudalism and capitalism. Capitalism was the latest phase of human advancement, but Marx believed that it would give way to socialism.

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Capitalist society was marked by an ever intensifying process of alienation operating at several levels. First, modern capitalist society is one where humans are more alienated from nature than ever before; second, human beings are alienated from each other as capitalism individualises previously collective forms of social organisation, and as relationships get more and more market-mediated. Third, the large mass of working people is alienated from the fruits of its labour because workers do not own the products they produce. Moreover, workers have no control over the work process itself — unlike in the days when skilled craftsmen controlled their own labour, today the content of the factory worker's working day is decided by the management. Finally, as the combined result of all these alienations, human beings are also alienated from themselves and struggle to make their lives meaningful in a system where they are both more free but also more alienated and less in control of their lives than before.

However, even though it was an exploitative and oppressive system, Marx believed that capitalism was nevertheless a necessary and progressive stage of human history because it created the preconditions for an egalitarian future free from both exploitation and poverty. Capitalist society would be transformed by its victims, i.e. the working class, who would unite to collectively bring about a revolution to overthrow it and establish a free and equal socialist society. In order to understand the working of capitalism, Marx undertook an elaborate study of its political, social and specially its economic aspects.

Marx's conception of the economy was based on the notion of a mode of production, which stood for a broad system of production associated with an epoch or historical period. Primitive communism, slavery, feudalism and capitalism were all modes of production. At this general level, the mode of production defines an entire way of life characteristic of an era. At a more specific level, we can think of the mode of production as being something like a building in the sense that it consists of a foundation or base, and a superstructure or something erected on top of the base. The base — or economic base — is primarily economic and includes the productive forces and production relations. Productive forces refer to all the means or factors of production such as land, labour, technology, sources of energy (such as electricity, coal, petroleum and so on). Production relations refer to all the economic relationships and forms of labour organisation which are involved in production. Production relations are also property relations, or relationships based on the ownership or control of the means of production.

For example, in the mode of production called primitive communism, the productive forces consisted mostly of nature — forests, land, animals and so on — along with very rudimentary forms of technology

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like simple stone tools and hunting weapons. Production relations were based on community property (since individual private property did not yet exist) and included tribal forms of hunting or gathering which were the prevalent forms of labour organisation.

The economic base thus consisted of productive forces and relations of production. On this base rested all the social, cultural and political institutions of society. Thus, institutions like religion, art, law, literature or different forms of beliefs and ideas were all part of the 'superstructure' which was built on top of the base. Marx argued that people's ideas and beliefs originated from the economic system of which they were part. How human beings earned their livelihood determined how they thought — material life shaped ideas, ideas did not shape material life. This argument went against the dominant ways of thinking in Marx's time, when it was common to argue that human beings were free to think whatever they wanted and that ideas shaped the world.

Marx placed great emphasis on economic structures and processes because he believed that they formed the foundations of every social system throughout human history. If we understand how the economy works and how it has been changing in the past, he argued, we can learn how to change society in the future. But how can such change be brought about? Marx's answer: through class struggle.

Class Struggle

For Marx, the most important method of classifying people into social groups was with reference to the production process, rather than religion, language, nationality or similar identities. He argued that people who occupy the same position in the social production process will eventually form a class. By virtue of their location in the production process and in property relations, they share the same interests and objectives, even though they may not recognise this immediately. Classes are formed through historical processes, which are in turn shaped by transformations in the conditions and forces of production, and consequent conflicts between already existing classes. As the mode of production — that is, the production technology and the social relations of production — changes, conflicts develop between different classes which result in struggles. For example, the capitalist mode of production creates the working class, which is a new urban, property-less group created by the destruction of the feudal agricultural system. Serfs and small peasants were thrown off their lands and deprived of their earlier sources of livelyhood. They then congregated in cities looking for ways to survive, and the pressure of the laws and police forced them to work in the newly built factories. Thus, a large new social group was created consisting of property-less people who were forced to work for their living. This shared location within the production process makes workers into a class.

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Marx was a proponent of class struggle. He believed that class struggle was the major driving force of change in society. In *The Communist Manifesto* (which was also a programme of action), Marx and Engels presented their views in a clear and concise manner. Its opening lines declare, 'The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle'. They went on to trace the course of human history and described how the nature of the class struggle varied in different historical epochs. As society evolved from the primitive to the modern through distinct phases, each characterised by particular kinds of conflict between the oppressor and oppressed classes. Marx and Engels wrote, 'Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried out an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight'. The major opposing classes of each stage were identified from the contradictions of the production process. In capitalism the bourgeoisie (or capitalists) owned all the means of production, (such as investible capital, existing factories and machinery, land and so on). On the other hand, the working class lost all the means of production that it owned (or had access to) in the past. Thus, in the capitalist social system, workers had no choice but to sell their labour for wages in order to survive, because they had nothing else.

Even when two classes are objectively opposed to each other, they do not automatically engage in conflict. For conflict to occur it is necessary for them to become subjectively conscious of their class interests and identities, and therefore also of their rivals' interests and identities. It is only after this kind of

Activity 2

Although it is also called a 'class', does the group formed by you and your classmates form a class in the Marxian sense? What arguments can you give in favour and against this view? Do factory workers and agricultural workers belong to the same class? What about workers and managers working in the same factory — do they both belong to the same class? Does a rich industrialist or factory owner who lives in the city and owns no agricultural land belong to the same class as a poor agricultural labourer who lives in the village and owns no land? What about a landlord who owns a lot of land and a small peasant who owns a small piece of land — do they belong to the same class if they live in the same village and are both landowners?

Think carefully about the reasons for your responses to these examples. [*Suggestion:* Try to imagine what interests the people mentioned in these examples may have in common; think of the position they occupy in the larger social system, particularly in relation to the production process.]

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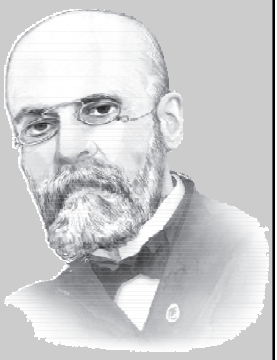
'class consciousness' is developed through political mobilisation that class conflicts occur. Such conflicts can lead to the overthrow of a dominant or ruling class (or coalition of classes) by the previously dominated or subordinated classes — this is called a revolution. In Marx's theory, economic processes created contradictions which in turn generated class conflict. But economic processes did not automatically lead to revolution — social and political processes were also needed to bring about a total transformation of society.

The presence of ideology is one reason why the relationship between economic and socio-political processes becomes complicated. In every epoch, the ruling classes promote a dominant ideology. This dominant ideology, or way of seeing the world, tends to justify the domination of the ruling class and the existing social order. For example, dominant ideologies may encourage poor people to believe that they are poor not because they are exploited by the rich but because of 'fate', or because of bad deeds in a previous life, and so on. However, dominant ideologies are not always successful, and they can also be challenged by alternative worldviews or rival ideologies. As consciousness spreads unevenly among classes, how a class will act in a particular historical situation cannot be pre-determined. Hence, according to Marx, economic processes generally tend to generate class conflicts, though this also depends on political and social conditions. Given favourable conditions, class conflicts culminate in revolutions.

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)



Emile Durkheim was born on April 15, 1858 in Epinal in the Lorraine region of France on the German border. He was from an orthodox Jewish family; his father, grandfather and great grandfather were all rabbis or Jewish priests. Emile too was initially sent to a school for training rabbis.

1876: Enters the *Ecole Normale Superieure* in Paris to study philosophy.

1887: Appointed lecturer in social sciences and education at the University of Bordeaux.

1893: Publishes *Division of Labour in Society,* his doctoral dissertation.

1895: Publishes *Rules of Sociological Method.*

1897: Founds *Anee Sociologique*,the first social science journal in France; and publishes his famous study, *Suicide*.

1902: Joins the University of Paris as the Chair of Education. Later in 1913 the Chair was renamed Education and Sociology.

1912: Publishes *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.*

1917: Dies at the age of 59, heartbroken by the death of his son, Andre in World War I.

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Emile Durkheim may be considered as the founder of sociology as a formal discipline as he was the first to become a Professor of Sociology in Paris in 1913. Born into an orthodox Jewish family, Durkheim was sent to a rabbinical school (a Jewish religious school) for his early education. By the time he entered the Ecole Normale Superieure in 1876 he broke with his religious orientation and declared himself an agnostic. However, his moral upbringing had an enduring influence on his sociological thinking. The moral codes were the key characteristics of a society that determined the behaviour patterns of individuals. Coming from a religious family, Durkheim cherished the idea of developing a secular understanding of religion. It was in his last book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* that he was finally able to fulfil this wish.

Society was for Durkheim a social fact which existed as a moral community over and above the individual. The ties that bound people in groups were crucial to the existence of society. These ties or social solidarities exerted pressure on individuals to conform to the norms and expectations of the group. This constrained the individual's behaviour pattern, limiting variation within a small range. Constriction of choice in social action meant that behaviour could now be predicted as it followed a pattern. So by observing behaviour patterns it was possible to identify the norms, codes and social solidarities which governed them. Thus, the existence of otherwise 'invisible' things like ideas, norms, values and so on could be empirically verified by studying the patterns of social behaviour of people as they related to each other in a society.

For Durkheim the social was to be found in the codes of conduct imposed on individuals by collective agreement. It was evident in the practices of everyday life. The scientific understanding of society that Durkheim sought to develop was based on the recognition of moral facts. He wrote, 'Moral facts are phenomena like others; they consist of rules of action recognizable by certain distinctive characteristics, it must then be possible to observe them, describe them, classify them and look for certain laws explaining them' (Durkheim 1964: 32). Moral codes were manifestations of particular social conditions. Hence the morality appropriate for one society was inappropriate for another. So for Durkheim, the prevailing social conditions could be deduced from the moral codes. This made sociology akin to the natural sciences and was in keeping with his larger objective of establishing sociology as a rigorous scientific discipline.

Durkheim's Vision of Sociology

Durkheim's vision of sociology as a new scientific discipline was characterised by two defining features. First, the subject matter of sociology — the study of social facts — was different from the other

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sciences. Sociology concerned itself exclusively with what he called the 'emergent' level, that is, the level of complex collective life where social phenomena can emerge. These phenomena — for example, social institutions like religion or the family, or social values like friendship or patriotism etc. — were only possible in a complex whole that was larger than (and different from) its constituent parts. Although it is composed entirely of individuals, a collective social entity like a football or cricket team becomes something other than and much more than just a collection of eleven persons. Social entities like teams, political parties, street gangs, religious communities, nations and so on belong to a different level of reality than the level of individuals. It is this 'emergent' level that sociology studies.

The second defining feature of Durkheim's vision of sociology was that, like most of the natural sciences, it was to be an empirical discipline. This was actually a difficult claim to make because social phenomena are by their very nature abstract. We cannot 'see' a collective entity like the Jain community, or the Bengali (or Malayalam or Marathi) speaking community, or the Nepalese or Egyptian national communities. At least, we cannot see them in the same straightforward way that we can see a tree or a boy or a cloud. Even when the social phenomenon is small — like a family or a theatre group — we can directly see only the individuals who make up the collectivity; we cannot see the collectivity itself. One of Durkheim's most significant achievements is his demonstration that sociology, a discipline that dealt with abstract entities like social facts, could nevertheless be a science founded on observable, empirically verifiable evidence. Although not directly observable, social facts were indirectly observable through patterns of behaviour. The most famous example of his use of a new kind of empirical data is in his study of *Suicide*. Although each individual case of suicide was specific to the individual and his/her circumstances, the average rate of suicide aggregated across hundreds of thousands of individuals in a community was a social fact. Thus, social facts could be observed via social behaviour, and specially aggregated patterns of social behaviour.

So what are 'social facts'? Social facts are like things. They are external to the individual but constrain their behaviour. Institutions like law, education and religion constitute social facts. Social facts are collective representations which emerge from the association of people. They are not particular to a person but of a general nature, independent of the individual. Attributes like beliefs, feelings or collective practices are examples.

Division of Labour in Society

In his first book, *Division of Labour in Society,* Durkheim demonstrated his method of analysis to explain the evolution of society from the primitive

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to the modern. He classified a society by the nature of social solidarity which existed in that society. He argued that while a primitive society was organised according to 'mechanical' solidarity, modern society was based on 'organic' solidarity. Mechanical solidarity is founded on the similarity of its individual members and is found in societies with small populations. It typically involves a collection of different self-sufficient groups where each person within a particular group is engaged in similar activities or functions. As the solidarity or ties between people are based on similarity and personal relationships, such societies are not very tolerant of differences and any violation of the norms of the community attracts harsh punishment. In other words, mechanical solidarity based societies have repressive laws designed to prevent deviation from community norms. This was because the individual and the community were so tightly integrated that it was feared that any violation of codes of conduct could result in the disintegration of the community.

Organic solidarity characterises modern society and is based on the heterogeneity of its members. It is found in societies with large populations, where most social relationships necessarily have to be impersonal. Such a society is based on institutions, and each of its constituent groups or units is not self-sufficient but dependent on other units/groups for their survival. Interdependence is the essence of organic solidarity. It celebrates individuals and allows for their need to be different from each other, and recognises their multiple roles and organic ties. The laws of modern society are 'restitutive' in nature rather than 'repressive'. This means that in modern societies, the law aims to repair or correct the wrong that is done by a criminal act. By contrast, in primitive societies the law sought to punish wrong doers and enforced a sort of collective revenge for their acts. In modern society the individual was given some autonomy, whereas in primitive societies the individual was totally submerged in the collectivity.

A characteristic feature of modern societies is that individuals with similar goals come together voluntarily to form groups and associations. As these are groups oriented towards specific goals, they remain distinct from each other and do not seek to take over the entire life of its members. Thus, individuals have many different identities in different contexts. This enables individuals to emerge from the shadow of the community and establish their distinct identity in terms of the functions they perform and the roles they play. Since all individuals have to depend on others for the fulfilment of their basic needs like food, clothing, shelter and education, their intensity of interaction with others increases. Impersonal rules and regulations are required to govern social relations in such societies because personalised relations can no longer be maintained in a large population.

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The Division of Labour in Society provides a good preview of Durkheim's enduring concerns. His effort to create a new scientific discipline with a distinct subject which can be empirically validated is clearly manifested in the way he discusses the different types of social solidarity as social facts. His objective and secular analysis of the social ties which underlie different types of society laid the foundation of sociology as the new science of society.

Max Weber (1864-1920)

Max Weber was born on 21 April, 1864 in Erfurt, Germany into a Prussian family. His father was a magistrate and a politician who was an ardent monarchist and follower of Bismarck. His mother was from a distinguished liberal family from Heidelberg.

1882:	Went to Heidelberg to study law.
1884-84:	Studied at the universities of Gottingen and Berlin.
1889:	Submitted his doctoral dissertation on *A Contribution to the History of Medieval Business Organisations*.
1891:	Submitted his habilitation thesis (entitling him to be a teacher) on *Roman Agrarian History and the Significance for Public and Private Law*.
1893:	Married Marianne Schnitger.
1894-96:	Appointed Professor of Economics first at Freiburg, and then Heidelberg.
1897-1901:	Has a nervous breakdown and falls ill; unable to work, travels to Rome.
1901:	Weber resumes scholarly work.
1903:	Became the Associate Editor of the journal *Archives for Social Science and Social Welfare.*
1904:	Travels to the USA. Publishes *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.*
1918:	Takes up a specially created chair in Sociology at Vienna.
1919:	Appointed Professor of Economics at the University of Munich.
1920:	Weber dies.

Almost all of his major works which made him famous were translated and published in book form only after his death. These include: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (1946), *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences* (1949), *The Religion of India* (1958) and *Economy and Society* (3 vols, 1968).

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Activity 3

Try to compare what Durkheim and Marx say about the social division of labour. They both agree that as society evolves, the social organisation of production grows more complex, the division of labour becomes more detailed, and this creates unavoidable interdependencies among different social groups. But where Durkheim emphasises solidarity, Marx emphasises conflict. What do you think about this?

Can you think of reasons why Marx may be wrong about modern society? For example, can you think of situations or examples where people are joining together to form groups or collectivities despite being from different class backgrounds and having conflicting interests? What counter arguments could you give to persuade someone that Marx may still have a point?

Can you think of reasons why Durkheim may be wrong about modern society giving more freedom to the individual? For example, isn't it true that the spread of mass communication (specially through television) has tended to standardise popular fashion in things like clothes or music? Today, young people in different social groups, different countries, states or regions are now more likely to be listening to the same music, or wearing the same kind of clothes than ever before. Does this make Durkheim wrong? What could be the arguments for and against in this context?

Remember, sociology is not like mathematics where there is usually only one right answer. In anything to do with society and human beings, it is possible that there are many right answers, or that an answer is right in one context but wrong in another, or that it is partly right and partly wrong, and so on. In other words, the social world is very complex, and it changes from time to time and from place to place. This makes it all the more important to learn how to think carefully about the reasons why a particular answer may be right or wrong in a particular context.

Max Weber was one of the leading German social thinkers of his time. Despite long periods of physical and mental ill health, he has left a rich legacy of sociological writing. He wrote extensively on many subjects but focused on developing an interpretive sociology of social action and of power and domination. Another major concern of Weber was the process of rationalisation in modern society and the relationship of the various religions of the world with this process.

Max Weber and Interpretive Sociology

Weber argued that the overall objective of the social sciences was to develop an 'interpretive understanding of social action'. These sciences were thus very different from the natural sciences, which aimed to discover the objective 'laws of nature' governing the physical world. Since the central concern of the social sciences was with social action and since human actions necessarily involved subjective meanings, the methods of enquiry of social science

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also had to be different from the methods of natural science. For Weber, 'social action' included all human behaviour that was meaningful, that is, action to which actors attached a meaning. In studying social action the sociologist's task was to recover the meanings attributed by the actor. To accomplish this task the sociologist had to put themselves in the actor's place, and imagine what these meanings were or could have been. Sociology was thus a systematic form of 'empathetic understanding', that is, an understanding based not on 'feeling for' (sympathy) but 'feeling with' (empathy). The empathic (or empathetic) understanding which sociologists derive from this exercise enables them to access the subjective meanings and motivations of social actors.

Weber was among the first to discuss the special and complex kind of 'objectivity' that the social sciences had to cultivate. The social world was founded on subjective human meanings, values, feelings, prejudices, ideals and so on. In studying this world, the social sciences inevitably had to deal with these subjective meanings. In order to capture these meanings and describe them accurately, social scientists had to constantly practise 'empathetic understanding' by putting themselves (imaginatively) in the place of the people whose actions they were studying. But this investigation had to be done objectively even though it was concerned with subjective matters. Thus, 'empathetic understanding' required the sociologist to faithfully record the subjective meanings and motivations of social actors without allowing his/her own personal beliefs and opinions to influence this process in any way. In other words, sociologists were meant to describe, not judge, the subjective feelings of others. Weber called this kind of objectivity 'value neutrality'. The sociologist must neutrally record subjective values without being affected by her/his own feelings/opinions about these values. Weber recognised that this was very difficult to do because social scientists were also members of society and always had their own subjective beliefs and prejudices. However, they had to practise great self-discipline — exercise an 'iron will' as he puts it — in order to remain 'value neutral' when describing the values and worldviews of others.

Apart from empathetic understanding, Weber also suggested another methodological tool for doing sociology — the 'ideal type'. An ideal type is a logically consistent model of a social phenomenon that highlights its most significant characteristics. Being a conceptual tool designed to help analysis, it is not meant to be an exact reproduction of reality. Ideal types may exaggerate some features of phenomenon that are considered to be analytically important, and ignore or downplay others. Obviously an ideal type should correspond to reality in a broad sense, but its main job is to assist analysis by bringing out

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important features and connections of the social phenomenon being studied. An ideal type is to be judged by how helpful it is for analysis and understanding, not by how accurate or detailed a description it provides.

The ideal type was used by Weber to analyse the relationship between the ethics of 'world religions' and the rationalisation of the social world in different civilisations. It was in this context that Weber suggested that ethics of certain Protestant sects within Christianity had a deep influence on the development of capitalism in Europe.

Weber again used the ideal type to illustrate the three types of authority that he defined as traditional, charismatic and rational-legal. While the source of traditional authority was custom and precedence, charismatic authority derived from divine sources or the 'gift of grace', and rational-legal authority was based on legal demarcation of authority. Rational-legal authority which prevailed in modern times was epitomised in the bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy

It was a mode of organisation which was premised on the separation of the public from the domestic world. This meant that behaviour in the public domain was regulated by explicit rules and regulations. Moreover, as a public institution, bureaucracy restricted the power of the officials in regard to their responsibilities and did not provide absolute power to them.

Bureaucratic authority is characterised by these features:

(i) Functioning of Officials;
(ii) Hierarchical Ordering of Positions;
(iii) Reliance on Written Document
(iv) Office Management; and
(v) Conduct in Office.

(i) *Functioning of Officials:* Within the bureaucracy officials have fixed areas of 'official jurisdiction' governed by rules, laws and administrative regulations. The regular activities of the bureaucratic organisation are distributed in a fixed way as official duties. Moreover, commands are issued by higher authorities for implementation by subordinates in a stable way, but the responsibilities of officials are strictly delimited by the authority available to them. As duties are to be fulfilled on a regular basis, only those who have the requisite qualifications to perform them are employed. Official positions in a bureaucracy are independent of the incumbent as they continue beyond the tenure of any occupant.

(ii) *Hierarchical Ordering of Positions:* Authority and office are placed on a graded hierarchy where the higher officials supervise the lower ones. This allows scope of appeal to a higher official in case of dissatisfaction with the decisions of lower officials.

(iii) *Reliance on Written Document:* The management of a bureaucratic organisation is carried out on the basis of written documents

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(the files) which are preserved as records. There is cumulation in the decision making of the 'bureau' or office. It is also a part of the public domain which is separate from the private life of the officials.

(iv) *Office Management:* As office management is a specialised and modern activity it requires trained and skilled personnel to conduct operations.

(v) *Conduct in Office:* As official activity demands the full time attention of officials irrespective of her/his delimited hours in office, hence an official's conduct in office is governed by exhaustive rules and regulations. These separate her/his public conduct from her/his behaviour in the private domain. Also since these rules and regulations have legal recognition, officials can be held accountable.

Weber's characterisation of bureaucracy as a modern form of political authority demonstrated how an individual actor was both recognised for her/his skills and training and given responsibilities with the requisite authority to implement them. The legal delimitation of tasks and authority constrained unbridled power and made officials accountable to their clients as the work was carried out in the public domain.

Activity 4

To what extent do you think the following groups or activities involve the exercise of bureacratic authority in Weber's sense?
(a) your class; (b) your school; (c) a football team; (d) a panchayat samiti in a village; (e) a fan association for a popular film star; (f) a group of regular commuters on a train or bus route; (g) a joint family; (h) a village community; (i) the crew of a ship; (j) a criminal gang; (k) the followers of a religious leader; and (l) an audience watching a film in a cinema hall.

Based on your discussions, which of these groups would you be willing to characterise as 'bureaucratic'? Remember, you must discuss reasons both for as well as against, and listen to people who disagree with!

Glossary

Alienation: A process in capitalist society by which human beings are separated and distanced from (or made strangers to) nature, other human beings, their work and its product, and their own nature or self.

Enlightenment: A period in 18th century Europe when philosophers rejected the supremacy of religious doctrines, established reason as the means to truth, and the human being as the sole bearer of reason.

Social Fact: Aspects of social reality that are related to collective patterns of behaviour and beliefs, which are not created by individuals but exert pressure on them and influence their behaviour.

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Mode of Production: It is a system of material production which persists over a long period of time. Each mode of production is distinguished by its means of production (eg: technology and forms of production organisation) and the relations of production (eg: slavery, serfdom, wage labour).

Office: In the context of bureaucracy a public post or position of impersonal and formal authority with specified powers and responsibilities; the office has a separate existence independent of the person appointed to it. (This is different from another meaning of the same word which refers to an actual bureaucratic institution or to its physical location: eg. post office, panchayat office, Prime Minister's office, my mother's or father's office, etc.)

Exercises

1. Why is the Enlightenment important for the development of sociology?
2. How was the Industrial Revolution responsible for giving rise to sociology?
3. What are the various components of a mode of production?
4. Why do classes come into conflict, according to Marx?
5. What are social facts? How do we recognise them?
6. What is the difference between 'mechanical' and 'organic' solidarity?
7. Show, with examples, how moral codes are indicators of social solidarity.
8. What are the basic features of bureaucracy?
9. What is special or different about the kind of objectivity needed in social science?
10. Can you identify any ideas or theories which have led to the formation of social movements in India in recent times?
11. Try to find out what Marx and Weber wrote about India.
12. Can you think of reasons why we should study the work of thinkers who died long ago? What could be some reasons to not study them?

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CHAPTER 5

INDIAN SOCIOLOGISTS

As you saw in the opening chapter of your first book, *Introducing Sociology*, the discipline is a relatively young one even in the European context, having been established only about a century ago. In India, interest in sociological ways of thinking is a little more than a century old, but formal university teaching of sociology only began in 1919 at the University of Bombay. In the 1920s, two other universities — those at Calcutta and Lucknow — also began programmes of teaching and research in sociology and anthropology. Today, every major university has a department of sociology, social anthropology or anthropology, and often more than one of these disciplines is represented.

Now-a-days sociology tends to be taken for granted in India, like most established things. But this was not always so. In the early days, it was not clear at all what an Indian sociology would look like, and indeed, whether India really needed something like sociology. In the first quarter of the 20th century, those who became interested in the discipline had to decide for themselves what role it could play in India. In this chapter, you are going to be introduced to some of the founding figures of Indian sociology. These scholars have helped to shape the discipline and adapt it to our historical and social context.

The specificity of the Indian context raised many questions. First of all, if western sociology emerged as an attempt to make sense of modernity, what would its role be in a country like India? India, too, was of course experiencing the changes brought about by modernity but with an important difference — it was a colony. The first experience of modernity in India was closely intertwined with the experience of colonial subjugation. Secondly, if social anthropology in the west arose out of the curiosity felt by European society about primitive cultures, what role could it have in India, which was an ancient and advanced civilisation, but which also had 'primitive' societies within it? Finally, what useful role could sociology have in a sovereign, independent India, a nation about to begin its adventure with planned development and democracy?

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The pioneers of Indian sociology not only had to find their own answers to questions like these, they also had to formulate new questions for themselves. It was only through the experience of 'doing' sociology in an Indian context that the questions took shape — they were not available 'readymade'. As is often the case, in the beginning Indians became sociologists and anthropologists mostly by accident. For example, one of the earliest and best known pioneers of social anthropology in India, L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer (1861-1937), began his career as a clerk, moved on to become a school teacher and later a college teacher in Cochin state in present day Kerala. In 1902, he was asked by the Dewan of Cochin to assist with an ethnographic survey of the state. The British government wanted similar surveys done in all the princely states as well as the presidency areas directly under its control. Ananthakrishna Iyer did this work on a purely voluntary basis, working as a college teacher in the Maharajah's College at Ernakulam during the week, and functioning as the unpaid Superintendent of Ethnography in the weekends. His work was much appreciated by British anthropologists and administrators of the time, and later he was also invited to help with a similar ethnographic survey in Mysore state.

Ananthakrishna Iyer was probably the first self-taught anthropologist to receive national and international recognition as a scholar and an academician. He was invited to lecture at the University of Madras, and was appointed as Reader at the University of Calcutta, where he helped set up the first post-graduate anthropology department in India. He remained at the University of Calcutta from 1917 to 1932. Though he had no formal qualifications in anthropology, he was elected President of the Ethnology section of the Indian Science Congress. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by a German university during his lecture tour of European universities. He was also conferred the titles of Rao Bahadur and Dewan Bahadur by Cochin state.

The lawyer Sarat Chandra Roy (1871-1942) was another 'accidental anthropologist' and pioneer of the discipline in India. Before taking his law degree in Calcutta's Ripon College, Roy had done graduate and post-graduate degrees in English. Soon after he had begun practising law, he decided to go to Ranchi in 1898 to take up a job as an English teacher at a Christian missionary school. This decision was to change his life, for he remained in Ranchi for the next forty-four years and became the leading authority on the culture and society of the tribal peoples of the Chhotanagpur region (present day Jharkhand). Roy's interest in anthropological matters began when he gave up his school job and began practising law at the Ranchi courts, eventually being appointed as official interpreter in the court.

Roy became deeply interested in tribal society as a byproduct of his

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professional need to interpret tribal customs and laws to the court. He travelled extensively among tribal communities and did intensive fieldwork among them. All of this was done on an 'amateur' basis, but Roy's diligence and keen eye for detail resulted in valuable monographs and research articles. During his entire career, Roy published more than one hundred articles in leading Indian and British academic journals in addition to his famous monographs on the Oraon, the Mundas and the Kharias. Roy soon became very well known amongst anthropologists in India and Britain and was recognised as an authority on Chhotanagpur. He founded the journal *Man in India* in 1922, the earliest journal of its kind in India that is still published.

Both Ananthakrishna Iyer and Sarat Chandra Roy were true pioneers. In the early 1900s, they began practising a discipline that did not yet exist in India, and which had no institutions to promote it. Both Iyer and Roy were born, lived and died in an India that was ruled by the British. The four Indian sociologists you are going to be introduced in this chapter were born one generation later than Iyer and Roy. They came of age in the colonial era, but their careers continued into the era of independence, and they helped to shape the first formal institutions that established Indian sociology. G.S. Ghurye and D.P. Mukerji were born in the 1890s while A.R. Desai and M.N. Srinivas were about fifteen years younger, having been born in the second decade of the 20th century. Although they were all deeply influenced by western traditions of sociology, they were also able to offer some initial answers to the question that the pioneers could only begin to ask : what shape should a specifically Indian sociology take?

G.S. Ghurye can be considered the founder of institutionalised sociology in India. He headed India's very first post-graduate teaching department of Sociology at Bombay University for thirty-five years. He guided a large number of research scholars, many of whom went on to occupy prominent positions in the discipline. He also founded the Indian Sociological Society as well as its journal *Sociological Bulletin*. His academic writings were not only prolific, but very wide-ranging in the subjects they covered. At a time when financial and institutional support for university research was very limited, Ghurye managed to nurture sociology as an increasingly Indian discipline. Ghurye's Bombay University department was the first to successfully implement two of the features which were later enthusiastically endorsed by his successors in the discipline. These were the active combining of teaching and research within the same institution, and the merger of social anthropology and sociology into a composite discipline.

Best known, perhaps, for his writings on caste and race, Ghurye also wrote on a broad range of other themes including tribes; kinship, family and

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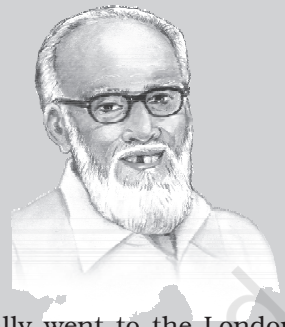
Govind Sadashiv Ghurye (1893-1983)



G. S. Ghurye was born on 12 December 1893 in Malvan, a town in the Konkan coastal region of western India. His family owned a trading business which had once been prosperous, but was in decline.

1913: Joined Elphinstone College in Bombay with Sanskrit Honours for the B.A. degree which he completed in 1916. Received the M.A. degree in Sanskrit and English from the same college in 1918.

1919: Selected for a scholarship by the University of Bombay for training abroad in sociology. Initially went to the London School of Economics to study with L.T. Hobhouse, a prominent sociologist of the time. Later went to Cambridge to study with W.H.R. Rivers, and was deeply influenced by his diffusionist perspective.

1923: Ph.D. submitted under A.C. Haddon after River's sudden death in 1922. Returned to Bombay in May. *Caste and Race in India,* the manuscript based on the doctoral dissertation, was accepted for publication in a major book series at Cambridge.

1924: After brief stay in Calcutta, was appointed *Reader* and *Head* of the Department of Sociology at Bombay University in June. He remained as *Head* of the Department at Bombay University for the next 35 years.

1936: Ph.D. Programme was launched at the Bombay Department; the first Ph.D. in Sociology at an Indian university was awarded to G.R. Pradhan under Ghurye's supervision. The M.A. course was revised and made a full-fledged 8-course programme in 1945.

1951: Ghurye established the Indian Sociological Society and became its founding President. The journal of the Indian Sociological Society, *Sociological Bulletin* was launched in 1952.

1959: Ghurye retired from the University, but continued to be active in academic life, particularly in terms of publication — 17 of his 30 books were written after retirement.
G.S. Ghurye died in 1983, at the age of 90.

marriage; culture, civilisation and the historic role of cities; religion; and the sociology of conflict and integration. Among the intellectual and contextual concerns which influenced Ghurye, the most prominent are perhaps diffusionism, Orientalist scholarship on Hindu religion and thought, nationalism, and the cultural aspects of Hindu identity.

One of the major themes that Ghurye worked on was that of 'tribal' or 'aboriginal' cultures. In fact, it was his writings on this subject, and

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specially his debate with Verrier Elwin which first made him known outside sociology and the academic world. In the 1930s and 1940s there was much debate on the place of tribal societies within India and how the state should respond to them. Many British administrator-anthropologists were specially interested in the tribes of India and believed them to be primitive peoples with a distinctive culture far from mainstream Hinduism. They also believed that the innocent and simple tribals would suffer exploitation and cultural degradation through contact with Hindu culture and society. For this reason, they felt that the state had a duty to protect the tribes and to help them sustain their way of life and culture, which were facing constant pressure to assimilate with mainstream Hindu culture. However, nationalist Indians were equally passionate about their belief in the unity of India and the need for modernising Indian society and culture. They believed that attempts to preserve tribal culture were misguided and resulted in maintaining tribals in a backward state as 'museums' of primitive culture. As with many features of Hinduism itself which they felt to be backward and in need of reform, they felt that tribes, too, needed to develop. Ghurye became the best-known exponent of the nationalist view and insisted on characterising the tribes of India as 'backward Hindus' rather than distinct cultural groups. He cited detailed evidence from a wide variety of tribal cultures to show that they had been involved in constant interactions with Hinduism over a long period. They were thus simply further behind in the same process of assimilation that all Indian communities had gone through. This particular argument — namely, that Indian tribals were hardly ever isolated primitive communities of the type that was written about in the classical anthropological texts — was not really disputed. The differences were in how the impact of mainstream culture was evaluated. The 'protectionists' believed that assimilation would result in the severe exploitation and cultural extinction of the tribals. Ghurye and the nationalists, on the other hand, argued that these ill-effects were not specific to tribal cultures, but were common to all the backward and downtrodden sections of Indian society. These were the inevitable difficulties on the road to development.

Activity 1

Today we still seem to be involved in similar debates. Discuss the different sides to the question from a contemporary perspective. For example, many tribal movements assert their distinctive cultural and political identity — in fact, the states of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh were formed in response to such movements. There is also a major controversy around the disproportionate burden that tribal communities have been forced to bear for the sake of developmental

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projects like big dams, mines and factories. How many such conflicts do you know about? Find out what the issues are in these conflicts. What do you and your classmates feel should be done about these problems?

Ghurye on Caste and Race

G.S. Ghurye's academic reputation was built on the basis of his doctoral dissertation at Cambridge, which was later published as *Caste and Race in India* (1932). Ghurye's work attracted attention because it addressed the major concerns of Indian anthropology at the time. In this book, Ghurye provides a detailed critique of the then dominant theories about the relationship between race and caste. Herbert Risley, a British colonial official who was deeply interested in anthropological matters, was the main proponent of the dominant view. This view held that human beings can be divided into distinct and separate races on the basis of their physical characteristics such as the circumference of the skull, the length of the nose, or the volume (size) of the cranium or the part of the skull where the brain is located.

Risley and others believed that India was a unique 'laboratory' for studying the evolution of racial types because caste strictly prohibits inter-marriage among different groups, and had done so for centuries. Risley's main argument was that caste must have originated in race because different caste groups seemed to belong to distinct racial types. In general, the higher castes approximated Indo-Aryan racial traits, while the lower castes seemed to belong to non-Aryan aboriginal, Mongoloid or other racial groups. On the basis of differences between groups in terms of average measurements for length of nose, size of cranium etc., Risley and others suggested that the lower castes were the original aboriginal inhabitants of India. They had been subjugated by an Aryan people who had come from elsewhere and settled in India.

Ghurye did not disagree with the basic argument put forward by Risley but believed it to be only partially correct. He pointed out the problem with using averages alone without considering the variation in the distribution of a particular measurement for a given community. Ghurye believed that Risley's thesis of the upper castes being Aryan and the lower castes being non-Aryan was broadly true only for northern India. In other parts of India, the inter-group differences in the anthropometric measurements were not very large or systematic. This suggested that, in most of India except the Indo-Gangetic plain, different racial groups had been mixing with each other for a very long time. Thus, 'racial purity' had been preserved due to the prohibition on inter-marriage only in 'Hindustan proper' (north India). In the rest of the country, the practice of endogamy (marrying only within a particular caste group) may

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have been introduced into groups that were already racially varied.

Today, the racial theory of caste is no longer believed, but in the first half of the 20th century it was still considered to be true. There are conflicting opinions among historians about the Aryans and their arrival in the subcontinent. However, at the time that Ghurye was writing these were among the concerns of the discipline, which is why his writings attracted attention.

Ghurye is also known for offering a comprehensive definition of caste. His definition emphasises six features.

(i) Caste is an institution based on *segmental division*. This means that caste is divided into a number of closed, mutually exclusive segments or compartments. Each caste is one such compartment. It is closed because caste is decided by birth — the children born to parents of a particular caste will always belong to that caste. On the other hand, there is no way other than birth of acquiring caste membership. In short, a person's caste is decided by birth at birth; it can neither be avoided nor changed.

(ii) Caste is based on *hierarchical division*. Each caste is strictly unequal to every other caste, that is, every caste is either higher or lower than every other one. In theory (though not in practice), no two castes are ever equal.

(iii) The institution of caste necessarily involves *restrictions on social interaction*, specially the sharing of food. There are elaborate rules prescribing what kind of food may be shared between which groups. These rules are governed by ideas of purity and pollution. The same also applies to social interaction, most dramatically in the institution of untouchability, where even the touch of people of particular castes is thought to be polluting.

(iv) Following from the principles of hierarchy and restricted social interaction, caste also involves *differential rights and duties* for different castes. These rights and duties pertain not only to religious practices but extend to the secular world. As ethnographic accounts of everyday life in caste society have shown, interactions between people of different castes are governed by these rules.

(v) Caste *restricts the choice of occupation*, which, like caste itself, is decided by birth and is hereditary. At the level of society, caste functions as a rigid form of the division of labour with specific occupations being allocated to specific castes.

(vi) Caste involves *strict restrictions on marriage*. Caste 'endogamy', or marriage only within the caste, is often accompanied by rules about 'exogamy', or whom one may not marry. This combination

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of rules about eligible and non-eligible groups helps reproduce the caste system.

Ghurye's definition helped to make the study of caste more systematic. His conceptual definition was based on what the classical texts prescribed. In actual practice, many of these features of caste were changing, though all of them continue to exist in some form. Ethnographic fieldwork over the next several decades helped to provide valuable accounts of what was happening to caste in independent India.

Between the 1920s and the 1950s, sociology in India was equated with the two major departments at Bombay and Lucknow. Both began as combined departments of sociology and economics. While the Bombay department in this period was led by G.S. Ghurye, the Lucknow department had three major figures, the famous 'trinity' of Radhakamal Mukerjee (the founder), D.P. Mukerji, and D.N. Majumdar. Although all three were well known and widely respected, D.P. Mukerji was perhaps the most popular. In fact, D.P. Mukerji — or D.P. as he was generally known — was among the most influential scholars of his generation not only in sociology but in intellectual and public life beyond the academy. His influence and popularity came not so much from

Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji (1894-1961)

D.P. Mukerji was born on 5 October 1894 in a middle class Bengali brahmin family with a long tradition of involvement in higher education. Undergraduate degree in science and postgraduate degrees in History and Economics from Calcutta University.

1924: Appointed Lecturer in the Department of Economics and Sociology at Lucknow University

1938-41 Served as Director of Information under the first Congress-led government of the United Provinces of British India (present day Uttar Pradesh).

1947: Served as a Member of the U.P. Labour Enquiry Committee.

1949: Appointed Professor (by special order of the Vice Chancellor) at Lucknow University.

1953: Appointed Professor of Economics at Aligarh Muslim University

1955: Presidential Address to the newly formed Indian Sociological Society

1956: Underwent major surgery for throat cancer in Switzerland Died on 5 December 1961.

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his scholarly writings as from his teaching, his speaking at academic events, and his work in the media, including newspaper articles and radio programmes. D.P. came to sociology via history and economics, and retained an active interest in a wide variety of subjects ranging across literature, music, film, western and Indian philosophy, Marxism, political economy, and development planning. He was strongly influenced by Marxism, though he had more faith in it as a method of social analysis than as a political programme for action. D.P. wrote many books in English and Bengali. His *Introduction to Indian Music* is a pioneering work, considered a classic in its genre.

D.P. Mukerji on Tradition and Change

It was through his dissatisfaction with Indian history and economics that D.P. turned to sociology. He felt very strongly that the crucial distinctive feature of India was its social system, and that, therefore, it was important for each social science to be rooted in this context. The decisive aspect of the Indian context was the social aspect: history, politics and economics in India were less developed in comparison with the west; however, the social dimensions were 'over-developed'. As D.P. wrote , "... my conviction grew that India had had society, and very little else. In fact, she had too much of it. Her history, her economics, and even her philosophy, I realised, had always centred in social groups, and at best, in socialised persons." (Mukherji 1955:2)

Given the centrality of society in India, it became the first duty of an Indian sociologist to study and to know the social traditions of India. For D.P. this study of tradition was not oriented only towards the past, but also included sensitivity to change. Thus, tradition was a living tradition, maintaining its links with the past, but also adapting to the present and thus evolving over time. As he wrote, "...it is not enough for the Indian sociologist to be a sociologist. He must be an Indian first, that is, he is to share in the folk-ways, mores, customs and traditions, for the purpose of understanding his social system and what lies beneath it and beyond it." In keeping with this view, he believed that sociologists should learn and be familiar with both 'high' and 'low' languages and cultures — not only Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic, but also local dialects.

D.P. argued that Indian culture and society are not individualistic in the western sense. The average Indian individual's pattern of desires is more or less rigidly fixed by his socio-cultural group pattern and he hardly deviates from it. Thus, the Indian social system is basically oriented towards group, sect, or caste-action, not 'voluntaristic' individual action. Although 'voluntarism' was beginning to influence the urban middle classes, its appearance ought to be itself an interesting subject of study for the Indian sociologist. D.P. pointed out

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that the root meaning of the word tradition is to transmit. Its Sanskrit equivalents are either *parampara*, that is, succession; or *aitihya*, which comes from the same root as *itihas* or history. Traditions are thus strongly rooted in the past that is kept alive through the repeated recalling and retelling of stories and myths. However, this link with the past does not rule out change, but indicates a process of adaptation to it. Internal and external sources of change are always present in every society. The most commonly cited internal source of change in western societies is the economy, but this source has not been as effective in India. Class conflict, D.P. believed, had been "smoothed and covered by caste traditions" in the Indian context, where new class relations had not yet emerged very sharply. Based on this understanding, he concluded that one of the first tasks for a dynamic Indian sociology would be to provide an account of the internal, non-economic causes of change.

D.P. believed that there were three principles of change recognised in Indian traditions, namely; *shruti, smriti* and *anubhava*. Of these, the last — *anubhava* or personal experience — is the revolutionary principle. However, in the Indian context personal experience soon flowered into collective experience. This meant that the most important principle of change in Indian society was generalised *anubhava,* or the collective experience of groups. The high traditions were centred in *smriti* and *sruti*, but they were periodically challenged by the collective experience of groups and sects, as for example in the *bhakti* movement. D.P. emphasised that this was true not only of Hindu but also of Muslim culture in India. In Indian Islam, the Sufis have stressed love and experience rather than holy texts, and have been important in bringing about change. Thus, for D.P., the Indian context is not one where discursive reason (*buddhi-vichar*) is the dominant force for change; *anubhava* and *prem* (experience and love) have been historically superior as agents of change.

Conflict and rebellion in the Indian context have tended to work through collective experiences. But the resilience of tradition ensures that the pressure of conflict produces change in the tradition without breaking it. So we have repeated cycles of dominant orthodoxy being challenged by popular revolts which succeed in transforming orthodoxy, but are eventually reabsorbed into this transformed tradition. This process of change — of rebellion contained within the limits of an overarching tradition — is typical of a caste society, where the formation of classes and class consciousness has been inhibited. D.P.'s views on tradition and change led him to criticise all instances of unthinking borrowing from western intellectual traditions, including in such contexts as development planning. Tradition was neither to be worshipped nor ignored, just as modernity was needed but not to be blindly adopted. D.P. was

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simultaneously a proud but critical inheritor of tradition, as well as an admiring critic of the modernity that he acknowledged as having shaped his own intellectual perspective.

Activity 2

Discuss what is meant by a 'living tradition'. According to D.P. Mukerji, this is a tradition which maintains links with the past by retaining something from it, and at the same time incorporates new things. A living tradition thus includes some old elements but also some new ones. You can get a better and more concrete sense of what this means if you try to find out from different generations of people in your neighbourhood or family about what is changed and what is unchanged about specific practices. Here is a list of subjects you can try; you could also try other subjects of your own choice.

Games played by children of your age group (boys/girls)

Ways in which a popular festival is celebrated

Typical dress/clothing worn by women and men

... Plus other such subjects of your choice ...

For each of these, you need to find out: What aspects have remained unchanged since as far back as you know or can find out? What aspects have changed? What was different and same about the practice/event (i) 10 years ago; (ii) 20 years ago; (iii) 40 years ago; (iv) 60 or more years ago

Discuss your findings with the whole class.

A.R. Desai is one of the rare Indian sociologists who was directly involved in politics as a formal member of political parties. Desai was a life-long Marxist and became involved in Marxist politics during his undergraduate days at Baroda, though he later resigned his membership of the Communist Party of India. For most of his career he was associated with various kinds of non-mainstream Marxist political groups. Desai's father was a middle level civil servant in the Baroda state, but was also a well-known novelist, with sympathy for both socialism and Indian nationalism of the Gandhian variety. Having lost his mother early in life, Desai was brought up by his father and lived a migratory life because of the frequent transfers of his father to different posts in the Baroda state.

After his undergraduate studies in Baroda, Desai eventually joined the Bombay department of sociology to study under Ghurye. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the social aspects of Indian nationalism and was awarded the degree in 1946. His thesis was published in 1948 as *The Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, which is probably his best known work. In this book, Desai offered a Marxist analysis of Indian nationalism, which gave prominence to economic processes and divisions, while taking account of the specific conditions of British colonialism. Although it had its critics, this book proved to be very popular and went through numerous reprints. Among

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Akshay Ramanlal Desai (1915-1994)

A. R. Desai was born in 1915. Early education in Baroda, then in Surat and Bombay.

1934-39:	Member of Communist Party of India; involved with Trotskyite groups.
1946:	Ph.D. submitted at Bombay under the supervision of G.S. Ghurye.
1948:	Desai's Ph.D. dissertation is published as the book: *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*.
1951:	Joins the faculty of the Department of Sociology at Bombay University
1953-1981:	Member of Revolutionary Socialist Party.
1961:	*Rural Transition in India* is published.
1967:	Appointed *Professor* and *Head* of Department.
1975:	*State and Society in India: Essays in Dissent* is published.
1976:	Retired from Department of Sociology.
1979:	*Peasant Struggles in India* is published.
1986:	*Agrarian Struggles in India after Independence* is published. Died on 12 November 1994.

the other themes that Desai worked on were peasant movements and rural sociology, modernisation, urban issues, political sociology, forms of the state and human rights. Because Marxism was not very prominent or influential within Indian sociology, A.R. Desai was perhaps better known outside the discipline than within it. Although he received many honours and was elected President of the Indian Sociological Society, Desai remained a somewhat unusual figure in Indian sociology.

A.R. Desai on the State

The modern capitalist state was one of the significant themes that interested A.R. Desai. As always, his approach to this issue was from a Marxist perspective. In an essay called "The myth of the welfare state", Desai provides a detailed critique of this notion and points to it many shortcomings. After considering the prominent definitions available in the sociological literature, Desai identifies the following unique features of the welfare state:

(i) A welfare state is a positive state. This means that, unlike the 'laissez faire' of classical liberal political theory, the welfare state does not seek to do only the minimum necessary to maintain law and order. The welfare state is an

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interventionist state and actively uses its considerable powers to design and implement social policies for the betterment of society.

(ii) The welfare state is a democratic state. Democracy was considered an essential condition for the emergence of the welfare state. Formal democratic institutions, specially multi-party elections, were thought to be a defining feature of the welfare state. This is why liberal thinkers excluded socialist and communist states from this definition.

(iii) A welfare state involves a mixed economy. A 'mixed economy' means an economy where both private capitalist enterprises and state or publicly owned enterprises co-exist. A welfare state does not seek to eliminate the capitalist market, nor does it prevent public investment in industry and other fields. By and large, the state sector concentrates on basic goods and social infrastructure, while private industry dominates the consumer goods sector.

Desai then goes on to suggest some test criteria against which the performance of the welfare state can be measured. These are:

(i) Does the welfare state ensure freedom from poverty, social discrimination and security for all its citizens?

(ii) Does the welfare state remove inequalities of income through measures to redistribute income from the rich to the poor, and by preventing the concentration of wealth?

(iii) Does the welfare state transform the economy in such a way that the capitalist profit motive is made subservient to the real needs of the community?

(iv) Does the welfare state ensure stable development free from the cycle of economic booms and depressions?

(v) Does it provide employment for all?

Using these criteria, Desai examines the performance of those states that are most often described as welfare states, such as Britain, the USA and much of Europe, and finds their claims to be greatly exaggerated. Thus, most modern capitalist states, even in the most developed countries, fail to provide minimum levels of economic and social security to all their citizens. They are unable to reduce economic inequality and often seem to encourage it. The so-called welfare states have also been unsuccessful at enabling stable development free from market fluctuations. The presence of excess economic capacity and high levels of unemployment are yet another failure. Based on these arguments, Desai concludes that the notion of the welfare state is something of a myth.

A.R. Desai also wrote on the Marxist theory of the state. In these writings we can see that Desai does not take a one-sided view but openly criticises the shortcomings of Communist states. He cites many

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Marxist thinkers to emphasise the importance of democracy even under communism, arguing strongly that political liberties and the rule of law must be upheld in all genuinely socialist states.

Activity 3

A.R. Desai criticises the welfare state from a Marxist and socialist point of view — that is he would like the state to do more for its citizens than is being done by western capitalist welfare states. There are also very strong opposing viewpoints today which say that the state should do less — it should leave most things to the free market. Discuss these viewpoints in class. Be sure to give a fair hearing to both sides.

Make a list of all the things that are done by the state or government in your neighbourhood, starting with your school. Ask: people to find out if this list has grown longer or shorter in recent years — is the state doing more things now than before, or less? What do you feel would happen if the state were to stop doing these things? Would you and your neighbourhood/ school be worse off, better off, or remain unaffected? Would rich, middle class, and poor people have the same opinion, or be affected in the same way, if the state were to stop some of its activities?

Make a list of state-provided services and facilities in your neighbourhood, and see how opinions might differ across class groups on whether these should continue or be stopped. (For example: roads, water supply, electricity supply, street lights, schools, sanitation, police services, hospitals, bus, train and air transport... Think of others that are relevant in your context.)

Probably the best known Indian sociologist of the post-independence era, M.N. Srinivas earned two doctoral degrees, one from Bombay University and one from Oxford. Srinivas was a student of Ghurye at Bombay. Srinivas' intellectual orientation was transformed during the years he spent at the department of social anthropology in Oxford. British social anthropology was at that time the dominant force in western anthropology, and Srinivas also shared in the excitement of being at the 'centre' of the discipline. Srinivas' doctoral dissertation was published as *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*. This book established Srinivas' international reputation with its detailed ethnographic application of the structural – functional perspective dominant in British social anthropology. Srinivas was appointed to a newly created lectureship in Indian sociology at Oxford, but resigned in 1951 to return to India as the *head* of a newly created department of sociology at the Maharaja Sayajirao University at Baroda. In 1959, he moved to Delhi to set up another department at the Delhi School of Economics, which soon became known as one of the leading centres of sociology in India.

Srinivas often complained that most of his energies were taken up in institution building, leaving him with

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Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas (1916-1999)

M.N. Srinivas was born on 16 November 1916 in an Iyengar brahmin family in Mysore. His father was a landowner and worked for the Mysore power and light department. His early education was at Mysore University, and he later went to Bombay to do an MA under G.S. Ghurye.

1942: M.A. thesis on Marriage and Family Among the Coorgs published as book.

1944: Ph.D. thesis (in 2 volumes) submitted to Bombay University under the supervision of G.S. Ghurye.

1945: Leaves for Oxford; studies first under Radcliffe-Brown and then under Evans-Pritchard.

1947: Awarded D.Phil. degree in Social Anthropology from Oxford; returns to India.

1948: Appointed Lecturer in Indian Sociology at Oxford; fieldwork in Rampura.

1951: Resigns from Oxford to take up Professorship at Maharaja Sayaji Rao University in Baroda to found its sociology department.

1959: Takes up Professorship at the Delhi School of Economics to set up the sociology department there.

1971: Leaves Delhi University to co-found the Institute of Social and Economic Change at Bangalore.

Died on 30 November 1999.

little time for his own research. Despite these difficulties, Srinivas produced a significant body of work on themes such as caste, modernisation and other processes of social change, village society, and many other issues. Srinivas helped to establish Indian sociology on the world map through his international contacts and associations. He had strong connections in British social anthropology as well as American anthropology, particularly at the University of Chicago, which was then a powerful centre in world anthropology. Like G.S. Ghurye and the Lucknow scholars, Srinivas succeeded in training a new generation of sociologists who were to become leaders of the discipline in the following decades.

M.N. Srinivas on the Village

The Indian village and village society remained a life-long focus of interest for Srinivas. Although he had made

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short visits to villages to conduct surveys and interviews, it was not until he did fieldwork for a year at a village near Mysore that he really acquired first-hand knowledge of village society. The experience of fieldwork proved to be decisive for his career and his intellectual path. Srinivas helped encourage and coordinate a major collective effort at producing detailed ethnographic accounts of village society during the 1950s and 1960s. Along with other scholars like S.C. Dube and D.N. Majumdar, Srinivas was instrumental in making village studies the dominant field in Indian sociology during this time.

Srinivas' writings on the village were of two broad types. There was first of all ethnographic accounts of fieldwork done in villages or discussions of such accounts. A second kind of writing included historical and conceptual discussions about the Indian village as a unit of social analysis. In the latter kind of writing, Srinivas was involved in a debate about the usefulness of the village as a concept. Arguing against village studies, some social anthropologists like Louis Dumont thought that social institutions like caste were more important than something like a village, which was after all only a collection of people living in a particular place. Villages may live or die, and people may move from one village to another, but their social institutions, like caste or religion, follow them and go with them wherever they go. For this reason, Dumont believed that it would be misleading to give much importance to the village as a category. As against this view, Srinivas believed that the village was a relevant social entity. Historical evidence showed that villages had served as a unifying identity and that village unity was quite significant in rural social life. Srinivas also criticised the British administrator anthropologists who had put forward a picture of the Indian village as unchanging, self-sufficient, "little republics". Using historical and sociological evidence, Srinivas showed that the village had, in fact, experienced considerable change. Moreover, villages were never self-sufficient, and had been involved in various kinds of economic, social and political relationships at the regional level.

The village as a site of research offered many advantages to Indian sociology. It provided an opportunity to illustrate the importance of ethnographic research methods. It offered eye-witness accounts of the rapid social change that was taking place in the Indian countryside as the newly independent nation began a programme of planned development. These vivid descriptions of village India were greatly appreciated at the time as urban Indians as well as policy makers were able to form impressions of what was going on in the heartland of India. Village studies thus provided a new role for a discipline like sociology in the context of an independent nation. Rather than being restricted

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to the study of 'primitive' peoples, it could also be made relevant to a modernising society.

Activity 4

Suppose you had friends from another planet or civilisation who were visiting the Earth for the first time and had never heard of something called a 'village'. What are the five clues you would give them to identify a village if they ever came across one?

Do this in small groups and then compare the five clues given by different groups. Which features appear most often? Do the most common features help you to make a sort of definition of a village? (To check whether your definition is a good one, ask yourself the question: Could there be a village where all or most features mentioned in your definition are absent?)

Activity 5

In the 1950s, there was great interest among urban Indians in the village studies that sociologists began doing at that time. Do you feel urban people are interested in the village today? How often are villages mentioned in the T.V., in newspapers and films? If you live in a city, does your family still have contacts with relatives in the village? Did it have such contacts in your parents' generation or your grandparents' generation? Do you know of anybody from a city who has moved to a village? Do you know of people who would like to go back? If you do, what reasons do these people give for wanting to leave the city and live in the village? If you don't know of any such people, why do you think people don't want to live in a village? If you know of people living in a village who would like to live in a town or city, what reasons do they give for wanting to leave the village?

Conclusion

These four Indian sociologists helped to give a distinctive character to the discipline in the context of a newly independent modernising country. They are offered here as examples of the diverse ways in which sociology was 'Indianised'. Thus, Ghurye began with the questions defined by western anthropologists, but brought to them his intimate knowledge of classical texts and his sense of educated Indian opinion. Coming from a very different background, a thoroughly westernised modern intellectual like D.P. Mukerji rediscovered the importance of Indian tradition without being blind to its shortcomings. Like Mukerji, A.R. Desai was also strongly influenced by Marxism and offered a critical view of the Indian state at a time when such criticism was rare. Trained in the dominant centres of western social anthropology, M.N. Srinivas adapted his training to the Indian context and helped design a new agenda for sociology in the late 20th century.

It is a sign of the health and strength of a discipline when succeeding generations learn from

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and eventually go beyond their predecessors. This has also been happening in Indian sociology. Succeeding generations have subjected the work of these pioneers to constructive criticism in order to take the discipline further. The signs of this process of learning and critique are visible not only in this book but all over Indian sociology.

Glossary

Administrator–anthropologists: The term refers to British administrative officials who were part of the British Indian government in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and who took great interest in conducting anthropological research, specially surveys and censuses. Some of them became well known anthropologists after retirement. Prominent names include: Edgar Thurston, William Crooke, Herbert Risley and J.H. Hutton.

Anthropometry: The branch of anthropology that studied human racial types by measuring the human body, particularly the volume of the cranium (skull), the circumference of the head, and the length of the nose.

Assimilation: A process by which one culture (usually the larger or more dominant one) gradually absorbs another; the assimilated culture merges into the assimilating culture, so that it is no longer alive or visible at the end of the process.

Endogamy: A social institution that defines the boundary of a social or kin group within which marriage relations are permissible; marriage outside these defined groups are prohibited. The most common example is caste endogamy, where marriage may only take place with a member of the same caste.

Exogamy: A social institution that defines the boundary of a social or kin group with which or within which marriage relations are prohibited; marriages must be contracted outside these prohibited groups. Common examples include prohibition of marriage with blood relatives (sapind exogamy), members of the same lineage (sagotra exogamy), or residents of the same village or region (village/region exogamy).

Laissez-faire: A French phrase (literally 'let be' or 'leave alone') that stands for a political and economic doctrine that advocates minimum state intervention in the economy and economic relations; usually associated with belief in the regulative powers and efficiency of the free market.

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Exercises

1. How did Ananthakrishna Iyer and Sarat Chandra Roy come to practice social anthropology?
2. What were the main arguments on either side of the debate about how to relate to tribal communities?
3. Outline the positions of Herbert Risley and G.S. Ghurye on the relationship between race and caste in India.
4. Summarise the social anthropological definition of caste.
5. What does D.P. Mukerji mean by a 'living tradition'? Why did he insist that Indian sociologists be rooted in this tradition?
6. What are the specificities of Indian culture and society, and how do they affect the pattern of change?
7. What is a welfare state? Why is A.R. Desai critical of the claims made on its behalf?
8. What arguments were given for and against the village as a subject of sociological research by M.N. Srinivas and Louis Dumont?
9. What is the significance of village studies in the history of Indian sociology? What role did M.N. Srinivas play in promoting village studies?

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