

Value-Added Course
VAC 102: Understanding India (2 Credits)

Course Objective

After going through this Course, students should be able to:-

- i. define the idea of image and the concept of ideological and ethnographic image*
- ii. discuss the nature of Ideological ethnographic image of Indian society*
- iii. outline the concepts of nationalism, pluralism and Indian civilization*
- iv. discuss the change and modernization in India*
- v. identify the major forces responsible for continuity of tradition along with modernization.*
- vi. give a description of the parameters of ethnographic image of Indian society*
- vii. outline the portrayal of unity in diversity, village India, caste, tribes and religion*
- viii. identify the features of 'Little and Great Traditions' in India*

Course outline

Unit-I Ideological Images of Indian Society

Ideological Images of India: Pluralism and Nationalism; Indian Civilization; Modernization in India, Modernization and Continuity of Tradition.

Unit-II Ethnographic Images of Indian Society

Ethnographic Image of India; Unity in Diversity, Village, Caste, Tribes, Religion; Little and Great Traditions

Reading List

- Bailey, F G.1960. Tribe, Caste and Nation. Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Bailey, F. G. 1969 "Structure and change in Indian society: A review article." Pacific Affairs 42 (4): 494–502
- Cohn, Bernard S. 1955. "The changing status of a depressed caste." In Village India: Studies in the little community, edited by McKim Marriott, 53–77. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Dirks, Nicholas B. 1990. "The original caste: Power, history, and hierarchy in South Asia." In India through Hindu categories, edited by McKim Marriott,59– 77. New Delhi: Sage.
- Dirks, Nicholas B. 2001. Castes of mind: Colonialism and the making of modern India. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dumont, Louis, and David F. Pocock. 1957. "Village studies." Contributions to Indian Sociology 1: 23–41.
- Dumont, Louis. 1980. Homo hierarchicus: The caste system and its implications. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Gandhi MK 1929 (1957) The Story of My Experiments with Truth, Beacon Press.
- Guha, Ranajit. 1987. "Introduction." In An anthropologist among the historians and other essays, by Bernard S. Cohn, vii–xxvi. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Hutton J. H. 1946Caste in India, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

- Madan, T. N. 1994. *Pathways: Approaches to the study of society in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Madan, T.N. (ed). 1992. *Religion in India*. New Delhi: OUP.
- Majumdar R. C 1951 The History and Culture of the Indian People (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,), vol. 1, p. 42.*
- Mandelbaum, David G. 1970. *Society in India*. Berkeley: The University of California Press.
- Metcalf, Thomas R. (1997). *Ideologies of the Raj*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nanda Subrat K 2006 Cultural Nationalism in a Multi-National Context: The Case of India, Sociological Bulletin, 55 (1), January-April, Pp. 24-44*
- Risley, Herbert Hope (1908). *The People of India* (1st ed.). Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co.; London: W. Thacker & Co.
- Risley, Herbert Hope (1915). Crooke, William, ed. *The People of India* (2nd ed.). Calcutta & Simla: Thacker, Spink & Co.; London: W. Thacker & Co.
- Schatz, Edward, ed. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. University of Chicago Press. 2009.
- Sharma, K.L 1980. *Essays on Social Stratification*. New Delhi: Rawat.
- Singh Yogendra 1973 Modernization of Indian tradition: a systemic study of social change, Thomson Press (India), Publication Division.*
- Singh Yogendra 1978 Essays on modernization in India, Manohar,*
- Singh Yogendra 1993 Social Change in India: Crisis and Resilience, Har-Anand Publications.*
- Srinivas MN 2000 *Social Change in Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi.
- Tagore Rabindranath, The History of Bharatavarsha, available online at www.ifih.org.*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
 - 3.1 Introduction
 - 3.2 Ideological Image
 - 3.3 Ideological Images of India
 - 3.3.1 Pluralism
 - 3.3.2 Nationalism
 - 3.4 Indian Civilization
 - 3.5 Social Change and Modernization in India
 - 3.5.1 Modernization and Continuity of Tradition
 - 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
-

- References
 - Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress
-

- **OBJECTIVES**

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

- define the concept of ideology
 - give a description of ideological image of society
 - discuss the nature of ideological images of Indian society
 - outline the concepts of nationalism, pluralism and Indian civilization
 - discuss the change and modernization in India
 - identify the major forces responsible for continuity of tradition along with modernization.
-

- **INTRODUCTION**

“*Saare jahaan se achha Hindustan hamaraa*” (Better than all the world, is our India) is the very poetic and descriptive image of Indian society, as described by the great poet Allama Iqbal. Indian society has withstood social heterogeneity and cultural diversity, social, ethnic, caste, communal and religious pluralism, multiple streams of the national movement, contrasting styles of party leadership and clashing ideological perspectives. Giving a descriptive image of India’s changing social, political, and cultural climate in the post colonial period, and recounting the state of Muslims in India from the ancient days requires volumes of historical literature. Hence a holistic portrayal of India's structural and cultural domain is indeed difficult. This unit attempts to provide a description of ideological imaging of Indian society. The ideas, thoughts and descriptions relating to the culture of pluralism and nationalism of its own and a great civilization having complex structure of great and little traditions are dealt with at length here. It is also argued that the models of modernization in India co-vary with the

choice of ideologies. It is also felt necessary to see how the modern values in India are being assimilated into the traditional norms and develops a composite norm, which provides the continuity to the process of social change.

3.2 IDEOLOGICAL IMAGE

Within Sociology, ideology is broadly understood as referring to the worldview a person or a society has regarding the sum total of their culture, values, beliefs, assumptions, common sense, and expectations. Ideology is a system of concepts and views which serves to make sense of the world while obscuring the social interests that are expressed therein, and by its completeness and relative internal consistency. It tends to form a closed system and maintain itself in the face of contradictory or inconsistent experience. In fact, ideology gives an identity within society, within groups, and in relation to other people. Ideological image refers to a clear depiction or portrayal of society which is unique, and shows how thoughts, actions, and interactions of people are shaped across cultural space and time, and what happens to society at large in the holistic journey of transitions and transformations.

3.3 IDEOLOGICAL IMAGES OF INDIA

A national and, to a great extent, global consensus on India that has been constructed over the years is that it builds itself in a culture of pluralism and nationalism of its own and is a great civilization having a complex structure of great and little traditions. The Post-colonial India leads the story of the success of the largest democracy in the world with a written constitution. This story of success is garnished with references to a secular constitution in a country of many religions, a free press, an independent judiciary and a thriving intellectual community. Many of these claims are grounded in varying degrees of truthful capturing of some aspects of India's economic and political reality. When the captured images are magnified to a scale that a glorified picture of India emerges and leads to theorisation and celebration of the idea called Indian Ideology. This Indian Ideology of celebration of the 'Idea of India' is shared, in different hues, by a vast majority of Indian

intellectuals within India and those settled abroad. Ideology refers to a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the world and to change it. Indian intellectuals are unsparing in their scrutiny of India's social ills: 'Hunger, misery, illiteracy; inequality of every kind, sexual discrimination,

economic exploitation; corruption, commercialization, fanaticism; the spreading of slums, the looting of the environment-a detailed scholarship of anger or disgust covers virtually all. Perry Anderson's book (2013) "The Indian Ideology" connects three phases of modern Indian history- the struggle for independence led by Gandhi, the 1947 partition and the making of the Indian republic under Nehru's leadership and Indian nationalism.

India is often referred to as the land of cultural plurality and diversity where two contrasting worldviews - that of the traditional and continuous and the formal and official (inherited from the British) thrive. These two views today coexist uncomfortably, often at cross purposes and clashing with the contemporary official worldview. Amidst such controversy Indian intellectuals examine the real ground situations through field experience to explore the more recent new category of cultural landscape within the context of India's multiple

faiths /beliefs, plural

THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Ideological Images of India

communities and cultural diversities vis a vis international principle of sacred values and categories.

3.3.1 Pluralism

Pluralism is acknowledging the fact that multiple power groups should exist and compete in a free and open place of ideas, from which policies and law are generated to govern the society. It is a form of society in which various social groups including the minorities maintain their independent cultural traditions without any restrictions. In simple terms it can also be a situation where people with disagreeing beliefs live in the same society peacefully without disbanding their beliefs.

Since time immemorial, India is a home to numerous languages, religions, tribes, races, castes and sub-castes depicting cultural pluralism. Of them religious pluralism has a different existential predicament in India. Religious pluralism is a belief that one can overcome religious differences between different religions and conflicts within the same religion. For most religious traditions religious pluralism is based on non-literal view of one's religious traditions allowing for respect to be followed between different traditions on core principles rather than on marginal issues. It is an attitude which rejects focus on immaterial differences and instead gives respect to those beliefs that are held in common, well within limits and limitations.

The existence of religious pluralism depends on the existence of freedom of religion which is when different religions of a particular region possess the same rights of worship and public expression. Freedom of religion is weakened when one religion is given rights or privileges which are denied to others. Religious freedom did not exist in those countries where the state restricted or prevented the public expression of religious belief and even persecuted the individual religions. In some Middle Eastern countries, where they adhere to one particular religion, pluralism is rather restricted if not overtly curbed.

Secularism in western notion is a practise of separating state from religion, restricting in it from interfering in the religious matters of people. India has its own version of secularism. Keeping in view the pluralistic society and beliefs of the people, Gandhi, during independence struggle had come out with his Indian version of secularism which means equality of all religions. Thus, secularism in India is a result of its pluralistic diversities and this is driving India since many years and continues to do so.

Activity 1

Make a list of Tribal, Caste and Religious groups in your neighbourhood in order to explain the concept of pluralism. Write also a paragraph on interaction and intercommunication among them.

3.3.2 Nationalism

Nationalism is generally seen as a political principle for establishing sovereign nation-states. Nanda (2006) argued that nationalism in a multi-national context is viewed differently at different levels. By analysing several cases of

linguistic and provincial movements in India, he tried to demonstrate that in multi-ethnic

countries, such as India, nationalism assumes a political connotation at the macro level and a cultural connotation at the regional level. While the political connotation symbolises the establishment of a sovereign nation-state at the macro level, the cultural connotation, by and large, underlines the protection of distinct cultural nation/nationality in a given provincial political space within the common sovereign state.

India faces the uphill task of reconciling national integration efforts with accommodation of multiple ethnic identities within the framework of a single sovereign polity. The task becomes all the more difficult as free India has adopted a secular democratic political system. It is well known that India is a veritable labyrinth of cultural pluralism/diversity. Of numerous languages, religions, tribes, races, castes and sub-castes of cultural pluralism in India, language, tribe and, to some extent, religion, happen to be crucial, as they not only serve as important markers of group identity, but also provide viable bases for nationality formation. The fact that linguistic and tribal identities in India are linked to a definite territory, that is, a concept of 'homeland' or 'desh', reinforces their salience.

Moreover, the term 'desh' implies not merely a territory, but also a people, language, style of life, and pattern of culture; in fact, a nation in the European sense of the term. Deshpande (1983) observes that the concept of 'homeland' is variously expressed in Indian vocabulary as '*desh*', '*nadu*', '*rastra*', to name some of these. In addition, several linguistic and tribal groups in India possess distinct history, culture, myths, symbols and values. All these elements go into the making of territorially rooted cultural nationalities in India and render her a multi-national character. Given such a complex socio-cultural reality, any attempt to disturb the natural linkage between language, culture and homeland would cause disaffection among the affected people. As a matter of fact, this natural linkage between territory, language and culture was disturbed for the first time in India during the colonial period.

The colonial policy of keeping 'Indian India' separate from 'British India' was perhaps designed to thwart the development of nationalism at the all-India level. It did not, however, take long for

nationalism to grow at the all-India level. Indian nationalism assumed a liberal-political content and it evolved from a sense of pan-Indian geo-political unity and an anticolonial perception shared by people belonging to diverse cultural nationality backgrounds. In fact, the all-India national consciousness was mainly articulated by the nationalist elite comprising various cross sections of the Indian middle class.

Apart from the all-India level, nationalism in India was also seen at the regional- national level. Unlike the pan-Indian national consciousness, however, the regional national consciousness emerged as a form of cultural nationalism seeking to preserve identity and protect 'homeland' vis-à-vis other nationalities in the country. It is in this sense that the regional cultural nationalism differed from the pan-Indian political nationalism which aimed at India's independence and the establishment of the Indian nation-state. Moreover, the regional national consciousness emanated from a cultural sense of 'pre-existent nation' defined in terms of a distinct culture, shared history, specific language and common territory. Thus, the origins of cultural nationalism in India date back to the colonial times. The rise of such cultural nationalism was mainly attributed to the existence of artificial provincial units in colonial India.

Ideological Images of India

Like colonial experience elsewhere, in India too, British colonialism carved out administrative provinces which did not match the physical distribution of nationalities and their socio-cultural affiliation. In some cases, several nationalities were juxtaposed in one provincial unit. For example, the Bengal presidency contained different nationalities like the Bengali, Oriya, Assamese, Maithili, Bhojpuri and a host of tribal communities. The Madras Presidency included the Tamils, Telugus, Malayalees and Kannadigas; while the Bombay Presidency comprised the Marathis, Gujaratis, Kannadigas and Konkanis. In some other instances, people of a particular nationality (for example, Oriyas, Kannadigas, etc.) were apportioned to two or more provincial units. Juxtaposition reduced the smaller nationalities into a minority position; apportionment led to cultural fragmentation and territorial dismemberment of some nationalities. The fragmentation of culture and territory created disjuncture among language, culture and territory. Thus, tension and conflict resulted in both the cases: in the case of juxtaposition, conflict resulted from domination of one nationality over another; in the case of apportionment, tension resulted from a fear of loss of 'homeland' and, hence, identity.

The mainstream nationalities, whose culture and territory were not fragmented and who happened to be in majority, emerged as dominant nationality under favourable colonial conditions. While their culture and language flourished under colonial patronage, the language and culture of the dominated and peripheral nationalities faced serious threats. Furthermore, the deprived nationalities perceived the subordination of their cultural identity to the mainstream as the root-cause of their socioeconomic and political deprivation.

The very consciousness of protecting and preserving one's cultural identity within a culture-congruent provincial unit gave rise to several cultural nationalisms in colonial India. The rise of national consciousness among the Oriyas, Sindhis, Assamese, Telugus, and Malayalees, and the assertion of tribal identity by the Jharkhand tribes are some cases in point. As mentioned earlier, these cultural nationalisms at the regional level were pursued simultaneously along with the anti-colonial national movement for liberation of India. Several studies have discussed this dual character of nationalism in the Indian context. A.R. Desai (1966: 368), for example, noted that from the standpoint of the united national movement for India's independence, the movement of the nationalities for self-determination assumed decisive significance. Some recent articulations on national identity in India reiterated this thesis quite unequivocally. For example, M.N. Karna (2000: 94) observes that both language and region have shaped regional national identity in India and that pan-Indianness objectively co-exists with the regional national consciousness.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark T for true or F for false against each statement.
 - a) Freedom of religion is strengthened when one religion is given rights or privileges and denied to others.
 - b) India is the largest democracy in the world with a written Constitution.
 - c) Ideology refers to a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the

world and to change it.

d) Nationalism is generally seen as a blind loyalty towards one's own country's culture against other nation-states.

2) What are the three phases of Indian History described in the Book entitled "The Indian Ideology"?

Three phases are

a)

.....
.....

b)

.....
.....

c)

.....
.....

3.4 INDIAN CIVILIZATION

Indian civilization is distinguished from other civilizations of the world in respect of its continuity and heterogeneity, its accommodating ethos and its composite character. Hence, Sunil Khilnani (1997) writes:

"The founding idea of India was never simply a commitment to abstract values or ideas – of pluralism and democracy – but was rooted in a practical understanding of the compulsions and constraints of Indian politics. Indians, no more than their counterparts anywhere else, are moderate, principled or even especially tolerant people: they are deeply self-interested. (1997:xiii).

He further writes that the idea of India is not homogenous and univocal. In fact, no single idea can possibly hope to capture the many energies, angers, and hopes of one billion Indians; nor can any narrower ideas – based on a single trait – fulfil their desires. What has given the modern India, as distinctive identity over the past half-century, is that it has kept India a democratic, tolerant, and open- minded state. It allows them to learn to live alongside one another" (ibid:xiv).

Indian civilization is more than 5,000 years old. We have assimilated many cultures, races, warriors and marauders during this short time span. The Vedas, the Puranas and the Upanishads were written here. Spiritual knowledge was imparted by India to the

world. India civilization is believed to begin from river banks, the banks of the Indus river and the Ganges river. India derives its name from the Indus river.

In order to understand civilization, one has to undertake a study based on cataloguing (listing of cultural traits); cultural essence (to identify the essential underlying process); and cultural communication (enduring elements that are transmitted among the parts of the society). N.K. Bose (1967) and Surajit Sinha (1972), Bernard S. Cohn (1971) and others use a civilizational perspective in the understanding of Indian society. They have tried to explore the historicity, continuity and inter linkage of various structures in India. They analyse the structural under-pinning of any civilization to get a sharp and historically framed portrait of religion, caste, village, state

formation, land relations and the like. They believe that a social system, a nation, or a civilization has to be understood in a historical-civilizational frame.

For Majumdar (1951) "So far as the available evidence goes, there cannot be the slightest doubt that Indian civilization manifests itself in a way and a form very different from that with which we are familiar within the rest of the world. We

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Ideological Images of India

have consequently to approach the history of India in a different spirit, and adopt a different scale of values in order to appraise her culture and civilization. The wars and conquests, the rise and fall of empires and nations, and the development of political ideas and institutions should not be regarded as the principal object of our study, and must be relegated to a position of secondary importance. On the other hand, more stress should be laid upon philosophy, religion, art, and letters, the development of social and moral ideas, and the general progress of those humanitarian ideals and institutions which form the distinctive feature of the spiritual life of India and her greatest contribution to the civilization of the world”.

Rabindra Nath Tagore (1930) writes “Our real ties are with the *Bharatavarsha* that lies outside our textbooks. If the history of this tie for a substantially long period gets lost, our soul loses its anchorage. After all, we are no weeds or parasitical plants in India. Over many hundreds of years, it is our roots, hundreds and thousands of them, that have occupied the very heart of *Bharatavarsha*. But, unfortunately, we are obliged to learn a brand of history that makes our children forget this very fact. It appears as if we are nobody in India...”

Check Your Progress 2

- List out any three prominent criteria that distinguish Indian civilization from other civilizations of the world.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
- Name any three aspects that are to be included in a study in order to best understand the concept of Civilization.
.....
.....
.....
.....

3.5 SOCIAL CHANGE AND MODERNIZATION IN INDIA

Yogendra Singh (1973) labels social change as ‘ideology’. In his book "Social Change in India": Crisis and Resilience, Yogendra Singh (1993: 12) discusses two types of tendencies of social change in modern India: “First, there has taken place a substantial change in the social structure without simultaneously bringing about a structural change in the society. It results into tensions and often builds up social crisis. Secondly, there has taken place a sea-change in the subjective domain or the consciousness of the people in respect of social change.”

To him Indian civilisation has always been based on the principle of holism,

hierarchy, continuity, and transcendence and its character has been influenced by orthogenetic changes and changes in its Great Tradition and Little Traditions

but the forms of the institutions remained unchanged as the endogenous changes were confined only to 'Sanskritisation'. The real change came from the contact of western civilisation in the 17th century, which began with the process of colonization. The earlier encounter with Islam only reinforced the tradition as Islam was a traditional religion and a synthesis of Islamic tradition and Hindu tradition took place. The Islam of the Indian subcontinent also adopted the features of hierarchy as most of the Muslims were Hindu converts. In political structure also, the feudal system was common to both the religions. Despite having differences in ideologies, a syncretic relationship between both the religions was apparent in the Indian subcontinent. Social change and modernism are two different things especially while evaluating traditional societies. Social change can be continuous without having the modern or pre-modern type of evolution. Hence to study change in Indian social system applying western evolutionary perspective will be an injustice to the very pattern of Indian society. Indian social system was undergoing changes without inculcating any modern notion of change which can be studied from qualitatively distinctive evolutionary differentiation.

Taking elements from different theoretical understandings and practical experiences, the change in Indian society is sui generis and these changes cannot be studied from any one perspective due to presence of heterogeneity of culture and differential effects of modernity on different societies.

According to Yogendra Singh (1973), social change in India can be approached in terms of the following theoretical perspectives:

- 1) The causation of social change is to be sought both from within and without the social system or the tradition. For this we find the concepts employed by Redfield and Singer as being particularly useful and make a distinction between the heterogenetic or exogenous and orthogenetic or endogenous sources of change.
- 2) A distinction between cultural structure and social structure is also made to focus upon the need to observe changes at the level of these two relatively independent substantive

domains. Again, following Redfield, cultural structure has further been sub-divided into the categories of the little tradition and the great tradition. Similarly, the social structure is divided to form categories of micro-structure and macro-structure.

- 3) These distinctions follow from the need to focus upon the contexts, through which processes of change could be evaluated in matters of spread and depth.
- 4) Finally, the direction of change is represented in a linear evolutionary form from 'traditionalization' towards 'modernization'. Traditionalization comprises the total range of changes governed by orthogenetic patterns in the cultural and social structures. Modernization similarly represents the net balance of changes following from heterogenetic contacts.

The causal forces, substantive domain, contexts and direction of change provide us the logical boundaries within which the more specific processes of social change in India could be observed and described. These specific processes and the relevant concepts describing them have been noted in the form of a paradigm by Y Singh. Singh examines the significance of the specific concepts in the course of the analysis of change pertaining to the relevant substantive domain.

Ideological Images of India

Yogendra Singh sees the process of social change through two perspectives- i) structural, and ii) evolutionary. Structural changes are seen through the variables of social mobility, technological modernity and secular institutions, changes in norms and value systems etc and modernisation is seen through the flow of these values and their impact decides the nature and extent of the transformation. However, an evolutionary perspective is based on theoretical assumptions and these theoretical perspectives can be either structural-functional or dialectical. Dialectical approach sees the ‘breakdown’ of old institutions as the prerequisite criteria for the change and change in psycho-neurological factors are not appreciated in this method. Structural-functional approach treats evolution as a continuous process from the sub-human to human and beyond this. As Talcott Parsons writes “Modernisation follows an ‘evolutionary universal’ model. He believes in the homeostasis of social agencies and revolution as the breakdown of this balance.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) What is meant by ‘traditionalization’ and ‘modernization’ in the words of Y Singh? Give your answer in one sentence for your answer.
- a)
- b)
- ii) Name the four types of theoretical developments in Indian Sociology as discussed by Y. Singh?
- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true or F for false against each statement.
- a) The concept of modernity cannot be understood in isolation to tradition.
- b) Talcott Parsons writes that “Modernisation follows an ‘evolutionary universal’ model.
- c) D.P. Mukherjee, A.R. Desai and Ram Krishna Mukherjee emphasized the significance of a dialectical model in Indian Sociology.
- d) Sanskritization characterized a change within the framework of Indian tradition.

3.5.1 Modernization and Continuity of Tradition

Modernization like social change is not only a composite concept but also an ideological concept. The models of modernization co-vary with the choice of ideologies. The composite nature of this concept renders it pervasive in the vocabulary of social sciences and evokes its kinship with concepts like ‘development’, ‘growth’, ‘evolution’ and ‘progress’. The basic problematic idea of modernization in the Third World nations is ideological, particularly

when we examine the modernization ideology in India. Louis Dumont finds the relative

autonomy between dominant tradition and absolute values. In the pre-colonial era, the micro institutions of India like caste system, family, village, and community retained the traditional structures. However, modernization brought homogeneity in elite structures but the 'trickle down' effect is not visible because social base for recruitment of these elites were limited. After reforms, these bases widened and the elite culture got prominence in urban centres.

The concept of modernity cannot be understood in isolation to tradition. So, it is necessary to see how modern values are being assimilated into the traditional norms and develop a composite norm, which provides the continuity to the process of social change. So, the historicity of modernisation should be seen in Indian sense as Marriot calls it "Indianisation of modernity". Modernity and traditions are found together in one basket where traditional role structures are giving way to the modern norms and traditional norms are also keeping their own significance. For instance, in the cultural structure of India, the Islamic impact constitutes an important heterogenetic source of cultural transformation and synthesis and its significance can be seen at the levels of both the little and great traditions. This has been followed by westernization as a major form of exogenous cultural impact on India, and its ramifications also have relevance for the little and great traditions.

The changes in social structure could also be discussed more fruitfully when a distinction is made between the macro- structures and micro-structures. The instances of macro-structures are: bureaucracy, industry, market, leadership, political parties, etc. These consist of role relationships, which have a pan-Indian extension of boundaries. In contrast, the micro-structures, such as kinship, family, caste and sub-caste, tribe, etc., have limited boundaries for extension of role relationships and their obligations. The integrated approach, as offered by Singh through a schematic arrangement of concepts of change, has the advantage of being comprehensive as well as theoretically consistent.

In the book on "Essays on Modernization in India" (1977), Singh has analysed the varied and complex processes involved in modernization in India, the forces released by it and their bearing on the

stability, creativity and development of India as a dynamic nation and composite civilization. Offering an integrated perspective, Singh portrays the challenges and contradictions that India encounters in the course of its modernization. Can modernization be treated as a universalistic process or does it have its own historicity? What are the essentially cognitive and cultural correlates of modernization? Can it be looked upon as a scientific and operational notion in social science and can its magnitude empirically be tested on a sub-structure of society? What are the processes involved in political, cultural, social and educational modernization in India? And, what new faces of social, political and cultural contradictions are released while these processes are on? And, how do these forces account for the future stability, sustained creativity and development of India as a dynamic nation and composite civilization?

In an important essay on ideology, theory and method in Indian Sociology, Yogendra Singh (1979), divides a period of a quarter century of Sociology in India from 1952 to 1977 into four heuristic categories:

- i) 1952 to 1960 – a period of adaptive changes and innovations;
- ii) 1960 to 1965 – a period of significant shifts in theoretic priorities and

Ideological Images of India

beginning of some critical tensions in theory and ideology of Indian Sociology;

- iii) 1965 to 1970 – a period of marked sociological self-awareness and growth of new directions in theoretical and substantive contributions; and
- iv) 1970 to 1977 – a period of new maturity and new horizons of knowledge.

He attributes these four periods to four types of theoretic developments in Indian Sociology. These theoretic orientations are:

- a) Philosophical theoretical orientation
- b) Culturological orientation
- c) Structural theoretic orientation
- d) Dialectical-historical orientation

The philosophical orientation in Indian Sociology is associated with the contributions of Radhakamal Mukerjee, D.P. Mukerji and A.K. Saran. This orientation has not made a significant impact on the theoretical nature of Indian Sociology according to Singh (1983). It is interesting to note that despite the profoundness of scholarship of these scholars, the impact is minimal. The impact of western Sociology was becoming more and more enveloping and empirical bases of societal understanding looked simpler than the rigour of philosophy.

The culturological orientation begins with the work of Srinivas, Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India. Brahminization, Sanskritization and Westernization were major concepts derived from this study. Sanskritization characterized a change within the framework of Indian tradition.

The structural theoretic orientation focuses on power structure, social stratification, family structure, demography and similar aspects which reveal patterns, arrangements and repetitiveness. The empirical aspects are converted into abstracted concepts, models and categories. The structural studies have also taken up a comparative framework.

The dialectical-historical orientation is primarily based on Marxist approach and method for the analysis of social reality. The dialectical method has not been termed as Marxist as adaptations have been made keeping in view the Indian social reality. It is, however, a less developed branch of Indian Sociology. D.P. Mukherjee and Ram Krishna Mukherjee emphasized the significance of the dialectical model. A.R. Desai has consistently used dialectical-historical approach with ideological fervour and commitment. He has consistently exposed contradictions in policies and programmes of change. The dialectical-historical theoretic orientation grew rapidly in the seventies, when micro-empirical realities were subjected to class observation along with macro-structural social and economic processes in India (Singh, 1983).

Singh's typology of four major theoretic orientations is significant and logically coherent. According to Singh (1993), these theoretical orientations basically have implicit or explicit ideological connotation. The implications can be discerned at the level of analysis, which as a critique rejects the way social reality is managed or justifies the formation of social reality as it has

come to be, manipulated and

constructed. At an other level, they imply need for alternatives, modifications and corrections. Knowledge-neutrality is a contradiction in terms. Evaluation and analysis of social reality reveals systematic formulation of scattered, diverse and immediate impressions, which are mediated through the common man's impressionistic perceptions and views. At the third level, dominance of theoretical orientations generated institutionally tends to lead to negation and blinding of our own intellectual traditions.

3.6 LET US SUM UP

This unit has traversed through the very descriptive imaging of Indian society. First of all, the concepts like 'Ideology', 'Ideological Imaging' and 'Ideological Imaging of Indian society' were clarified. Ideological underpinnings behind the basic features of Indian ideology such as pluralism and Nationalism were discussed. India's pluralism is best understood in terms of its Unity in Diversity. Pan-Indianness objectively co-exists with the regional national consciousness. The next section suggests that Indian civilization is distinguished from other civilizations of the world in respect of its continuity and heterogeneity, its accommodating ethos and its composite character. The final section looks at the ideological components of social change, modernization and continuity of tradition in India. It says that tradition and modernity in India are not obstacles to each other but rather go together. The causal forces, substantive domain, contexts and direction of change provide us the logical boundaries within which the more specific processes of social change in India could be observed and described.

3.7 REFERENCES

Majumdar R. C 1951 The History and Culture of the Indian People (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,), vol. 1, p. 42.

Nanda Subrat K 2006 Cultural Nationalism in a Multi-National Context: The Case of India, Sociological Bulletin, 55 (1), January-April, Pp. 24-44

Singh Yogendra 1973 Modernization of Indian tradition: a systemic study of social change, Thomson Press (India), Publication Division.

Singh Yogendra 1978 Essays on modernization in India, Manohar,.

Singh Yogendra 1993 Social Change in India: Crisis and Resilience, Har-Anand Publications.

Tagore Rabindranath, The History of Bharatavarsha, available online at www.ifih.org.

3.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark T for true or F for false against each statement.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Ideological Images of India

- a) F.
 - b) T.
 - c) T
 - d) F.
- ii) What are three phases of Indian History described in the Book entitled “The Indian Ideology”?

Three phases are

- a) the struggle for independence led by Gandhi,
- b) the 1947 partition and the making of the Indian republic under Nehru’s leadership
- c) the Indian nationalism.

Check Your Progress 2

- List out any three prominent criteria that distinguish Indian civilization from other civilizations of the world.
 - its continuity and heterogeneity,
 - its accommodating ethos
 - composite character
- Name any three aspects that are to be included in a study in order to best understand the concept of Civilization.
 - cataloguing (listing of cultural traits);
 - cultural essence (to identify the essential underlying process); and
 - cultural communication (enduring elements that are transmitted among the parts of the society).

Check Your Progress 3

- i) What is meant by ‘traditionalization’ and ‘modernization’ in the words of Y Singh? Use one sentence for your answer.
- a) Traditionalization comprises the total range of changes governed by orthogenetic patterns in the cultural and social structures.
 - b) Modernization similarly represents the net balance of changes following from heterogenetic contacts.
- ii) Name the four types of theoretic developments in Indian sociology as discussed by Y Singh?
- a) Philosophical theoretical orientation
 - b) Culturological orientation
 - c) Structural theoretic orientation
 - d) Dialectical-historical orientation
- iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true or F for false against each statement.

- a) T.
- b) T.
- c) T
- d) T

FURTHER READING

Majumdar R. C 1951 The History and Culture of the Indian People (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.), vol. 1, p. 42.

Nanda Subrat K 2006 Cultural Nationalism in a Multi-National Context: The Case of India, Sociological Bulletin, 55 (1), January-April, Pp. 24-44

Singh Yogendra 1973 Modernization of Indian tradition: a systemic study of social change, Thomson Press (India), Publication Division.

GLOSSARY

Caste: An ascriptive grouping which is community based.

Great Tradition: Cultural trait or tradition, which is written and widely accepted by the elite of the society who are educated and learned.

Little Tradition: Cultural trait or tradition, which is oral and operates at the village level.

Sanskritisation: M.N. Srinivas used this concept for the first time to refer to a process of social change whereby a low Hindu caste or tribe adopts the customs ritual, ideology and life style of the higher caste with a view to improve its own caste status.

UNIT 4

ETHNOGRAPHIC IMAGES OF INDIA*

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Ethnographic Image
- 4.3 Ethnographic Image of India
- 4.4 Unity in Diversity
- 4.5 Village
- 4.6 Caste
- 4.7 Tribes
- 4.8 Religion
 - Little and Great Traditions
 - Let us Sum up
 - References
 - Specimen Answers to Check your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:-

- define the idea of image and the concept of ethnographic image
- discuss the nature of ethnographic image of Indian society
- give a description of the parameters of ethnographic image of Indian society
- outline the portrayal of unity in diversity, village India, caste, tribes and religion
- identify the features of 'Little and Great Traditions' in India.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The idea of image here does not necessarily relate to something visual, a photograph, a film captured by a camera, telescope, microscope, or other device, or displayed on a computer or video screen or a geometric sketch or a map. Another form of data collection is that of the "image." The image is the protuberance that an individual puts onto an item or mental construct. An image can be constructed about the physical world through a particular individual's perspective, primarily based on that individual's past or observed experiences. As for example an individual may form an image of a novel after completing reading it. Similarly, one can be in a position to tell you from the field the difference between the ways the birth of a girl child is viewed in a family in Mizoram (welcome) and that in Madhya Pradesh (a burden). The idea of the image is a primary tool for ethnographers to collect data which presents a holistic cultural portrait of the field and subjects that incorporates the views of the

participants (emic) as well as the views of the researcher (etic). It might also consolidate the needs of the group and advance need-based actionable changes in the society studied.

After delineating the idea of image as a mental construct or a descriptive category, the first unit, this unit deals with the concept of ethnographic image as such and ethnographic image of Indian society. While listing out the parameters of ethnographic image of Indian society, the next section relates to the basic portrayal of India's unity in diversity, village India, caste, tribes and religion. The last section of this unit discussed the features of little and great traditions in India society.

4.2 ETHNOGRAPHIC IMAGE

'Ethnographic image' refers to a methodological framework which is a detailed portrayal of the features of population, culture, communities, their ethnogenesis and habitat. Ethnography is the process of documenting the culture of a group from the subject's own perspectives. Ethnography, as the presentation of empirical data on human societies and cultures, is interdisciplinary in character absorbing within its fold the social, and cultural branches of Anthropology, Culture Studies, Sociology, Communication Studies, Social Work, Education, Folkloristics, Religious Studies, Geography, Criminology, History and Museology.

Ethnographic image is a symbolic expression or authentic impression that a person, a community or culture, organization, or product presents to the public about its glorious characteristics. The idea of an image relies on the imagination which is used and utilized to reflect on the patterns of the groups ideas and beliefs expressed through language or other activities, and how they behave in their groups as expressed through their actions that the researcher observed. The image presents the perspective, experiences, and influences of an individual as a single entity and in consequence the individual may represent this image in the group under study. Data analysis involves interpretation of the functions and meanings of human actions. There are two popular forms of ethnography such as realist ethnography and critical ethnography, which have been brought into academic discourse in an attempt to reform the contemporary understanding of society, culture, history, traditions

and ethnic diversities.

Ethnographic research can range from a realist perspective, in which behavior is observed, to a constructivist perspective where understanding is socially constructed by the researcher and subjects. Research can range from an objectivist account of fixed, observable behaviors to an interpretivist narrative describing "the interplay of individual agency and social structure" (Schatz,2009:117). Critical theory researchers address "issues of power within the researcher- researched relationships and the links between knowledge and power."

4.3 ETHNOGRAPHIC IMAGE OF INDIA

The early account of ethnographic image of India is found in 'The People of India' project instituted by British India to study the society, culture, caste, tribe and Indian folklore. Two able British East India Company officers trained in Anthropology, John Forbes Watson and John William Kaye compiled an eight- volume study entitled *The People of India between 1868 and 1875*, containing

468 annotated photographs of the native castes and tribes of India. The origin of the project is traced to the desire of Lord Canning, the then Governor-General of India, who conceived of the collection of images for the private edification of himself and his wife (Metcalf, 1997:117).

The very purpose of this project was to develop a fuller understanding of the customs and beliefs of the people whom they were to administer with strategic control. Hence it was a visual documentation of “typical” physical attributes, dress and other aspects of native life with brief notes regarding what were thought to be the “essential characteristics” of each community.

In 1908 Herbert Risley, the Census Commissioner for the 1901 Census of India, furthered the same project and came out with another volume ‘The People of India’ containing 25 illustrations on Races, Caste and Tribes in India.

Many members of the Indian intelligentsia were unimpressed with the general undertone and the outcome that their people had been depicted both unfairly and dispassionately. The last such type of work by British ethnographers cum administrators, was J. H. Hutton’s *Caste in India*, published in 1944.

The contributions of different national traditions either American, Indian, French, or British anthropologists along with the internal diversity of national traditions have led to multidirectional influences on ethnographic image of India. Both western and Indian ethnographic image of India had following areas of emphasis in common:

- a) Unity in Diversity
- b) Village India
- c) Caste
- d) Tribes
- e) Religion
- f) Little and Great Traditions

4.4 UNITY IN DIVERSITY

India’s unity in diversity has been variously portrayed. Kashmir to Kanyakumari, India is one. Indian society exemplifies the best case of unity in diversity.

India is a vibrant amalgamation of varied cultural practices, races, ethnic groups, climate, religions, regions and traditions. Ancient Indian culture stood for an infinite variety of symbols and rituals. The fine arts were valued in ancient India. It is said that India is the cradle of the human race, the birth place of human speech, the mother of history and the great grandmother of tradition. Indian culture believes in the principle of humanity, tolerance, unity, universal brotherhood, secularism and close-knit social system. Indians have maintained their modesty and simplicity despite the aggressiveness of the Muslim conquerors and the reforming zeal of the British, the Portuguese and the Dutch. The Indians are distinguished for their humanness and serene nature without any severity in their principles and ideals. In spite of several diversities based on caste, regions, race, languages, religious and colour diversities, Indian society has maintained its unity.

4.5 VILLAGE INDIA

A book entitled *Village India* by McKim Marriott—like its twin *India's Villages* by Srinivas (both published in 1955)—presented the first results of their ethnographic endeavour. Marriott's study situated Indian "civilization" from a grass-roots empirical perspective. Srinivas's contribution in *Village India* is a classic example of an account of "social structure." He perceives Rampura, the pseudonym for his village of study, as "a well-defined structural entity". He investigated how local castes are, on the one hand, separated by rules of commensality and, on the other hand, interdependent through occupational specialization and patron-client relationships. The dominant caste fulfils, in his view, a unifying function for the village as a whole.

Ethnographic imaging of village India exhibits contested dimensions as well. Kathleen Gough did not see "India's" village as a "well-defined structural entity." She observed the severe social consequences of drastic economic changes: decreasing coherence at the village level and increasing rivalry between castes, especially the contestation of Brahmanical dominance in Kumbapettai, a village in the Tanjore District of Tamil Nadu. Similarly, André Béteille, Gerald D. Berreman, Joan Mencher, and Frederick G. Bailey, were being mainly concerned with questions of power and dominance in Village India.

Mandelbaum (1972) writes, "A village is not a neatly separable social and conceptual package but it is nonetheless fundamental social unit." The French sociologist Louis Dumont refers to three meanings of the term 'village community' as a political society, as a body of co-owners of the soil and as the emblem of traditional economy and polity, a watchword of Indian patriotism. Thus, according to this view the village community in India has been a part of India's polity and economy. A village is far more than a locale, more than just a collection of houses, lanes and fields.

Activity 1

Prepare a Social Map of your village or locality you belong to, indicating the infrastructure facility and the basic services available in the area. Give also a brief ethnographic account regarding the type change the locality has experienced during last 10 years. Share the same among your classmates.

In the early nineteenth century, British administrators described Indian villages as 'little republics'. They opined that Indian villages have a simple form of government and are economically self-sufficient units. Villages of India have to give a share of produce to the king and need to send their young men to serve in the wars. Other than these two restrictions, Indian villages have no interference on the higher levels of political authority and they are unconcerned about who are ruling them, according to British administrators. The standard quotation, often reprinted, on the Indian village as a monolithic, atomistic, unchanging entity is from a report by Sir Charles Metcalfe, one of the founding administrators of British rule in India. The passage begins, "The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations." It goes on to say that wars pass over it, regimes come and go, but the village as a society always emerges unchanged, unshaken, and self-sufficient.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark T for true or F for false against each statement.
 - a) The image is the protuberance that an individual puts onto an item or mental construct.
 - b) The views of the researcher on ethnographic data are called emic views.
 - c) Both western and Indian ethnographic image of India had Unity in Diversity as an area of emphasis in common.
 - d) 1955 is a landmark in the history of village studies in India.
- ii) What are the three meanings that Louis Dumont associates with the term village community?

Three meanings are

a)

b)

c)

b)

c)

4.6 CASTE

Indian society comprises the different social systems and sub-systems such as family, jati, and village, and the different role actors have in these systems, the latter being understood in behavioural terms, as interactions between different individuals and groups. Several ethnographers concentrated on caste because they believed that understanding caste was to understand people and hence to understand India. Caste, locally called '*jati*' is the backbone of the Indian social system. Caste ranking is perceived as an extreme form of "stratification," and "pervasive inequality" is indicated as a key feature of the caste system as has been viewed by David G Mandelbaum. For Louis Dumont, by contrast, caste is not an observable reality in the first place but a "state of mind". This means that caste cannot be explained merely as a particular form of social structure or a particular type of social behaviour but primarily in terms of ideas and values.

There are thousands of such *jatis*, and each has its distinctive rules, customs, and modes of government. The term Varna (literally meaning "color") refers to the ancient and somewhat ideal fourfold division of Hindu society: (1) the Brahmans, the priestly and learned class; (2) the Kshatriyas, the warriors and rulers; (3) the Vaisyas, the farmers and merchants; and (4) the Sudras, the peasants and laborers. Below the category of Sudras were the untouchables, or *Panchamas* (literally "fifth division"), who performed the most menial tasks.

Marriott (1955) sees intercaste transactions in Kishan Garhi village "as a kind of tournament among 24 teams [castes] which make up this village society". The actors' goal in this tournament is to gain "dominance over others through feeding them or securing dependence on others by being fed by them".

M N. Srinivas (1955) has also debated the question of rigidity in caste. In an ethnographic study of the *Coorgs* of South India, he observed considerable flexibility and mobility in their caste hierarchies. He asserts that the caste system

is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed

for all time; instead, movement has always been possible, especially in the middle regions of the hierarchy. It was always possible for groups born into a lower caste to “rise to a higher position by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism” i.e. adopt the customs of the higher castes. The concept of Sanskritisation or the adoption of upper-caste norms by the lower castes, addressed the complexity and fluidity of caste relations.

Max Muller, (1860) a German Indologist, writes, “the whole caste system, as it has come down to us, bears unmistakable evidence of Brahminical origin”. Muller reveals that the Brahmans have been the strongest advocates of the caste system. They have created the vast divisions in Hindu society. They cruelly punished those who questioned the caste system and their supremacy. The principle of exclusion and inclusion or seclusion or rejection based on birth and endogamy resulted in diversification of caste groups, occupational roles and rituals.

S.V. Ketkar (1979) believes hereditary membership and endogamy as the basis of caste as an organic structure of relations. Here the organic nature of caste refers to harmony of relations between different caste groups. Emile Senart writes: A caste system is one whereby a society is divided into a number of self-contained and completed segregated units (castes), the mutual relations between them are ritually determined in a graded scale.

K.L.Sharma (1980) views that caste has never been a static system. The prevalence of thousands of castes and sub-castes and many more clans and sub-clans within these castes is a proof of diversification, differentiation and change in the caste system. Inter caste and mixed marriages, migration, change in occupations, the Buddhist movement, the impact of Islam, the impact of British and several other factors have made caste not only an adaptive but also a living symbol of social relations.

4.7 TRIBES

India can proudly be called the largest “tribal” population in the world. Most of the tribal people of India live in hilly or forested remote and isolated landscape where population is very thin and communication difficult. They are found from high valleys near the spine of Himalayas to southernmost India. The main tribal territories are in the broad central belt of hilly country from West

Bengal, Orissa, and Bihar on the east, through central India, to the upland parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra on the west. Although there are great social and cultural differences among the tribal people dispersed across India, the main occupations of the tribes are (1) shifting cultivation; (2) forestry and food gathering by hunting;

(3) settled agriculture; (4) agricultural labour; animal husbandry; and (6) household industry

D.G.Mandelbaum (1972) points out the following characteristics of Indian tribes: (1) kinship as an instrument of social bonds; (2) lack of hierarchy (rigid status distinction) among men and groups (clans and lineage); (3) absence of strong and formal organizations; (4) communitarian basis of land holding; (5) segmentary character; (6) little value on surplus accumulation, on the use of capital and on market trading; (7) lack of distinction between form and substance of religion; and (8) a distinct psychological make-up for enjoying life.

The tribal people are bound by a sense of strong identity. Language, kinship,

magical rites and practices, pattern of habitation, food habits, and styles of life are the special features of tribal life. Kinship in tribal community governs the major social, economic and political life of their people. In tribal life the principal links for the whole society are based on kinship. Individual equality as kinsmen is assumed, dependency and sub-ordination among men are minimized. Agnatic bonds form the fundamental web, affinal ties are of lesser significance. Tribal societies are small in size. They possess a morality, religion, and world view of their own, corresponding to their social relations.

B.K.Roy Burman (1972) divides tribal communities into five territorial groupings, taking into account their historical, ethnic and socio-cultural relations. These are as follows (1) North-East India, comprising Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura;(2)the sub- Himalayan region of north and north- west India, comprising hill districts of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh;(3) Central and East India, comprising West Bengal, Bihar(now Jharkhand),Orissa, Madhya Pradesh(now Chhattisgarh) and Andhra Pradesh;(4) South India comprising Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka; and (5) Western India, comprising Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The Scheduled Tribes (article 342 of Constitution of India) in India, also referred to as *adivasis* (original inhabitants), are spread across the central, northeast, and southern regions of India. These various tribes resided in India long before the Aryans had arrived roughly in 1500 B.C. The tribals were however socially and geographically isolated, following the entry of the Aryans and then consequently the Muslims and the British. More than six hundred and fifty tribes that make up the Scheduled Tribes speak a multitude of languages. They are also religiously diverse, with some following animism, while others have adopted Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity. The social traditions of most tribals make them stand out from the country’s mainstream Hindu population.

Along with being geographically and socially isolated, the tribal groups have historically been politically under-represented. Their regions of residence also have been economically underdeveloped. Scheduled tribe status under the Indian Constitution has designated reserved seats for tribals in political forums, such as the parliament, along with job reservations in the civil service and educational institutions. Some of the noted scheduled tribes in India comprise: Andamanese, Bodo, Bhils, Chakma, Dhodia Tribes of Gujarat, Gonds, Khasis, aboriginal people of Lakshadweep, Kurichiya, Kurumbar, Tripuris, Mizos, Mundaris, Nagas, Nicobarese, Oraon, Santals, Todas, Maldharis of Gujarat, Cholanaikkan, Warli, Kisan Tribe, Dongria Kondh, Bonda, Kutia Kondh, and Bishapus .

Check Your Progress 2

- i) How do Mandelbaum and Dumont differ with regard to their views on caste in India?

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

.....

.....

ii) Name any three any three main occupations of tribes in India.

a)

.....
.....

b)

.....
.....

c)

.....
.....

4.8 RELIGION

Religious diversity has been a defining characteristic of India's population for centuries. The country has no official state religion, but religion plays a central role in Indian daily life. Thus, India's unity in diversity is also visible in the sphere of religion. The major religions of India are Hinduism (majority religion), Islam (largest minority religion), Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and the Bahá'í Faith. India is a land where people of different religions and cultures live in harmony. This harmony is seen in the celebration of festivals. The message of love and brotherhood is expressed by all the religions and cultures of India.

Whether it's the gathering of the faithful, bowing in prayer in the courtyard of a mosque, or the gathering of lamps that light up houses at Diwali, the good cheer of Christmas or the brotherhood of Baisakhi, the religions of India are celebrations of shared emotions that bring people together. People from the different religions and cultures of India, unite in a common chord of brotherhood and amity in this fascinating and diverse land.

At the ethnographic level, some scholars try to see interconnections between religion and power. Religious status as expressed in the opposition of pure/impure is for Dumont the key value of Indian society, and it is represented by the Brahman priest in the Varna model. Within the ideology, this value does not merely stand in opposition to its antithesis—power, represented by the kshatriya varna or the king—rather it encompasses the latter. Religion, the pure, and the Brahman thus represent society as a whole. While, according to Dumont, on

the ideological level the religious is thus always superior to power, on the empirical level the reverse may be the case: the king being—in terms of power—superior to the materially dependent Brahman priest. The superior encompassing value of purity and the clear distinction between religious status (Brahman) and power (the king) are the main conclusions Dumont draws from his analysis of the varna model.

Ranjit Guha (1987) emphasizes the role of religion for understanding subaltern agency. For Guha, “religiosity was, by all accounts, central to the

Santal rebellion of 1855. The notion of power which inspired it, was made up of such ideas and expressed in such words and acts as were explicitly religious in character. It was not that power was a content wrapped up in a form external to it called religion. It is not possible to speak of insurgency in this case except as a religious consciousness”.

Religion is taken seriously in Indian society to form communities or social groups. Followers of India's religions have created “communities,” or groups who largely coexist peacefully but live and worship in separate social circles. Accordingly, when violence does break out between groups, it is referred to as “communal” violence. The concept of communalism is discussed in a later unit.

4.9 LITTLE AND GREAT TRADITIONS

Milton Singer and Robert Redfield (1955) developed the twin concept of Little Tradition and Great Tradition while studying the orthogenesis of Indian civilization in Madras city, now known as Chennai. Tradition means handing down of information, beliefs and customs by word of mouth by way of examples from one generation to another. In other words, tradition is the inherited practices or opinion and conventions associated with a social group for a particular period. This also includes the attitudes of the people, durable interactional patterns and socio-cultural institutions. Great tradition is associated with the elites, literate and reflective few who are capable of analysing, interpreting and reflecting cultural knowledge. Great tradition is a body of knowledge which functions as the beacon light of knowledge. In contradiction to this little tradition comprises the belief pattern, the institutions, knowledge including proverbs, riddles, anecdotes, folk tales, legends, myths and the whole body of folk-lore of the folk and /or the unlettered peasants who imbibe cultural knowledge from the great tradition. The unity of Indian civilization is reflected in the perpetuation of the unity of worldview of both the folk /peasant and the elites or the literati through cultural performance and their cultural products. Cultural performance is institutionalized around the structure of both great traditions and little traditions.

There are several centres of the great tradition in India and there is a network of socio-cultural relationship. This relationship is based on cultural knowledge and ideology. There is a difference in cultural performances of great tradition and little traditions. The domain of great tradition represents the textual or the *Shastriya* nuances, whereas the universes of little traditions are folk/peasant and local versions of textual knowledge and cultural performance. Great tradition stands for persisting important arrangements of various roles and statuses appearing in such corporate bodies, like caste, sects, teachers, reciters, ritual leaders, priests, cultural performers, religious preachers etc. all of whom are engaged in inculcation and regular dissemination of cultural knowledge. The body of knowledge which they include is from various religious texts, such as mythology and epics.

The little tradition of its own role incumbents: folk artists, folk musicians, story-tellers, tellers of riddles, street singers, mendicant performers, interpreters of proverbs and puzzles, street dancers, astrologers, fortune-tellers and medicine men. In a village, the primary school teacher is a key person as regards little tradition knowledge. He himself performs multiple cultural roles and with the help of village leaders organises various folk performances, mythological plays, dramas, recitation of sacred language, saying of prayers accompanied by folk music which serve two purposes: (1) singing of devotional songs and (2) providing entertainment. The former activity is a sacred duty and the latter act is a secular one, meant for relieving stress and strain to which the peasants are sometimes subjected to.

The two traditions are not distinguishable in very isolated tribes. Among the Andaman Islanders we find nothing at all about any esoteric aspect of religion or thought. An older person may be likely to know what there is to be known as any other. There are differences between laymen and specialists in the

understanding of the religion. In a primitive tribe this sort of dichotomy is similar to the difference between the great tradition and little tradition in respect of civilisation and peasant

society, respectively. The folk or tribal society constitutes a proto-dimension of peasant society.

Marriott stressed that in the North Indian context, the great Sanskrit tradition could be viewed as an 'indigenous civilization'; a body of cultural forms elaborated in an orthogenetic fashion from a regional pool of ideas. Great tradition Hinduism thus constituted a primary civilization by contrast with other great traditions such as Spanish Catholicism in Latin America which were foreign impositions rather than the orthogenetic outgrowth of indigenous culture. Such heterogenetic great traditions did nonetheless amalgamate, or syncretize, with indigenous traditions to form 'secondary civilizations'.

Check Your Progress 3

i) What is meant by 'little tradition' and 'great tradition'? Use one sentence for your answer.

a) Great tradition is associated with

.....
.....
..... b) Little tradition

comprises

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

ii) How is the unity of Indian civilization best reflected?

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

iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true or F for false against each statement.

a) The folk or tribal society constitutes a

proto-dimension of peasant society.

- b) The primary school teacher organising mythological plays is his performing sacred duty not secular one.
- c) Among the Andaman Islanders we find nothing at all about any esoteric aspect of religion or thought.
- d) India has no official state religion.

4.10 LET US SUM UP

First of all, in this unit, the idea of image was defined as a mental construct or a descriptive category followed by clarification of concepts like ethnographic image and most specifically the ethnographic image of Indian society. The parameters of ethnographic image of Indian society such as India's Unity in Diversity, Village India, Caste, Tribes and Religion were discussed next. Before summing up, the penultimate section identified the features of Little and Great Traditions in India.

ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

4.11 REFERENCES

Bailey, F G.1960. *Tribe, Caste and Nation*. Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Bailey, F. G. 1969 "Structure and change in Indian society: A review article." *Pacific Affairs* 42 (4): 494–502

Cohn, Bernard S. 1955. "The changing status of a depressed caste." In *Village India: Studies in the little community*, edited by McKim Marriott, 53–77. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Dirks, Nicholas B. 2001. *Castes of mind: Colonialism and the making of modern India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Dirks, Nicholas B. 1990. "The original caste: Power, history, and hierarchy in South Asia." In *India through Hindu categories*, edited by McKim Marriott, 59–77. New Delhi: Sage.

Dumont, Louis, and David F. Pocock. 1957. "Village studies." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 1: 23–41.

Dumont, Louis. 1980. *Homo hierarchicus: The caste system and its implications*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Dumont, Louis.1970. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implication*. London: Paladin.

Gandhi MK 1929 (1957) *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Beacon Press,

Guha, Ranajit. 1987. "Introduction." In *An anthropologist among the historians and other essays*, by Bernard S. Cohn, vii–xxvi. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Hutton J. H. 1946 *Caste in India*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Madan, T. N. 1994. *Pathways: Approaches to the study of society in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Madan, T.N. (ed). 1992. *Religion in India*. New Delhi: OUP.

Mandelbaum, David G. 1970. *Society in India*. Berkeley: The University of California Press.

Metcalf, Thomas R. (1997). *Ideologies of the Raj*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Risley, Herbert Hope (1908). *The People of India* (1st ed.). Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co.; London: W. Thacker & Co.

Risley, Herbert Hope (1915). Crooke, William, ed. *The People of India* (2nd ed.). Calcutta & Simla: Thacker, Spink & Co.; London: W. Thacker & Co.

Schatz, Edward, ed. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. University of Chicago Press. 2009.

Sharma, K.L 1980. *Essays on Social Stratification*. New Delhi: Rawat.

Srinivas MN 2000 *Social Change in Modern India*, Orient Longman, New

Delhi.

Srinivas, M. N. 1955b. "The social system of a Mysore village." In *Village India: Studies in the little community*, edited by McKim Marriott, 1–35. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark T for true or F for false against each statement.
- a) T.
 - b) F.
 - c) T
 - d) T

- What are the three meanings that Louis Dumont associates with the term village community?

Three meanings are

- as a political society,
- as a body of co-owners of the soil and as the emblem of traditional economy and polity.
- a watchword of Indian patriotism.

Check Your Progress 2

- ii) How do Mandelbaum and Dumont differ with regard to their views on Caste in India?

Caste ranking is perceived by David G Mandelbaum as an extreme form of "stratification," and "pervasive inequality" which is a key feature of the caste system. Louis Dumont, by contrast says, caste is not an observable reality in the first place but a "state of mind".

- ii) Name any three main occupations of Tribes in India.
- a) shifting cultivation;
 - b) forestry and food gathering by hunting; and
 - c) agricultural labour and animal husbandry.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) What is meant by 'little tradition' and 'great tradition'? Use one sentence for your answer.
- a) Great tradition is associated with the elites, literate and reflective few who are capable of analysing, interpreting and reflecting cultural

knowledge.

- b) Little tradition comprises the belief pattern, the institutions, knowledge including proverbs, riddles, anecdotes, folk tales, legends, myths and

the whole body of folk-lore of the folk and /or the unlettered peasants who imbibe cultural knowledge from the great tradition.

ii) How is the Unity of Indian civilization best reflected?

The unity of Indian civilization is reflected in the perpetuation of the unity of worldview of both the folk /peasant and the elites or the literati through cultural performance and their cultural products. Cultural performance is institutionalized around the structure of both great tradition and little traditions.

iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true or F for false against each statement.

- a) T.
- b) F.
- c) T
- d) T

Further Reading

Bailey, F G. 1960. Tribe, Caste and Nation. Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Dumont, Louis. 1980. Homo hierarchicus: The caste system and its implications. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Guha, Ranajit. 1987. "Introduction." In An anthropologist among the historians and other essays, by Bernard S. Cohn, vii–xxvi. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Hutton J. H. 1946 Caste in India, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Mandelbaum, David G. 1970. Society in India. Berkeley: The University of California Press.

Srinivas M N 2000 Social Change in Modern India, Orient Longman, New Delhi.

GLOSSARY

Varna: The Varna distributes social groups into four categories, all over India. It is a model of social and ritual hierarchy of caste groups. These are four Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The Varna provides a cultural idiom to the caste system.

Caste: An ascriptive grouping which is community based.

Great Tradition: Cultural trait or tradition, which is written and widely accepted by the elite of the society who are educated and learned.

Little Tradition: Cultural trait or tradition, which is oral and operates at the village level.

Sanskritisation: M.N. Srinivas used this concept for the first time to refer to a process of social change whereby a low Hindu caste or tribe adopts the customs ritual, ideology and life style of the higher caste with a view to improve its own caste status.