

SOCIAL STRUCTURE, STRATIFICATION AND SOCIAL PROCESSES IN SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

You will recall that the earlier book *Introducing Sociology*, Class XI (NCERT, 2006) 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.

The central question that this chapter seeks to discuss is to what extent the individual is 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

Different types of buildings in rural and urban areas



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 sociological authors 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 stratification in Chapter 2 of *Introducing Sociology*, Class XI (NCERT, 2006), *Social stratification refers to the existence of structured inequalities between groups in society, in terms of their access to material or symbolic*

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

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 (NCERT, 2006) 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 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

Different types of processes



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,

Babul Mora. Naihar Chuto hi jai
Fears of the Natal home is left behind

Babul ki dua-ein leti ja

Ja tujhko sukhi sansar mile

Maike ki kabhi na yaad aaye

Sasural me itna pyar mile

Take your father's blessings/prayer
as you go;

Go, and (may you) get a happy
household;

May you never be reminded of your
mother's home;

(Because of) all the love you receive

At your in-laws' place.

(Basu 2001: 128)

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? The song in the box on the previous page is specific to a region, but evokes the more general fears of natal abandonment for women in a patrilineal society.

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.

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 no longer be

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



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

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 cooperate 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

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

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 studies 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.

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.’

Activity 6

India has recently witnessed intense debates on the government’s decision to ensure 27 per cent reservation for OBCs. Collect the different arguments for and against this proposal that have been put forward 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.

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.

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).

Views that humans *naturally* like to compete has to be understood

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

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.

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

pardah 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.

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. We end with two activities that report real life events that help you to use your sociological understanding to explore the manner in which the three processes operate for social groups that are differentially located in the social structure and the stratification system.

Activity 11

Read the report carefully and discuss the relationship between social structure, stratification and social processes. Describe how the characters Santosh and Pushpa are constrained by the social structure and stratification system. Is it possible to identify the three social processes of cooperation, competition and conflict in their lives? Can these marriages be seen as processes of cooperation? Can these marriages be seen as actions that people consciously adopt in order to survive in the competitive job market since married couples are preferred? Is there any sign of conflict?

Outlook 8 May 2006

“Meet the Parents: Teen marriages, migrant labour and cane factories in crisis. A vicious cycle.”

It is the same old story, only with a few twists. Santosh Shinde, 14, son of landless labourers who take a loan of Rs 8,000 to educate him. Now the moneylender wants the loan to be repaid, so the cash strapped Shindes take a salary advance from the only man offering jobs around town, a sugarcane factory contractor. Problem is that they are just a husband, a wife and gawky boy. So the Shindes hurriedly find a bride for Santosh: another 14 year old, Pushpa, who accompanies them from their village in Maharashtra's Osmanabad district to Karnataka. They stop en route for a no-frills marriage at a temple.

...There's even a name for it, 'gatekin'. It probably comes from the makeshift camps these migrant labourers set up outside the factory gates in the cane-cutting season. Contractors prefer married couples to single boys as they are more likely to stay on at the factories for months.

...With western Maharashtra's cane factories — which once produced nearly a third of India's sugar output — in a state of crisis, jobs for migrant labourers have dried up. Some estimates say the factories have accumulated losses of over Rs 1,900 crore, and this year 120 of the 177 sugar factories were forced to avail of the Centre's Rs. 1,650 crore bailout package. But the trickle down has been harsher on the migrant labour, out in the fields cutting cane feverishly during the six-month-long season. Their chances of getting jobs have become harder, and wages have plummeted.

... Gangly Santosh, now 16 and sporting a straggly moustache, has just finished his X exams while wife Pushpa took her XII exams. Pushpa, a good student, balances her academic ambitions with caring for a one-and-a-half-year-old son. Then there's home and labour in the fields. As she says, "My marriage was so quick, I wonder sometimes — when did I get married — when did all this happen?". Asked if her health has suffered, the young mother says "I try not to think about things I can't control. Instead I focus on what I can do now." Her in-laws have said she can study further only if she gets a scholarship. Otherwise, the young couple will migrate to Mumbai to work at a construction site.

Activity 12

Read the report carefully and contrast the competition that Vikram and Nitin face with that of Santosh and Pushpa in Activity 11.

The Week (7 May 2006) carried a special feature titled "The New Workaholics: Their Goals, Money, Risks Health".

As the Indian economy gallops at 8 per cent, firing on all cylinders, thousands of jobs are being created in every sphere of business resulting in changing attitudes and work styles. *Young professionals want rewards instantly. Promotions must come fast and quick.* And money — exceptional salaries, perks and big increments — the prime motivator, makes the world go round. Vikram Samant, 27, who recently joined a BPO, makes no bones about quitting his last job for a better salary. "Money is important but my new employers are fully aware that I'm worth every rupee paid to me," he reasons.

...What is also *driving young workaholics is the need to sprint up the corporate ladder* rather than climb each rung at a measured pace. “Yes, I want the next designation quickly, not when I am starting to go bald,” says Nitin, who refused to wait around for the next big jump and hopped from ICICI to Standard Chartered with a promotion and then to Optimix as zonal manager (emphasis original).

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 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?
-

REFERENCES

- ABDULLAH, T. and S. ZEIDENSTEIN. 1982. *Village Men of Bangladesh: Prospects for Change*. Pergamon Press, Oxford.
- BASU SRIMATI. 2001. *She Comes to Take Her Rights: Indian Women, Property and Propriety*. Kali for Women, New Delhi.

- BOTTOMORE, T.B. 1975. *Sociology as Social Criticism*. George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London
- DURKHEIM EMILE. 1933. *The Division of Labour in Society*. A Free Press (Paperback), The MacMillan Company, New York.
- JAYARAM, N. 1987. *Introductory Sociology*. MacMillan India Ltd, Delhi.
- HALE SYLVIA, M. 1990. *Controversies in Sociology: A Canadian Introduction*. Longman Groups, London.
- MARX KARL and FREDERICK ENGELS. 1974. *The German Ideology*. Selected Works, Vol. 1. Peoples Publishing House, Moscow.
- SEN AMARTYA. 1990. "Gender and Cooperative Conflicts" in *Persistent Inequalities* (ed) H.Tinker, pp.123-49. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- SINGH YOGENDRA. 1973. *Modernization of Indian Tradition*. Thomson Press, Delhi.
- SRINIVAS, M.N. 1972. *Social Change in Modern India*. Orient Longman, New Delhi.
- OOMMEN, T.K. 1972. *Charisma, Stability and Change; An Analysis of Bhodan-Gramdan Movement in India*. Thomson Press, New Delhi.
- WHITE, S.C. 1992. *Arguing With the Crocodile, Gender and Class in Bangladesh*, Zed Books, London.

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.

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

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

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, matchstick 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



A child doing skilled work**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

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.

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 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.

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

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

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 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.

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

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

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 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.

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

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

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 Economic 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 than 17 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

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

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 National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005.

Activity 5

Find out more about the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. 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

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



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-storied 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.

Where and how people will live in cities is a question that is also filtered through socio-cultural identities. Residential areas in cities all over the world are almost always segregated by

A girl child looking after the sibling



A commercial centre in a city



Women at work in cotton field



class, and often also by race, ethnicity, religion and other such variables. Tensions between such identities both cause these segregation patterns and are also a consequence. For example, in India, communal tensions between religious communities, most commonly Hindus and Muslims, results in the conversion of mixed neighbourhoods into single-community ones. This in turn gives a specific spatial pattern to communal violence whenever it erupts, which again furthers the 'ghettoisation'

process. This has happened in many cities in India, most recently in Gujarat following the riots of 2002. 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.

Various kinds of transport in an urban area



Shopping in a city



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?

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 ghettos 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?

REFERENCES

- GIDDENS, Antony. Sociology. 4th edition.
- GERTH, HANS and C. WRIGHT MILLS. (eds) *from Max Weber*.
- KHILNANI, SUNIL. 2002. *The Idea of India*, Penguin Books, New Delhi.
- Patel, Sujata and Kushal Deb (eds). 2006. *Urban Sociology*, Readings in Sociology and Social Anthropology series). Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- SRINIVAS, M.N. *Social Change in Modern India*.