

# 1. Introduction to Indian Society

## 1.1 Ancient and Medieval India

## 1.2 Colonial Period

## 1.3 Post-Independent India

### INTRODUCTION

As a student of Sociology, you will agree that the focus of Sociology is to understand the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ of human social behaviour. Sociologists are interested in understanding the factors, conditions, circumstances and forces that have impacted human behaviour in the past and which still continue to exert influence in our lives. The numerous social relationships that we engage in influence how we behave. This refers to our thinking and acting, our preferences, likes and dislikes, prejudices, beliefs, practices and rituals of daily life and so much more. For example, if you are raised in a household that has a customary practice of a morning bath before prayers are recited, then, you are very likely to conform to such a practice, and the chances are that you may propagate the same too. Again, for example, if you have been conditioned to believe in the superiority of a particular sex, here too, the probability of you endorsing and transmitting such a view is high.

Our civilisation goes back several thousand years when Sociology did not exist as a discipline. You will recall that Sociology emerged in Europe in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century CE. A question that you might then ask is, “How do we know about the social life of the people in the ancient past?” Indeed, this is a valid question. Our major sources of information about the past comes from artifacts that have been discovered by archeologists and field historians. Additionally, travelogues, memoirs, biographies, literature,

edicts and inscriptions, court chronicles etc. By artifacts, we mean, material components of culture such as tools, utensils, jewellery, art, sculpture, paintings, excavated discoveries, tombs, coins, weapons etc. Then, there are human and animal bones, fossils, geographical locations which also provide clues about the time period. Through modern techniques it is possible to estimate the age and other qualities of material remnants. Based on these findings, many narratives and counter-narratives have shaped our understanding regarding the social life in this period.

It would be impossible to summarise the culture of a civilisation that is several thousand years old, and yet there is much to learn and draw from specific strands or themes that have characterised the people of this land over this time-frame.

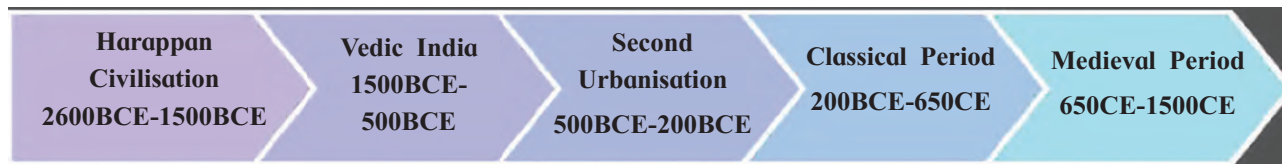
For the purpose of convenience, this Unit is divided into three sub-units, namely,

- (i) Ancient and Medieval India,
- (ii) Colonial Period, and
- (iii) Post-Independent India.

It is hoped, that you as a learner of Sociology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, will reflect on, understand, appreciate, as well as critically examine these strands of information about Indian society. Naturally, to do this, one can’t help but go back a few thousand years through a historical framework. By touching upon specific themes and significant landmarks, it should make you wonder about myriad ways of human living, societal-environmental relations, practices, rituals, injustices, blunders, migration and exodus, as well as enabling factors etc. It is a mixed bag and there is plenty to draw from. Our knowledge of the past has shaped our present and indeed has a bearing on what, why and how we think and behave. Such insights we

hope, will excite you, as they could well give you a sense of the plural roots of our heritage, diverse past and the present, as well as the near and distant future.

of time, possibly, some of the hymns came to be associated with the veneration of deities such as *Indra*, *Agni*, *Surya*, *Yama* etc. Indigenous tribal communities would have



## 1.1

### ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL INDIA

The above time line is indicative of how scholars have divided the study of early Indian History into different periods. Note that the years indicated in the above figure are approximations. As a learner of history, through your days in school, you may recall that each of these periods have been touched upon and discussed. So, what are we as learners of Sociology hoping to understand, through a reading of our social histories?

For the purpose of this Sociology course, few strands (or themes) have been selected to understand the Ancient and Medieval Period. They include,

- (i) religious beliefs and practices,
- (ii) status of women in society,
- (iii) nature of education,
- (iv) social life, and
- (v) urbanisation.

These themes have been briefly outlined as follows:

#### (i) Religious beliefs and practices :

Scholars suggest that the available discourses on religious practices are layered and complex. As far back as the Harappan civilisation, figurines of male Gods, Mother Goddess and animal deities have been found. However, there is no evidence for the existence of temples nor idol worship. Natural elements such as sun, rain, water, thunder and so on were venerated. With the passage

had their own systems of religious beliefs. Tribal religions had no labels nor any written scriptures. Thus, most of what is known about tribal belief systems is based on references made in ancient religious texts, medieval records and colonial ethnographies. Anthropologists have classified tribal belief systems by various terms like animism, totemism etc. which you will read about in the following Unit.



Harappa site

**Anthropology** : As a discipline, Anthropology emerged during the Colonial period, with the purpose of studying non-European, 'exotic' societies and cultures. It is classified into two broad fields, namely, Physical Anthropology and Social/Cultural Anthropology.

A critique of Anthropology as being part of a colonial project is found in the scholarly work 'Orientalism' by Edward Said.

As regards the Hindu way of life, there are many literary sources that shed light on beliefs and practices of the Vedic period –

some are written and some are oral traditions, such as Vedas, Upa Vedas, Vedangas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Epics etc. The Vedic period is usually divided into - Early Vedic Period (c.1500 BCE to c.1000 BCE) and Later Vedic Period (c.1000 BCE to c.500 BCE). One of the reasons for this is there are significant changes that take place, about which we shall discuss as we go long.

For Hindus, the Puranas and Dharmashastras laid out a Code of Conduct based on the Law of Karma (Action), which is also known as the law of cause and effect. You may have heard the phrase, “As you sow, so shall you reap.” Hindus believe in a cyclical world-view, that is, they believe that the deeds in one life determine the next life. The *atman* (soul) is trapped in the bondage of birth and rebirth, until it can attain *moksha* (salvation). The four aims of Hindu life (*Purusharthas*) are:

<p><b>DHARMA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>doing one's duties by following the path of righteousness, without the expectation of a reward</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>ARTHA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>refers to acquisition of wealth through the path of righteousness through hard work</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>KAMA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>sensuous pleasure or sexual union through the path of righteousness</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>MOKSHA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>ultimate goal of salvation from the cycle of birth and rebirth</i></li> </ul>

Scholars suggest that society in the Early Vedic period was less rigid with respect to occupation-based divisions. Over a period of time however, the rigidification of varnas (discussed later) into a fixed, closed system of stratification emerged. This came to be called *jati* (assigned by birth). The *Jati* system was anchored in Brahminism that suggested that hierarchy was subsequently based on the principle of “purity and pollution”. This meant strict endogamy, excessive ritualism and the emergence of discrete boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

Against this background of Brahmin supremacy there emerged the philosophies of Vardhaman Mahavir and Gautama Buddha. Though both initially belonged to the Hindu-fold, they rebelled against excessive ritualism, animal sacrifices and social-based hierarchies. Their teachings got established in the Indian ethos, as Jainism and Buddhism.

Jainism is believed to have a very ancient origin. The religion is said to have been revealed by 24 *Tirthankaras* (spiritual teachers) of which Vardhaman Mahavir was the last. Similar to the Hindu Doctrine of Karma, Jain teachings are also based on the Theory of Karma. However *ahimsa* (non-harming) and *tapas* (penance) are important and integral components of the Jain way of life. Vardhaman Mahavir did not speak of God in his teachings, but he emphasised the state of nirvana. His teachings were in the language of the common people, namely, Ardhamagadhi.

#### Be aware!

Of the *Sola Sati* (i.e. 16 virtuous women) in Jainism, five are shared with Hinduism, namely, Draupadi, Kausalya, Sita, Kunti and Damayanti.

If, the Hindu system of belief gave importance to the performance of sacrifices and Sanskritic rituals, Jainism advocated an austere and strict lifestyle based on penance.

Buddha, with his teachings seems to advocate the middle path based on the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-fold Path.

Like Jainism, the teachings of Gautama Buddha did not make reference to the concept of God. Also, the sacred literature (*Tripitkas*) were written in the language of the common people, namely, Pali. Buddha made monasticism an inseparable part of his creed. The function of monasticism was to provide suitable conditions for personal and societal development.

**Be aware!** : As schools of Indian philosophy, it is pertinent to note that both, Jainism and Buddhism are described as non-theistic, unlike other Indian philosophical schools and sects which are theistic, with the exception of Charvaka and Ajivika

**Charvaka** and **Ajivika** are also considered to be schools of Indian philosophy. While Charvaka is rooted in a non-theistic and materialistic philosophy, the Ajivika school of thought is rooted in fatalism and asceticism.

### Do you know?

#### The Jataka Tales (300 BCE - 400 CE)

These are a voluminous body of literature indigenous to India. They are concerned with the previous births of Gautama Buddha in both, human and animal form. The future Buddha may appear as a King, an outcaste, a God, an elephant etc. Whatever form he takes, the Buddha exhibits some virtue and moral that the tale thereby inculcates.

In these tales, there are numerous characters who interact and get into trouble whereupon the Buddha intervenes and resolves their problems. There is an inherent reference to naturism in these tales.

Thus, Jainism and Buddhism are perceived as “protest religions”. Both these religious traditions opened their doors to all sections of society. The right to salvation was no longer limited in a particular stratum of society. Understandably, Buddhism with its less rigid rules and regulations in comparison to Jainism was embraced by many; Buddhism thus spread far and wide

even beyond the boundaries of India because of the patronage of the Mauryan emperor, Ashoka. As a missionary religion, Buddhism spread to foreign countries like Tibet, China, Japan, Mongolia, Burma, Java, Sumatra and Sri Lanka. Even today, India is considered a holy place and the source of their religion by these countries. Jain and Buddhist *Sanghas* (schools) for religious learning were established people who chose the ascetic way of life (as nuns and monks).

Buddhism gave great importance to moral upliftment of human beings and directed people to lead moral lives. It insisted on virtues like charity, self-sacrifice, control over passions and non-injury in thought and action. These virtues are also advocated in the *Upanishads* and also widely practiced through the Buddhist way of life.

Over a period of time Jainism and Buddhism also split into sects. The smaller following invariably were those who adhered more strictly to the teachings of the leaders. The larger sect were people whose practices of the teachings were made more practical and doable. Jain sects include – *Digambaras* (sky clad) and *Shvetambaras* (white clad) whereas Buddhist sects include – *Hinayana* (Lesser Vehicle) and *Mahayana* (Greater vehicle), *Vajrayana* which comes much later in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE.

### Activity 1

Find out about the Eight-Fold Path of Buddhism.

Following the nirvana of Mahavir and Buddha, the spread of their teachings also diminished. For a period of about twelve hundred years there was no emergence of newer and impactful religions. Historian R. S. Sharma holds that there was a “period of flux leading to a continuous process of fragmentation and decentralization” during this period.



We will now pick up the strand of religious practices and beliefs that were significant during the **Medieval Period** (c. 650 CE – c. 1500 CE), which saw several religions come to India from outside. These include Judaism, Christianity, Islam and much later Zoroastrianism.

The **Sangham Period** (6<sup>th</sup> century BCE to 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE) is the period of history of ancient peninsular India (which approximates the present-day Tamil Nadu and Kerala States). It is named after the famous *Sangham* academies of poets and scholars centered in the city of Madurai. Religion played a milder role during the *Sangham* Age. Both ritualistic and supplicatory aspects of religion were practiced by the *Sangham* people. Rituals were related to animism and other forms of deity worship. Tree, stone, water, animals, stars and planets were worshipped. The Tamils of the Sangham Age were aware of certain spiritual and philosophical truths. They believed that life is distinct from body. While life can function independently of the body, the latter cannot, when divorced from life. Their entire philosophy of ancestral worship, reincarnation etc., was related to death and the afterlife.

The roots of Zoroastrianism is found in the Middle East region. Persecution of the people of this faith brought them to the Western coast of India, near present-day Gujarat, into which they culturally assimilated. Zoroastrianism is the only outside religious community that still practices endogamy; it did not permit proselytisation i.e. conversions into their faith. Also, entry into their Fire temples is restricted to members of the community.

**Zoroastrianism :** It is one of the world's oldest and continuously practiced religion. It is centered on a dualistic cosmology of good and evil (Heaven and Hell). Their sacred scripture is Avesta in

which it is stated that the supreme creator is Ahura Mazda, from whom Asha (cosmic order) originates. Fire and clean water are agents of ritual purity. Fire temples are their place of worship. The Holy Flame was brought by priests from Persia to Navsari in Gujarat (c. 9<sup>th</sup> century CE).

While maintaining their strong sense of identity and culture, despite their diminishing numerical strength, Parsis have contributed in all walks of life. Personalities like Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Field Marshall Sam Manekshaw, Zubin Mehta are some of the significant Parsis. Tata, Godrej and Wadia are important names in the building of modern industry in India. Dr. Homi Bhabha was instrumental in making India a nuclear power. The works of top lawyers from the Parsi community like Nani Palkiwala, Soli Sorabji and Fali Nariman continue to enlighten civil society.

People of Jewish faith are believed to be one of the early foreign religions to come to India. They came for the Hebrew King Solomon's merchants for the purpose of trade. Conversions of people in Kochi to Judaism led to the identity of Kochi Jews. Till today, the Jewish Synagogue is found in Fort Kochi.



**Jewish Synagogue, Kochi**

The number of Jews have dwindled. In Mumbai too, there is a small community of Bene Israel Jews and it is believed that some tribes in Mizoram too have Jewish identity. Jewish people follow the Torah (which includes the Books of the Old Testament of the Bible). Judaism is a monotheistic religion. They believe that the Messiah (Saviour) is yet to come. The Holy Sabbath is a sacred observance of Jews. You will recall that the Jewish people were the most persecuted community in human history.

### You should know!

**The Holocaust :** Since 1945, the word 'holocaust' has taken on a new and gruesome meaning. It was used to refer to the genocide (i.e. mass murder) of around 6 million European Jews, other communities and groups including gypsies, homosexuals, socialists, communists among some others. This was carried out by the German Nazi Regime in the Second World War. The total death toll was estimated to be around 11 million.

Find out more about the Concentration Camps that were spread across Europe during World War II.

From 1948-1951, 1,36,000 Jewish displaced persons immigrated to Israel. Others re-settled in United States and other nations outside Europe.

For centuries, they did not have a land of their own, but lived on many continents. It is only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that they have come to identify with a territory of their own, Israel, after years of political struggle.

It is in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE that Saint Thomas, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, brought Christianity to the shores of Malabar in South India. Followers of Christ came to be called Christians. The local people who converted to Christianity then, are called the Syrian Christians. Christianity is a monotheistic faith and like Judaism, it holds a linear view of life, that means, people believe that they have one life; their life on

Earth determines if they will go to Heaven. The essential foundation of the Christian faith is the principle of love and all Christians believe in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, their Saviour. The impact of Christianity is especially notable during the Colonial period.



**Cross founded by St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Church at Palayoor**

Even though Islam first came to India in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, the impact and influence of the religion is seen only much later. Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam also preaches monotheism and the faith centres on the Holy Quran. Muslims believe in the Five Pillars of Faith. It guides their beliefs and behaviour.



During the Medieval period, Islamic teachings spread far and wide. Several rulers made special efforts to propagate the faith. The Delhi Sultanate was an Islamic Empire that ruled a large part of India for almost 320 years (1206 CE - 1526 CE) over Five Dynasties.

Mamluk  
Dynasty  
or Slave  
Dynasty

Khilji  
Dynasty

Tughlaq  
Dynasty

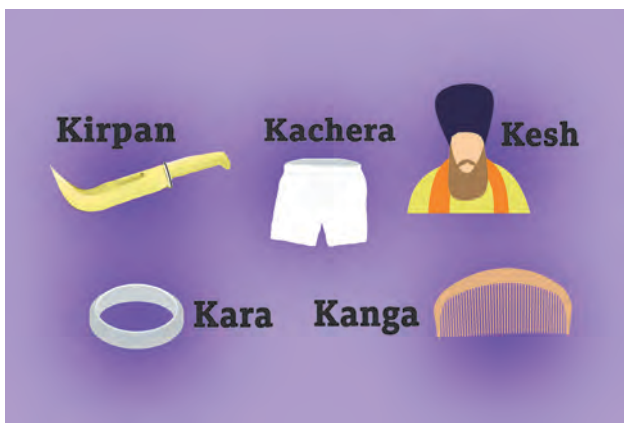
Sayyid  
Dynasty

Lodi  
Dynasty

During the rule of Akbar, he started a religion based on ethical rationalism, called Din-i-Ilahi. It was a synthesis of all religions and was based on Akbar's philosophy of universal toleration. It was a system without a priesthood, no rituals, beliefs nor books. It was inspired by the teachings contained in different sacred texts.

Social interaction of local people with Christians, Muslims and Jews led to conversions. Missionaries were especially known for their educational and social service to all people, irrespective of one's identity – sex, caste, creed, community etc.

Sikhism emerged in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century CE and was founded by Guru Nanak (1469 CE - 1539 CE). Like Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, Sikhism too preached the Karma theory. Sikhism flourished in Punjab (North India) and was largely contained there. It rejected caste-based social hierarchy. It supported equality of all persons for religious worship and other fields of life. The teachings of the ten Gurus constitute the faith of Sikhs and their sacred literature is the 'Guru Granth Sahib'.



**5 K's of Sikhism (Panj Kakkar)**

*Langar* is the Punjabi term for community kitchen which was institutionalised by the founding Guru during the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE. It is a unique symbol of charity and equality, designed to provide a free vegetarian meal to all people irrespective of caste, creed, age, gender or social status. All Sikh gurdwaras operate langars where volunteers (sevadars)

render courtesy, care and hospitality to all visitors.



**Langar**

The Bhakti movement emerged with the need to bring religious reform in Hinduism during the medieval period. It rejected the caste system. It criticised excessive ritualism and advocated simplicity in worship. It professed that all human beings were equal in the eyes of God. The focus was on devotional singing and repetition of his name (namasmaran). Sufism also preached the unity of humanity and believed in the equality of all human beings in the eyes of God. Some important exponents of this are Kabir, Rahim and Guru Nanak. Kabir and Rahim denounced external observances of religion such as rituals, superstitious practices, idolatry and pilgrimages. Guru Nanak decried the caste system, ritualism and idol worship.

#### **Bhakti Movement in Maharashtra:**

This movement began in the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE with Dnyaneshwar. The centre of this movement is located at the temple of Vithoba at Pandarpur. Namdev was his



contemporary (1270-1350) who criticised fasts, pilgrimages and all other external forms of religious practice.



## (ii) Status of women in Indian society

: Religious scriptures as well as historical studies indicate that Indian women enjoyed a comparatively high status during the early Vedic period. This is not to be understood as if women enjoyed an equal status with men. Patriarchal value systems were in operation then and they still continue to this day.

Women during the Early Vedic period had access to Vedic education; they were entitled to the *upanayana* (thread) ceremony which enabled them entry into the Gurukul system of education. The Rig Veda renders the highest status to qualified women.

Educated women were divided into two categories: *Sadyavadhū* – those who pursued their education just until they were married and *Brahmavadinis* – those who never married and continued studying and imparting education throughout their lives. Vedas and Vedangas were taught to women too, but later became limited to religious songs and poems necessary for rituals. Some notable Vedic and Upanishadic women scholars were Apala, Indrani, Ghosha, Lopamudra, Gargi and Maitreyi.

Women were considered as useful and productive members of society. They could participate in social assemblies (*vidath*). They were also permitted to choose their life partners for marriage. Marriage was considered a sacrament and was irrevocable, though not compulsory. The main form of marriage was monogamy. There is mention of Anuloma and Pratiloma marriage in the Upanishads.

In the Later Vedic period, the caste system and Brahminic supremacy became entrenched. Caste groups became rigid with the passage of time. The varna system now turned into an oppressive Jati (caste) system. In all this, women became doubly oppressed. Since education for girls was stopped, so was the sacrament of *upanayana* (thread ceremony) which initiated them into the Gurukul. It was replaced with marriage (*'vivaha'*) and more

so, child marriage. Marriage now became the only sacrament (*samskar*) permissible for women.

You will observe that even though women had a relatively better status in the Early Vedic period, when compared to the Later Vedic period, as regards social and legal aspects, they did not have equal rights with their male counterparts. They did not possess the right to property. The Later Vedic period witnessed a decline in the status of women in society. Women were now restricted to household duties and were barred from attending social assemblies. They were reduced to a subordinate status in the household. The family system continued to be patriarchal and descent was patrilineal. Hence women were more rigidly subjected to the three obediences, viz. father (before marriage), husband (after marriage) and son (after the husband's death). The birth of a daughter began to be looked down upon and there is evidence to suggest the beginning of the practice of dowry. The Gautam-Dharma Sutra advocated that girls should be married off before attaining puberty so as to ensure purity and chastity.

### Activity 2

Discuss whether there are similarities between the status of women in the Later Vedic period and modern Indian women. To what extent are there changes? Do some beliefs and practices still continue in 21<sup>st</sup> century India?

Jainism, being a religion of religious equality, is devoted to recognising the rights of all living creatures. Thus, it accepts that women are able to play a role on the path to liberation. The views of the two sects' viz. Digambara and Shvetambara differ on this issue. The Shvetambara sect acknowledges that many distinguished women played important roles. The 'Sola Sati' (16 virtuous women) highlight exemplary religious qualities



which are emulated as role models by Jain women. However, in the monasteries for women, there are codes of conduct for nuns that are far more difficult than those laid out for monks. At the same time, Mothers of Tirthankaras have been revered and worshipped for fulfillment of desires like progeny, wealth and health. Several Jain nuns have played a very active part in the abolition of sati practice, abolition of *daasi* system of slavery of women and in the prohibition of animal sacrifices. Several Jain nuns and exemplary women are highly respected and praised in the literary and oral tradition.

Digambara Jains believe that the principle of nudity is an essential element in the path to liberation. Vardhaman Mahavir himself had advocated this.

Gautama Buddha permitted women to join his monastic community and to fully participate in it. The various schools and traditions in Buddhism hold differing views regarding the possibilities of women's spiritual achievements. Buddhist doctrines do not differentiate between women and men since everyone, regardless of gender, status or age, is subject to old age, illness and mortality; thus, suffering and impermanence applies to all.



**Buddhist Bhikkhunis**

Though early Buddhist texts state that women can gain enlightenment, it is clearly stated in the Vinaya Pitaka that there could never be a female Buddha. But women were ordained as Bhikkhu into the Sangha. In this

text, Buddha states his positive view that the birth of a daughter should not be a matter for worry nor despair.

The Buddha has emphasised the fruitful role that women can play in society. In family affairs, the wife was expected to be a substitute for the husband if he was indisposed. In fact, she was expected to acquaint herself with his business or trade, so she would want to be in a position to manage his affairs in his absence. Buddha recognised the talents of women and gave them their responsibilities in the Bhikkuni Sangha. Renowned Bhikkunis were Dhammadinna, Khema and Uppalavanna.

The status of women deteriorated even further in Medieval India. Invasions from the Central Asian region along with zealous Brahmanical iron laws were the main cause for this degradation. Freedom of women was curtailed, knowledge of the scriptures and literacy was denied to them and her status was reduced to being dependent on men throughout her lifetime. Only women from upper castes and aristocracy were given education in private.

Widow remarriage which was permitted in the Vedic period, came to be considered taboo. Women continued to be excluded from family inheritances. Practices of child marriage, sati, *purdah* system and Devadasi system made women the objects of exploitation. The patriarchal joint family, the customs of polygamy and early marriage – all contributed to smothering the free development and growth of women.

**(iii) Nature of Education :** In the Harappan civilisation, inscriptions on seals indicate that the Harappan people were literate. There are inscriptions on household objects which point out that common people were literate.

During the Early Vedic period the content of education was based on sacred literature which were written in Sanskrit – which was not the language of the masses. The language

of teaching was also Sanskrit. The Yajur Veda commands education for all classes, women notwithstanding. The Atharva Veda states that “all classes have an equal right to study the Veda”. To enter Vedic Schools, it was a prerequisite for students of the first three Varnas to perform the Upanayana (thread) ceremony and they had to observe Brahmacharya for as long as they lived at the school to study the Vedas. There was an oral tradition of imparting knowledge, which was through rote-learning. Enunciation and pronunciation was an integral part of the oral tradition of learning. The aim of education was to sharpen the intellect as well as for character formation. Most scholars hold the view that the art of writing was unknown during this period. Value was attached to being truthful, carrying out one’s duties (dharma), devotion to the guru and to one’s parents, hospitality, faith and generosity. The Kshatriyas learnt the art of warfare and administration. Vaishyas studied trade and commerce and Shudras learnt agriculture and animal husbandry. The Brahmanas probably stayed in the school until they attained mastery of the four Vedas. There were various centres of learning. In this ‘Age of the four Vedas’, knowledge was created, preserved and transmitted to the subsequent generations through *Rishis*, sages, seers. They were known as *Brahmanas* – the possessors of Brahman (supreme knowledge).

It is observed that during the Later Vedic period, women were denied access to upanayana ceremony, which then denied them access to learning. There was emphasis on the institution of sacrifice and this led to the growth of large amounts of literature related to sacrifice. The first millennium CE saw the rise of States and increasing instability resulting from territorial expansion. There was disintegration of tribal units and chieftains were overthrown. In this situation of seeming hopelessness emerges asceticism as a means for salvation from worldly life, which was

now preached by the Upanishads, though it was also known to the Rig Veda. It is to be noted that by the time of the Upanishads (c. 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE), the spread of asceticism was largely through the teachings of ascetics themselves and new teachings spread through debates and discussions. In eastern parts of India there was the rise of free speculation and the emergence of humanitarian and theistic movements, which in turn led to new centres of spiritual leadership – the ascetics and wanderers (Sramanas or Parivrayakas). They now rejected the authority of the Vedas and of Vedic priests, though they continued to believe the doctrine of transmigration and the law of deeds. They frowned upon blood sacrifices which became a part of Brahminic ritual. Utmost importance was given to the practice of ahimsa or non-injury of living beings. As you would have inferred, we are referring now to the wandering teachers – Vardhamana Mahavir and Gautama Buddha.

After Mahavir became a *Kevalin* (omniscient), a Jina (conquerer) and Mahavir (great hero), he now became part of the sect called Nirgranthas, which came to be referred to as Jainas (following of Jina). Mahavir was a religious teacher for three decades. There were differences in the preachings of Mahavira and Buddha. Buddha borrowed and adapted from the popular beliefs of the region. Buddha chaityas were considered to be the abodes of earth-spirits and genii who, for the simple folk of the time, were far more accessible and less expensive to worship. Unorthodox holy men set up homes around the chaityas and in doing so, they could obtain alms from worshippers of the chaityas. The Buddha respected these local shrines and encouraged his lay followers to do the same. The Buddhist system of education was conducted through Buddhist monasteries (viharas). The centre of the Buddhist system of learning revolved around the Order (Sangh) of monks (bhikkus); later Buddha permitted the entry of women as nuns (bhikkunis). Admission into the Order

meant loss of one's caste and identity, into an organisation characterised by equality and fraternity. Religious instruction was imparted in the viharas.

Like the Brahmanical system of education, there was a special relationship between the learner and teacher; the student had to live with the teacher (Upajjhaya or Acharya) and serve him. There was clear segregation of monks and nuns within the Order. In the Order of Nuns, some became eminent teachers or Theris. Among the Order of Nuns, avenues for education and social service emerged. The Buddha's teachings form the basis of what we may call humanism today. You may recall studying about the famous and renowned ancient universities of Nalanda and Takshashila. Both these universities no longer exist. However, the tradition of residing and studying at monasteries continues to this day. The history of the Buddhist system of education is practically the history of the Buddhist Viharas or Order or Sangha. Just as Vedic culture centered on sacrifices, Buddhist education and learning revolved around monasteries. Mention of this is found in the travellogues of Hiuen Tsang.

Education in the Sangham period was a widespread social activity. It was a secular factor and not the privilege of any one community. Works on grammar, poetry, mathematics, astronomy and fine arts (music, dance, drama, painting, sculpture) and architecture were the specialisations.

The decline of Buddhist Viharas is significant as it marked the decline of an organised system of education. It also marked the beginning of the middle ages, with the advent of Islam in India.

Education during the medieval period is centered on the Quran. Without the ability to read and write, it would have been impossible to study the Quran, the Hadith and other sciences. The Prophet Mohammed exhorts all people of faith to acquire knowledge.

However, unlike the previous systems of learning, there was no requirement for the rigour associated with Vedic schools nor renunciation of the world. The Islamic system of education is open to all followers of the faith irrespective of one's status.

Education was imparted in three ways :

- (i) Maktab (for elementary education),
- (ii) Madrasa (for higher learning and generally attached to a mosque), and
- (iii) Khanqah (theological training).

**Maktab** had an age of admission around four years, which was marked by a rite of entry. Early training focused on the R's of learning - reading, recitation, writing and arithmetic. Several hours were spent on developing the art of writing. The study of the Quran would start from around age seven.

**Madrasas** included comprehensive study of the Quran and its commentary by established theologians alongside practical subjects like agriculture, accountancy, astrology, astronomy, history, geography, mathematics, Islamic law and jurisprudence and statecraft (i.e. the art of administration) and languages such as Arabic and Persian (which were languages also taught elsewhere in the contemporary Islamic world). Noted scholar Abul Fazl informs us that Akbar enabled the study of Sanskrit and Upanishads for Hindu students who wished to learn at the Madrasa. We can infer that the education was based upon the political, social and economic needs of the community at large. Students had the freedom to choose subjects according to one's interests and their aims in life. Post-madrasa training could be followed up by engaging the services of a learned teacher (for example, Abdul Qadir Badaoni, Abul Fazl, Faizi). Madrasas provided facilities for residence for both, students and teachers; financial support came from rulers, the wealthy and pious Muslims. In this regard they were similar to Buddhist Viharas and temple colleges of South India from after the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE.



**Khanqahs** can be likened to monasteries of Medieval Europe and they were often linked to the tombs of celebrated, much loved and respected saints. These came to be regarded as *Dargahs*.



**Indo-Islamic Art**

### Activity 3

Find out more about the impact of Muslim rule on the following :

- Painting • Architecture • Music

Present your findings in class.

**Art :** It is interesting to note that various arts and crafts such as music, painting, medicine, astronomy, geography, geometry and literature had contributed towards the Golden Age of the Guptas. Many of these skills got imparted through apprenticeship. The arts were especially boosted by the generosity of donors. In the course of time, the arts themselves came to be influenced by the tastes, ideas and interests of the patrons, namely, Muslim rulers in Medieval India.

During the Medieval Period education suffered a setback due to changed political circumstances. Muslim rulers at the imperial capitals at Delhi and Agra did not do anything remarkable for the promotion of education of women. Educational work was carried out in the villages and towns by private individuals and institutions. The mediums of instruction were Sanskrit, Arabic

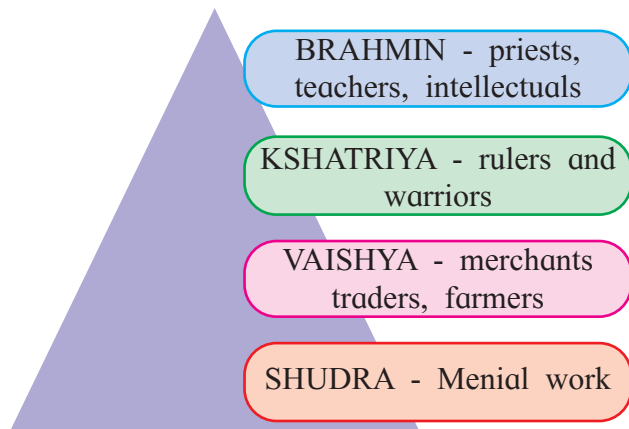
and Persian. Education, however, was made available to only a small section of people e.g. the elite and the ulema, the Brahmins, and a few upper caste groups. The education of girls was perceived as being a personal matter to be decided by their fathers or guardians. Women from the Muslim nobility were permitted to receive education in their homes at the hands of teachers who were presented with expensive gifts. Since, only a relatively small number of people belonged to the upper strata of society, it is reasonable to assume that the education of girls and women during the Medieval period was bleak.

**(iv) Social life :** Harappan civilisation was known for its well-planned towns, covered drainage system, its granary which was used for storing and trading surplus grain. The Great Bath is one indicator of the collective life of the people. Excavations indicate the existence of people who were probably horizontally divided on the basis of skills, without a rigid hierarchical structure. Thus, there were peasants, artisans, traders, fishermen, priests, administrators, artists, weavers etc.

Sangham literature makes reference to tribes and traditional castes. This is indicative of their coexistence. Though the Brahmins constituted a numerical minority, they played an important role in the development of Tamilian culture. Sangham priests though not dominating were in the process of assuming advisory and supervisory powers. The Bards (nomadic ballad singers) were a special class. Vedars (hunter and highway robbers) were much feared. The Marakudi was a separate warrior section who had their own traditions and beliefs. Then, there were fishermen, salt manufacturers, weavers, agriculturalists, shepherds and cowherds who were also important.

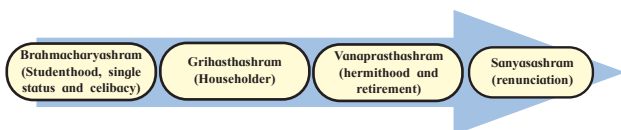
The Varna System during Vedic period referred to the social order or class of people.

There was flexibility and fluidity with respect to occupation. It was only towards the end of the Vedic period that Varna turned into a rigid *jati* (caste) hierarchy based on the ideology of ‘purity and pollution’. Notions of purity and pollution continue to be followed in everyday practices such as food and water intake, dressing, occupation, worship, social interactions, travel etc.



The first three varnas began to call themselves the upper varnas. They became the ‘twice-born’ (dvija) because they were entitled to the initiation ceremony (upanayana).

**Ashramvyavastha** was prescribed for the so-called twice-born castes. This referred to the four stages in the life of a Hindu. They were,



Hindu teachings showed its followers, four paths to realise God and attain Moksha. Each path is called a Marg. They were Jnana Marg (Path of Knowledge), Bhakti Marg (Path of Devotion), Raja Marg (Path of Meditation), Karma (Path of Action). Even in present times, Hindus through their daily life tend to follow one or more paths prescribed, but with more flexibility. You may have read about or seen YouTube videos of the Kumbh Mela Festival of the Sadhus. Sadhus are people who choose the path of asceticism.

The Classical Period (i.e. the period of the Gupta Dynasty) believed to be the ‘Golden Age’, is when Indian society grew and thrived, setting the foundations in arts, science, politics, religion, philosophy and economics that define Indian culture to this day. This period consists of the time when India was governed by the powerful Gupta Empire. When Chandragupta I ascended the throne, he built a mighty army and began consolidating all the warring cities under his rule. The Gupta Empire then grew to control much of the Indian subcontinent. It became a global trade centre and an epicentre of artistic and intellectual achievement. This was the time when Aryabhatta wrote on geometry, trigonometry and cosmology and calculated the length of the year at 365.358 days. He also predicted that the earth was a sphere. Varahamihira wrote on astronomy and astrology. Dhanvantri wrote on medicine. Education and Literacy were priorities of the Gupta civilisation. Everybody including the non-nobility had an equal opportunity for education.

Eventually, however, the empire grew so large that it became unwieldy and difficult to manage. The smaller kingdoms broke away. This allowed the Huns of Central Asia to invade and defeat the Gupta dynasty around 550 CE and finally the classical period declined by 650 CE.

Many texts (Nitishastras and Dharmashastras) were written during period of ‘second urbanisation’, (see page 15) which elaborated on socio-political laws. The punishments, however, varied according to the *jati* of the accused. Caste hierarchy deepened and the Shudras were assigned the status of mere service providers, namely, artisans, agricultural labourers and slaves to the ‘dvija castes’. Kinship ties continued to be strong, but patriarchal control of the family was predominant and the position of women deteriorated even further.

### You should know!

#### Great and Little Traditions

This is a conception of civilisations drawn up by two social anthropologists - Milton Singer and Robert Redfield who have conducted field work in North India.

Civilisations were conceived by them in cultural terms as co-existing and interdependent systems. They were called:

- (i) **Great Traditions** : an overarching dominant ideology that includes idea systems like science, philosophy, fine arts, and critical and reflexive ideas that more or less cover a large territory. (e.g. Hindustani and Carnatic Music)
- (ii) **Little Traditions** : which include folk art, folklore and the religious traditions of the local people. (e.g. Lavani, Lezim, Powada (ballad) of Maharashtra, Kalaripayattu of Kerala.)

The Medieval Period of India is one of numerous conquests. Early Muslim invaders came to India to take advantage of India's material resources. During the Delhi Sultanate, society experienced a synthesis of Indian and Islamic culture. Thus, Indo-Islamic architecture, use of mechanical technology and use of Hindi-Urdu language (Hindustani) was seen. Amir Khusro, who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century used a form of Hindustani, which he called Hindavi, which was the language of the period. At the same time, the Delhi Sultanate was also responsible for large scale destruction and desecration of temples – Hindu, Jain and Buddhist, in the Indian sub-continent.

The Delhi Sultanate was a feudal hierarchy that was broadly divided into four major groups – aristocrats or nobles (Sultans

and their relatives, Hindu and Muslim Chieftains), priests (Ulemas and Brahmin), towns people (urban wealthy merchants, traders and artisans), and peasants (rural agriculturalists who paid taxes to the State). During this period also, a rigid caste system was followed.

Scholars suggest that it was due to the systematic efforts of Emperor Akbar that gave India a strong and stable political administration. There were rulers who extended their empires far and wide; some were benevolent rulers and others were tyrants. There were some peaceful empires and others filled with fear and bloodshed. The Medieval Period is often stated to be the darkest period in the history of India, which is also true of Europe. However, as sociologists, it is necessary for us to understand that, through this, there emerged several changes that transformed Indian society also.

Performing arts, architecture and sculpture flourished alongside internal and foreign trade, and commerce. The establishment of Din-I-Ilahi by Akbar was a new religion based on ethical rationalism.

Towards the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE there emerged a widening gap between liberals and orthodox groups from various faiths. This polarisation is hardly surprising as it seems to be a recurring pattern among all religious groups even in 21<sup>st</sup> century India.

**(v) Urbanisation** : Contrary to the popularly held view that urbanisation is the result of industrial development, it is interesting to note that archeological evidence from the Harappan civilisation suggest that Harappa was indeed a well-planned town with a 'way of life' that can be referred to as '**first urbanisation**'. Archeological evidence suggests that the city life of the people of Harappa was well-developed. Some houses had wells and bathrooms. The city had a covered drainage system and a well-developed drainage system underground. The social



conditions were well-advanced like other contemporary civilisations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. There are recorded references to trade and commerce of the Harappan civilisation in Sumerian documents.

Towards the end of the Later Vedic period, after the pastoral and nomadic Indo-Aryans spread from Punjab to the Gangetic Plain; they deforested large areas of land to pave way for agriculture. The period c.500 BCE to c.200 BCE is considered the period of **‘second urbanisation’** which brought a large-scale beginning of town life in the middle Gangetic basin. Magadha had gained prominence and formed the base of the Mauryan Empire. This was a distinct cultural area, with new States arising after 500 BCE.

The small Indo-Aryan chieftaincies called Janapadas were consolidated into larger states called Mahajanpadas. Sixteen monarchies and “republics” known as Mahajanpadas, stretched across the Indo-Gangetic Plain from modern day Afghanistan to Bengal and Maharashtra. This period saw the second major rise of urbanism in India after the Harappan civilisation. Evidence for it comes through archaeological excavations, especially those of the Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) culture. Jain, Buddhist and Sutra literature are among the important sources of information about cities and socio-political life of this period.

The beginning of coinage (metallic coins) started in this period. These cities became the centres of administration as well as of trade and commerce. This led to the emergence of city-based artisan and merchant guilds. A network of routes for internal and distant trade developed in both eastern and western regions. The position of ‘king’ gained much strength and respect. The king was assisted by ministers and officials, who often came from the Brahmin and Kshatriya caste.

The above themes will give you some idea of specific factors and forces, or

circumstances that influenced people’s thinking and behaviour. As a learner in modern India, critically look at beliefs, practices, traditions, customs, patterns of behaviour that continue to be followed even today. Surely, this is the result of socialisation and cultural transmission from one generation to the next. It is important for us in the present times to ask questions about why practices or customs or beliefs continue. There is certainly no homogeneity that characterises the whole of a complex and composite culture. There are inherent contradictions and conflicting ideas. This is the beauty of plurality and complexities of social life. There is no one way to understand this social reality, frightening as that may sound. A world-view that comprehends historical disruptions and complexities in multi-layered realities can be called the “sociological imagination”.

#### Check your progress

1. What was the nature of education during the Early Vedic period?
2. State two indicators of the declining status of women during the Later Vedic period.
3. Mention any two characteristics of the Indian society in Medieval period.

## 1.2 COLONIAL PERIOD

The colonial period in India is generally referred to as the age of European conquest in this region. The Portuguese entered India for trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE.

By the early 17<sup>th</sup> century CE, the Dutch and British also landed on our shore. The French too came to India but their presence is felt especially in Puducherry (Pondicherry) in South India.

The British continued to rule India till the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The spread of Christianity in the Anglican tradition (Church of England) during the British presence in India is evident.

One cannot deny the fact that several systems were set in place under British rule in India. Some of the social reforms were also possible because of British policies.

Let us look at some consequences of colonialism in India.

**(1) Education :** The British set up a system of education which had far reaching impact on Indian society. The medium of instruction in the high school now became English. It became the common language of communication among the learned people. Schools and colleges were open to all individuals, irrespective of caste, creed, gender etc. The Indian Universities Act, 1856, enabled the establishment of the first universities - in Calcutta (Kolkata), Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai); they were modelled after the University of London. The content of education was not religion-oriented. It was secular – which included subjects like Mathematics, Science, Philosophy, Sociology, History etc. This led to the rise of a new class of intelligentsia, who were of Indian origin but trained in “Western” values, customs and practices. Some of them played a significant role in the reform movements. New values like rationality, equality, social justice, secular approach and individualism gained firmer ground.

**(2) Culture :** Many of the educated elite took to the lifestyle of the British with respect to food habits, dressing, customs, mannerisms, attitudes, beliefs, language, sports and entertainment etc. Eminent Indian sociologist, M. N. Srinivas referred to this process of imitation of the British, as ‘westernization’. The impact of Western culture has been classified into *four* types by **Alatas**. They are (i) eliminative changes (i.e. fading out of cultural elements), (ii) additive changes (i.e. new cultural additions), (iii) supportive changes (i.e. changes that support

existing cultural traits) and (iv) synthetic changes (i.e. the synthesis of old and new culture).

**(3) Administration :** The British set in place new systems of administration. They started the system of Services like the Economic Service, Education Service, Revenue Service and Administrative Service. It was the English-educated Indians who entered the administrative services to assist British rulers in governing the land and its people. A new judiciary system was created, which took into consideration the earlier legal traditions of the Indian communities. However, its implementation was carried out on a secular basis; each individual judged on an equal basis, irrespective of one’s caste and creed. The authority of feudal lords and zamindars was abolished; effecting gradual permeation of democratic values into the Indian psyche and society. The Indian Councils Act, The Indian High Court Act and The Indian Civil Service Act of 1861 - all led to major changes in the Executive, Legislative and Judicial administration of India.



**Bombay High Court**

**(4) Economy :** The economic system got transformed by industrial growth and its twin process of urbanisation. Caste-based skills and occupations and social relationships were gradually changing due to the impact of a changing economy and the rise of factories. The emergence of economic and educated classes were on the rise. Traditional

barriers were gradually dropped. New Revenue systems were started by the British in different parts of India which affected the peasants adversely. There was commercialisation of agriculture also. Subsistence economy was replaced by a market system that thrived on profiteering. The spurt in growth of cash crops had an inverse effect on growth of food crops. The famines in Bengal and Odisha (Orissa) in 1856 bear testimony to this.

#### **(5) Transport and Communication :**

Systems of railways and roadways, and Post and Telegraph offices were set up through the length and breadth of the country. These were ways in which it became possible to reach people in all parts of the country and access resources. In 1869, the Suez Canal was opened to promote trade interests. Earlier, Indian raw materials could not easily be transported to England. Development of transportation and communication led to an increase in market outlets for Indian raw materials.

**(6) Nationalist Movement :** Use of English as a common language of communication among the educated elite played a significant role in networking, promoting nationalism and thereafter the nationalist movement received momentum. The awakening among the Indian masses against alien rule resulted in the call for expulsion of the British from India and to fight for independence. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of the Indian National Congress and Mahatma Gandhi as the key figure in the call for independence.

**(7) Social Reform Movements :** It was the educated Indians, often from the upper social strata, who spearheaded the agenda for change at the micro-socio levels. The 19<sup>th</sup> century is witness to the emergence of many social and religious reform movements.

<b>Movements of Social Reforms</b>	<b>Founder</b>
Brahmo Samaj	Raja Rammohan Roy
Arya Samaj	Swami Dayanand Saraswati
Prarthana Samaj	Aatmaram Pandurang Tarkhadkar
Satya Shodhak Samaj	Mahatma Jotiba Phule
Harijan Sevak Sangh	Mahatma Gandhi
Theosophical Society	Annie Besant
Seva Sadan	Behramji Malbari
Dharma Sabha	Radhakant Deb
Wahabi Movement	Syed Waliullah
Self-Respect Movement	Erode V. Ramasamy (Periyar)

All these groups struggled to bring about changes at the local level in which they operated. They worked towards reforming obsolete, repressive and regressive religious practices. Many groups worked to promote education among the 'weaker' sections – especially women and so-called lower castes. Organisations like the Arya Samaj aimed at restoring Vedic traditions and integrating Vedic knowledge with a modern curriculum.

**(8) Social Legislation :** It refers to laws passed to promote social justice, social welfare, desirable social change, as well as protection of vulnerable and weaker sections of Indian society. The increase in the number of reformative groups could enable Indians to exert pressure upon the British government, for passing laws against prevalent social evils. It may be noted that laws by themselves cannot transform society, but they provided hope to those who were victims of injustice, oppression, exploitation and abuse. Some significant legislations include the following.



Year	Name of the Act
1829	The Prevention of Sati Act
1843	The Indian Slavery Act
1850	The Caste Disabilities Removal Act
1856	The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act
1870	The Female Infanticide Prevention Act
1872	The Civil (or Special) Marriage Act
1929	The Child Marriage Restraint Act

### Check your progress

With reference to the Colonial period:

1. Name two educational changes.
2. State two economic changes.
3. Cite two administrative changes.

### Activity 4

**Discussion :** Social reform movements are still present in India.

## 1.3 POST-INDEPENDENT INDIA

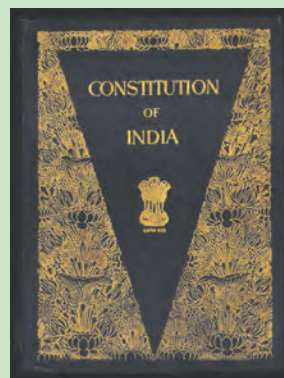
After Independence, the goals and programmes of the country have seen numerous changes. Our ancient culture and the British period had mixed impact on our thought patterns, behaviour patterns, our goals, aspirations, needs and so on. Alongside these, have emerged new challenges as well as opportunities. We are guided by the principles and values enshrined in the Indian Constitution and government plans and programmes for change, welfare, inclusion, development of all its people. Let us examine some significant factors that have affected India after 1947.

### (1) Constitution of India :

The Constitution of India was framed by the Constituent Assembly which was founded on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1946 to write the Constitution of India. The head of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution was Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. It is a document based on the strengths of several Constitutions and it recognises the diversity of Indian society. It cherishes the goals of liberty, equality and fraternity. It supports secularism; in the Indian context this meant, respect for people of all religions. There have been numerous amendments to the Indian Constitution. A recent change has been the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 which gave special status to Jammu & Kashmir.

### You should know !

The Constitution of India was made after the Drafting Committee referred to the Government of India Act (1935) as



well as the Constitutions of Australia, Canada, Germany (Weimer), Ireland, Japan, South Africa, Soviet Union, United Kingdom and United States.

### (2) Legislation :

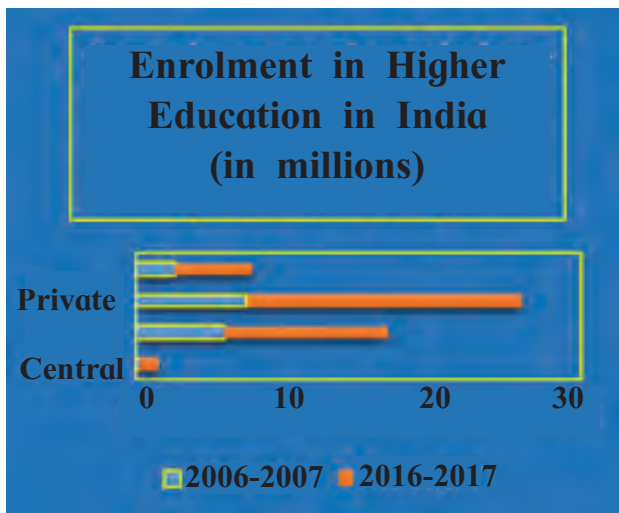
Concerns and problems of people and administration get recognised through academic research, scientific studies, media, advocacy groups and interest groups. Laws are made by the Indian Parliament. Several laws related to civil and criminal matters have been enacted, which may be amended or repealed from time to time. Some social legislations that would be of interest to us are given in the box on page 19.

Year	Legislative Provisions
1954	The Special Marriage Act
1955	The Hindu Code Bill
1955	The Untouchability (Offences) Act, later renamed, The Protection of Civil Rights Act (PCR Act), in 1976
1956	The Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act (SITA)
1961	The Dowry Prohibition Act
1971	The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP)
1985	The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act
1986	The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act
1995	Persons With Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act
2005	The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act
2012	The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. It was amended in 2019.
2013	The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act
2015	The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act
2019	The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act

**(3) Economy :** The economic growth of India until recently was guided by Planned Development, through twelve Five-Year Plans till 2017. Each plan period has had its own objectives. It is necessary to appreciate the link between polity and economy, as they are two sides of the same coin. The dispensation in government influences the philosophy that drives economic decisions. While we were driven by socialist principles for many decades, the government took upon itself the responsibility of education and health care in particular. It was in 1991, that a decisive change led to the onset, and some might say, onslaught, of globalisation. Indeed, globalisation has its share of positives but there are criticisms too. Since 2014, changes such as demonetisation, single taxation policy under GST, welfare schemes, borderless trade practices, *Swachh Bharat* drives, promoting

entrepreneurship etc. have been key points.

**(4) Education :** There has been significant expansion of number of anganwadis, schools, universities, deemed universities, autonomous institutions, IITs (Indian Institute of Technology), IIMs (Indian Institute of Management), IIITs (Indian Institute of Information Technology), NITs (National Institute of Technology), vocational programmes, open learning, online education, self-learning opportunities and so on. Enrollment numbers have been swelling and spinning beyond control in several cases. Indeed there are waves of certain courses flourishing from time to time. Number of teachers have also risen. The challenges of education have not diminished. The National Education Policy has been formulated in 2020, which aims to transform education across all levels.



**(5) Polity :** In Post-Independent India, we have taken on a system of governance based on the principle of democracy. India is the most populous democracy in the world. The three arms of government are the Executive, Assembly Legislature and the Judiciary. We have the principle of democratic decentralisation where power percolates down to the grassroots level. The Indian political system no longer recognises the former statuses of Prince, *nawab*, *Raja* or *Rani*. All citizens are equal in the eyes of law. Modern India has embraced the principles and practice of free and fair elections. Voting rights are given to all citizens of India, on the attainment of age 18. India also has a multi-party system – and parties may be national, state or regional in character. Individuals also have the right to contest in elections. We

also have a federal system of governance – Centre and State/Union Territory. The goals, policies and agenda of each government is guided by its own principles or ideologies. There are differences and multiple views (for example, Left, Right and Centre). The role of the opposition is the responsibility of keeping a check on the government in power. Consensus is an important value in a democratic society.

It is hoped that the introduction to Indian Society has given a bird's eye view of our vast culture and the forces that have impacted the same. This will perhaps equip us to understand Indian social institutions, to study social change in India, and to examine the hurdles that we face with respect to progress and development. At the same time, we can view some important challenges that lie ahead of us in the future.



**Voting rights to all adult citizens of India**



## SUMMARY

- In this course, as learners of Sociology, this unit takes you through significant patterns that have seen changes through the ages. The study of our past has been broadly divided into three periods: Ancient and Medieval India, Colonial period and Post-Independence period.
- The patterns focus upon : the influence of religious beliefs, customs and practices, the status of women in India and educational systems.
- The impact of three ancient indigenous religions – Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism is significant especially up to the end of the Later Vedic period.
- Subsequently, the impact of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism and Sikhism is seen in many fields – especially social service (e.g. education, healthcare, philanthropy).
- The Medieval period saw the rise and fall of various Hindu and Muslim empires.
- Though India has been influenced to a certain degree by the Portuguese, Dutch, and French, it is the British (or Colonial) impact which is significant on Indian society. The impact is seen in the areas of administration, social legislation, education, transport and communication, social reform movements, growth of nationalist movement etc.
- In the post-Independence era the impact is due to the Constitution, Legal provisions, education, economic and political changes and reforms etc.

## EXERCISES

**Q.1 (A) Complete the following statements by choosing the correct alternative given in the bracket and rewrite it.**

- (1) Monks in Buddhist monasteries were called ..... .  
(Bhikkus, Bhikkunis, Rishis)
- (2) The Special Marriage Act was passed in the year ..... .  
(1950, 1952, 1954)

**(B) Correct the incorrect pair and rewrite it.**

- (i) Raj Marg - Hinduism
- (ii) Teerthankar – Jainism
- (iii) Saint Thomas – Sikhism
- (iv) Eight-fold Path - Buddhism

**(C) Identify the appropriate term from the given options in the box and rewrite it against the given statement.**

Brahmo Samaj, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar,  
Harijan Sevak Sangh

- (1) An association established by Raja Rammohan Roy.
- (2) Head of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution of India

**(D) Correct the underlined words and complete the statement.**

- (1) Elementary education was imparted in Khanqahs during the medieval period.
- (2) The Theosophical Society was the initiative of Mahatma Gandhi.

**Q.2 Write short notes.**

- (1) Education during the Early Vedic period.
- (2) Status of women during the Medieval period.

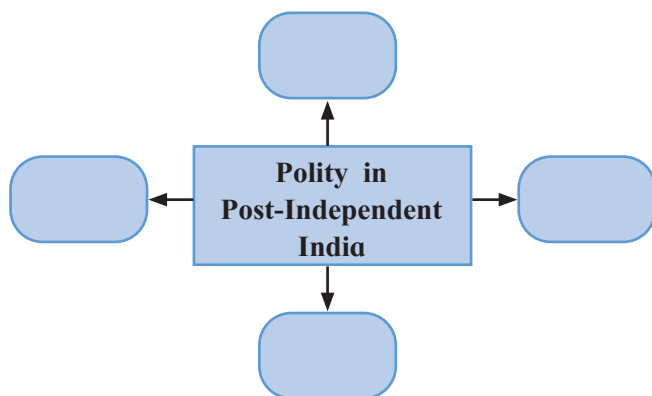
**Q.3 Write differences.**

- (1) Status of women in the Early Vedic period and Later Vedic period.
- (2) Education in the Ancient Period and Colonial period in Indian society.

**Q.4 Explain the following concepts with examples.**

- (1) Varna
- (2) Social legislation

**Q.5 (A) Complete the concept map.**



**(B) State whether the following statements are True or False with reasons.**

- (1) Colonial rule has significant impact on Indian society.
- (2) Buddhism spread to several parts of India and beyond.

**Q.6 Give your personal response.**

- (1) Jainism and Buddhism provided hope to all people.
- (2) Social reform movements are present even in 21<sup>st</sup> century India.

**Q.7 Answer the following question in detail. (About 150-200 words)**

Discuss with relevant examples, how the following factors have changed Indian society today.

- (i) English medium of instruction
- (ii) Lowering the age for voting
- (iii) Social legislations
- (iv) Transport and Communication

◆ ◆ ◆