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- Lack of regard for public property,
- Patriarchal system.

### **3.5.1 Fatalism**

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

### **3.5.2 Particularism**

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

### **3.5.3 Attitude of Public Property**

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

### **3.5.4 Patriarchal System**

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

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

occupational discrimination, social isolation, and psychological dependence, etc. faced by women have roots in this cultural preference for the male.

### 3.6 ECONOMY, POVERTY, EDUCATION

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

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

#### Some Aspects of Human Development in India

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

Box 3.02 Human Development Index			
1.	Life expectancy	63.3 yrs	2. Adult Literacy rate (15 years and above) 57.2%
3.	Combined enrolment ratio	55%	4. % of Population not using improved drinking water sources 12%
5.	Underweight children under age 5	47%	6. % of people living below National Poverty Line 35.0%
7.	Annual Population growth rate	1.9%	8. % of urban population 27.7%
9.	Population not using adequate sanitation facilities	69%	10. Children underweight for age [under 5 years] 47%
11	People Living with HIV/AIDS (2001)	0.79%	

Source: UNDP, 2003

#### 3.6.1 Child Labour

Child labour, a manifestation of poverty in the country has become a social problem in India. A large number of families belonging to the poor section of the society are forced to depend upon their children's contribution to the family income. They are not in a position to spare their children for full-time or even part-time schooling. Thus children who are expected to be in schools are found working as labourers.

Apart from the economic constraints of the families of the working children, the owners of some of the small-scale enterprises also prefer to employ child labour. For them, child labour is cheap. It reduces the cost of production and maximise their profit. Thus, child labour gets encouragement from both - the parents of the children and the owners of the enterprise. Therefore, despite the appalling conditions under which children work and the low wages they earn, child labour thrives in India.

**Activity 1**

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

### 3.6.2 Illiteracy and Education

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

### 3.6.3 Educational System

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

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

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

There is another kind of mismatch between education and economy in India. It is the situation wherein some of the highly qualified manpower produced by some of the educational institutions in India do not find the placement in the country rewarding enough. The result is the brain drain in which India loses what cream of its highly qualified manpower produced at a very heavy cost of public resources.



### 3.6.4 Industrialisation and Urbanisation

The process of industrialisation and urbanisation has been slow in India. Industrialisation has been concentrated in certain pockets in the country. The result is the inordinate growth of population in a few urban centres. This overgrowth of population in a few urban centres has created various problems of – urban poverty, unemployment, congestion, pollution, slum, etc.

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

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## 3.7 STATE AND POLITY

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

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

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

### 3.7.1 Electoral Process

Politically, India has a multi-party parliamentary form of democracy. Ideally, political parties are to be organised on universalistic ideologies and the citizens are expected to choose their representatives on universalistic principles. In fact, particularistic tendencies play an important role in the electoral process of the country. One can find political parties formed on communal or parochial lines and political mobilisation undertaken by political parties and individuals on the basis of caste, religion, language and region. The political activities of

this sort are negation of the healthy democratic polity. They are also leading to sectional conflicts, atrocities against weaker sections, linguistic and religious minorities. Thus, the political functioning and the electoral process, as they exist today, are fomenting problems of communalism, casteism and conflicts between the different sections of society.

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### 3.8 LET US SUM UP

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

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### 3.9 KEY WORDS

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Structural Breakdown</b>       | : This concept was used by Talcott Parsons to mean the system of rigidity which tries to resist or retard social transformation and thus leads to breakdown of the social structure. The steps taken by the people against systematic rigidity in the form of collective mobilisation has been called by Marxists as revolution. |
| <b>Structural Inconsistencies</b> | : This concept indicates the existence of two opposite sub-structures within the same structure which are not consistent with each other.  |
| <b>Soft-State</b>                 | : This concept has been used by Gunnar Myrdal in his book “The Asian Drama: An Enquiry into the Poverty of Nations’. By this concept he means the functioning of newly Independent Asian States which find difficulties in taking hard decisions to enforce the rule of law.   |

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### 3.10 FURTHER READINGS

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Singh, Yogendra, 1988. *Modernisation of Indian Tradition*, Reprint, Rawat Publication, Jaipur.

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### 3.11 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) a) Caste distinctions, overemphasis on rituals over knowledge, rigid hierarchy, higher position of ritual performers, sacrifice of animals.
- b) Attitudes of avoidance, superstition, increased notion of purity and pollution, untouchability, child marriage, lower position of women, strict observance of widowhood.
- c) *Sati*, Widowhood, Child marriage, illiteracy, untouchability, *thagi*, superstitions.

- d) Communalism, untouchability, population explosion, problems of weaker section alcoholism, drug addiction poverty, unemployment, black money, crime, delinquency and violence.
- 2) Arya Samaj, Brahmasamaj, Prarthan Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission.
- 3) Sanskritisation,  
Westernisation,  
Modernisation

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The Indian Society is multi-religious in nature, During the colonial period, the relationship between different religious communities particularly between Hindus and Muslims was politicised. It encouraged a tendency known as communalism which has been strengthened by mutual suspicious ideologies, competition for power, service and resources.
- 2) The education in the traditional Indian system was primarily confined to the upper castes. It has its adverse impact on the spread of mass education. This is one of the reasons for the widespread illiteracy in India.
- 3) English continues to be the link language in India for the purpose of higher education, administration and diplomacy. At the level of the centre, there is the question of the relationship between English and Hindi for the purpose of the medium of instructions and administration and at the State level between English, Hindi and the regional languages.
- 4)
  - a) There are several tribes in India and they comprise around seven per cent of India's population. They are not homogeneous in their customs. They are isolated and exploited and facing the problem of detribalisation.
  - b) There are religious and linguistic minorities in India. Sometimes, castes and tribes may also be considered as minorities within specific areas.
- 5)
  - a) Adverse effects on development and welfare programmes,
  - b) Poverty,
  - c) Illiteracy,
  - d) Increased pressures on land, capital, forest and other resources.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1)
  - a) Excessive consideration for one's own kin group, caste, tribe or religion,
  - b) corruption-involving favouritism,
  - c) discrimination,
  - d) inter-group conflicts
- 2) This lack of respect for public property is one of the root-causes of corruption, black money, tax-evasion, misappropriation of fund and use of sub-standard materials in public constructions.
- 3) There is a close linkage between economy, poverty and education. The illiteracy in India is directly linked with poverty. There is a mis-match between economy and education in the Indian context.
- 4) In fact, particularistic tendencies play an important role in the electoral process of the country. Several political parties have been formed on communal and parochial lines. At the time elections, castes, religion, language and region play significant roles. This type of mobilisation is also responsible for many socio-economic problems in India.

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