**Social Organization of Indian Civilization**

Social organization of Indian civilization has been analysed from various theoretical dimensions. Milton Singer (1968), for instance, is of the view that the pre-existing folk/regional culture fashioned India’s primary or indigenous civilization. He observed a cultural continuity between the great and the little traditions as being the cause and product of sharing common cultural consciousness and the expression of similar Indian outlook and ethos. This common consciousness and expression of similar ethos are found, according to Singer (1964), in India’s diverse regions, villages, castes, tribes, sacred books and sacred geography of sacred centres.

The basic social units of Indian civilization, i.e., joint family, caste and villages are not taken as structural or cultural isolates. These are rather seen as intimately connected with one another, and with other social units, through social networks of various kinds. The non-isolationist point of view was also adopted in Marriott’s work (Village India, 1955). It became the point of departure from the Redfieldian concept of a civilization as a structure of such networks and cultural centres (Redfield and Singer, 1954, “The Cultural Codes of Cities”; Cohn and Marriott, 1958, “Centres and networks in the integration of Indian civilization”; Singer, 1958, “The social organization of Indian civilization”; etc.). Singer tried to find out *how* the great tradition of Hinduism works in a modern heterogenetic city (e.g., his study on Madras city, 1958, 1972).

Analysing the cultural content in rural dimension (e.g., his *Kishan Garhi* study, 1955), Mckim Marriott tried to understand the autonomous wholeness of the regions of ‘Little Community’ and religious traditions of Indian civilization from the perspective of religion of little community present in Indian civilization (1955). For Marriott, the cultural growth of Indian civilization is occurring through two complementary processes of universalization and parochialization.

Marriott with Cohn (1958) tried to explain the integration of Indian civilization with references to her networks (of trade, marriage, etc.) and centres (religious, political, commercial and administrative). They viewed centres as a point, a concentration of civilizational influence. Indian civilization is thought to be consisting of knots and ties between the knots. The knots are concentrations from which elements of civilization flow outward, and the ties between the knots are the lines of communication and transportation along which the influences pass.

In his attempt to understand the social organization of Indian civilization, Oscar Lewis (1955) developed the concept of rural cosmopolitanism in his study of Ranikhera village (1955). For him, a village has extensive interrelations with a wide rural society (community). This pilgrimage to shrines and also arises from caste connections and intermarriages. He further highlighted the varied roles of kin- and caste –oriented factions in the process of decision-making in rural India (*Village Life in Northern India*, 1958).

Luis Dumont, on the other hand, tried to understand the traditional pan-Indian social organization from the intellectualist viewpoint, with the central focus being the exposition of hierarchy (1980 [1970]).

The functional relation of religion to social structure was the central focus of W.H.R. River’s monograph on the Todas (1906), Radcliffe-Brown’s on the Andamanese (1922), and Srinivas’ on the Coorgs (1952). The characteristic problem of these classic studies was to identify the religious cults associated with the different basic units of social structure – family, village, caste, etc. – and to trace the network of functional relations which bound them together.

Many later studies, however, have tried to trace the functional relations of other aspects of culture to social structure: of politics to social structure, of economics to social structure, of law to social structure, of language to social structure, etc. The works of F.G. Bailey, Barth, A. Beteille, T.S. Epstein, and C. Gough, among others, illustrate this trend. At the same time, there is a new interest in the conditions and course of change in these functional relationships. Nicholas, for example, seeks to determine the generic interrelations at the village level of political conflict, land tenure, and social structure, and how these are being changed by the coming of universal suffrage and land reform. Srinivas pointed out that sanskritization involves a change in position in the caste system but not a change in the system itself.