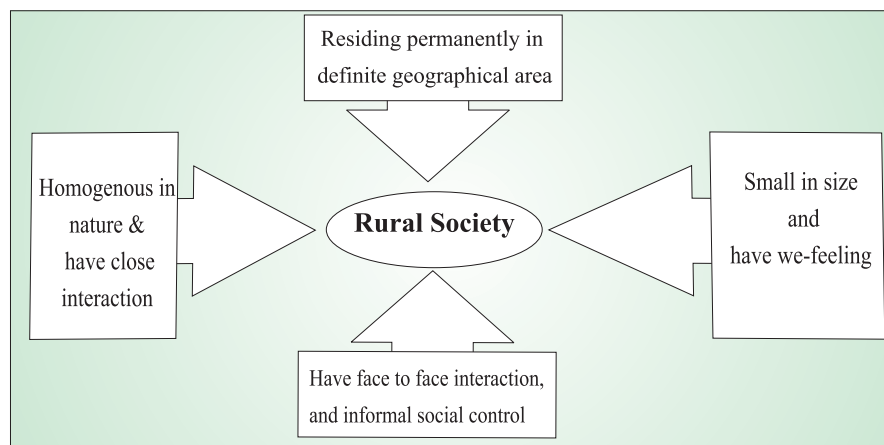


sociologists and anthropologists. A few among these include S. C. Dube, Oscar Lewis, M. N. Srinivas, M. Marriott, F. G. Bailey, Kathleen Gough, K. L. Sharma, Andre Beteille, etc.

Thus rural Society is :

- Residing permanently in definite geographical area, small in size, homogenous in nature, has face to face interaction, and informal social control.
- Families are mostly joint in nature.
- Its economy is self sufficient in nature and based on agriculture.
- Within the village, different caste groups are vertically arranged, forming a sort of hierarchy. They are interdependent.

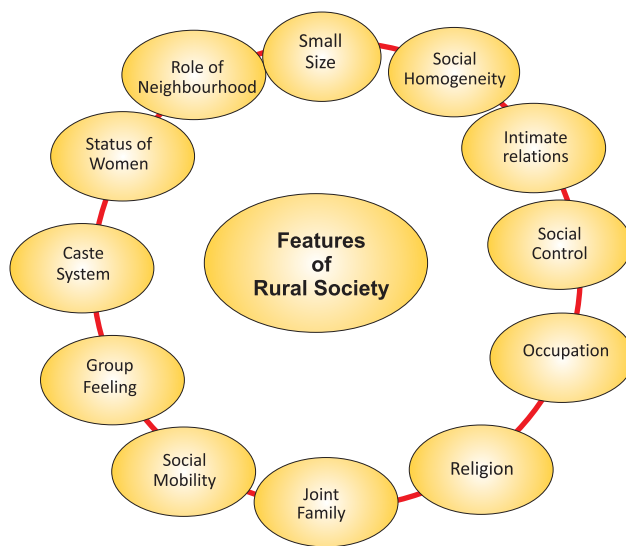


Features of Rural Society

The main characteristics of the rural society are discussed below:

1. **Small Size:** The rural societies are smaller in area than the urban societies. As the rural societies are small in size hence, the population is also less.
2. **Social Homogeneity:** Rural areas are homogenous in nature. Their life is very simple and smooth. Most of their inhabitants are connected with agriculture and its allied occupations. Therefore, in the way of thinking, behaving, dressing, acting and living the people are almost similar in nature.
3. **Intimate Relations:** In rural areas face to face relations are found. Since, the village is small in size, every person knows each other. All the members of village are interested in the welfare of all. Thus, the relationships in village community are informal, personal and inclusive.
4. **Social Control:** Village is an organised unit of an agrarian society. The life of people is dominated by traditional mores and informal social pressure. The mode of social control in rural society is informal in nature. Social pressure by the community in these areas is strong because of personal and informal contacts. The *Caste Panchayats* and the *Village Panchayats* are used as instruments of social pressure to look into the instances of social disobedience.

5. **Occupation:** Agriculture is the primary occupation of the rural society and forms the major basis of rural economy. Majority of the rural people are engaged in agriculture. The inhabitants are mainly engaged in dairy farming and cultivation. Besides the domestication of animals and agriculture there are some other occupations as well.
6. **Religion:** The rural society is considered to be a religious society. One of the significant features of the rural life is its domination by rituals. Religion and its associated aspects such as ritual and magic, influence rural India in many ways. Rural community is essentially caste-ridden. Religion accords legitimacy to the caste system. In fact, caste and religion are inseparable in the rural society . The origin of the caste system emanates from religion.



7. **Joint Family:** Another peculiar feature of the life of village is the joint family system. In the village, the family has strict control over the individuals. Generally, the father is the head of the household known as *Karta* and representative of the family. His orders are obeyed by all the members of the family.
8. **Social Mobility:** In rural areas, mobility is extremely limited as all the occupations are based on caste. Shifting from one occupation to another is difficult as caste is determined by birth. Thus, caste hierarchy determines the social status of the rural people.
9. **Caste System:** Indian village life is mixed up with the caste system. There is no village without the castes. Each village has several caste segments which have

their own ties in some spheres. The inter-dependence of castes can be seen in the exchange of specialised occupational services. The village life has been controlled by the two forms of panchayats system such as, *Village Panchayat* and *Jati Panchayat*.

- 10. Status of Women:** Women in the Indian rural context are very much dependent on their men folk. They are often engaged in indoor activities. However, besides performing domestic activities they also work in the fields along with their men folk. In addition, they look after their family, children and domestic animals. Instances of desertion, divorce and separation are comparatively less in the rural context.
- 11. Role of Neighbourhood:** Neighbourhood refers to a community in miniature. In a village, neighbourhood is of great importance. They share the joys and sorrows together. In the times of festivals, marriage and other religious ceremonies and in time of ill health, accidents and other crises, neighbours support each other. Feeling of dependency on the neighbours is always present in the village.
- 12. Group Feeling:** In the life of the villages group feeling occupies an important place. They respect and obey the orders of their elders. Individualism is almost absent in the villages. People are afraid of being publically criticised and condemned.

Activity 2.1

Find out the system that manages and controls the local affairs of the rural society.

Family System of Rural Society

Family is the basic unit of society. It is the oldest, most prevalent and enduring social institution which is found everywhere in the world. In Indian villages, families prevail and endure as the basic social institution. The rural society is marked by the patriarchal joint family system which is father-centred. The eldest male member of the family looks after the family affairs. The joint family is one which consists of members related through blood and spread over three or more generations, live together under a common roof and work under a common head. They are more homogeneous and better integrated.

As **Panikkar** has pointed out

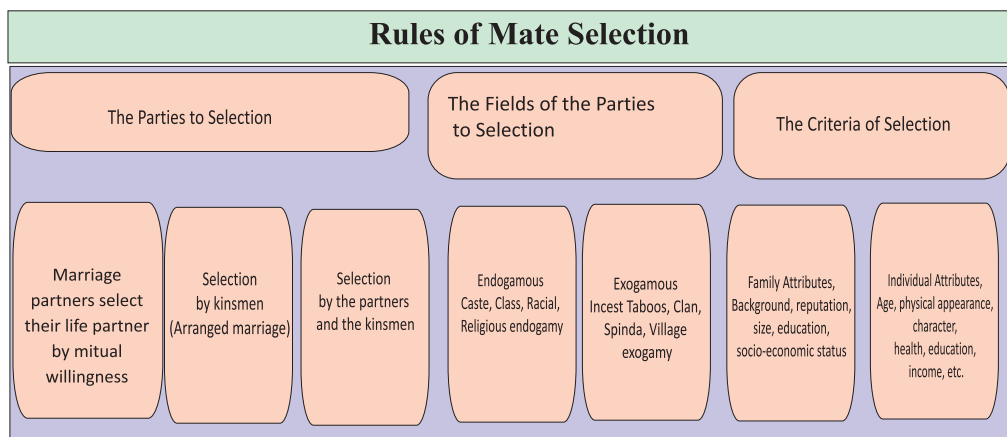
The caste system, village system of life and the joint family system can be regarded as the basic pillars of the Indian social system.

Dr. Iravati Karve said, *“Joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common, who participate in common family worship and who are related to each other as some particular type of kindred.”* There are some major characteristics of joint families which are discussed below:

- The size of the joint family is big.
- It consists of people of at least three or more generations such as grandparents, parents and children.
- The member tends to identify themselves with their family. Every member has her/his own duties, and obligations towards the family.
- Members of the joint family normally reside together under the same household.
- They eat the food prepared jointly in the common kitchen.
- They hold common property and the head of the family manages the family property.

Marriage System of Rural Society

Marriage is more than simply a legalised sexual union between a man and woman, it is socially acknowledged and approved relationship. In the rural society, a marriage is considered to be absolutely essential. It is not considered a union between two individuals, but a bond between two families, kin-groups and communities. Monogamy is the most prevalent form of marriage of Hindus in rural society. Among the Hindus, the marriage is prohibited in the same Gotra. For the selection of mate, the individual's wishes are not taken into consideration. There are certain specific aspects, which are exclusively rural with regard to the institution of marriage. The general rules regarding mate selection may be prescriptive, proscriptive and preferences which limit the field of eligibility. K.M. Kapadia has discussed the rules for mate selection under three sub heads:



Political System of Rural Society

The organisation, administration and all kinds of progress of the rural communities in India, is based on village panchayats. The village panchayats are the pillars that support the Indian rural social system. A panchayat is led by the headman who maintains peace and order in the village. It settles disputes among the villagers and looks after other matters of common concern for the village population.

Village Panchayat is the system of rural local self-government.

The Panchayati Raj has been established in all the states of India by the Acts of the state legislatures to build democracy at the grass root level. It is entrusted with rural development. It was constitutionalised through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. This act has added a new Part-IX to the Constitution of India. Rajasthan was the first state to establish Panchayati Raj. The act provides for a three-tier system of Panchayati Raj in every state.

Gram Panchayat at the Village Level

Panchayat Samiti at the Block Level

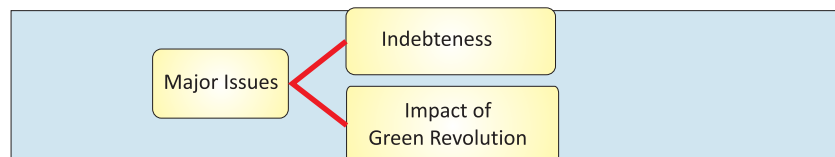
Zila Parishad at the District Level

It is the duty of the every panchayat to arrange certain things within the area of its authority in accordance with the availability of the funds. These include maintainance of public roads, arrangement for water, medical treatment and health, education, statistical data, progress of agriculture and cottage indusries, control of building, sanitation and security, administration, etc.



Rural Issues

Rural people face a series of problems, which affect their survival and quality of life. The problems of the rural people throughout the country appear to be common. However, the intensity of these problems varies widely and a few of them need to be given priority. The causes of these problems also vary, due to the family size, employment status, ownership of various resources, socio-economic background and religious beliefs. Today, there are many issues the rural people are dealing with and these issues have some positive and negative impact on them. Two of these rural issues, namely, indebtedness and the impact of Green Revolution are discussed in detail below.



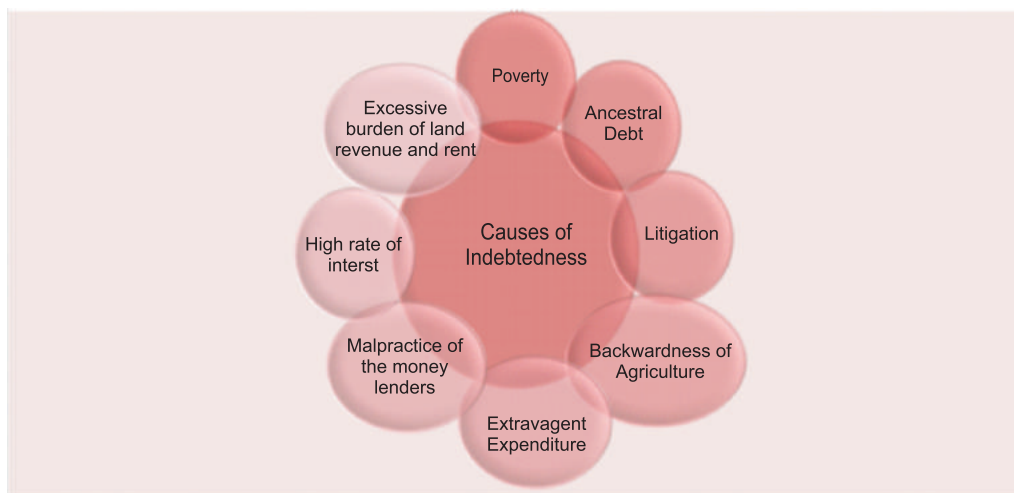
Indebtedness

One of the major problems of the rural society is indebtedness. The reasons for the chronic indebtedness are poverty and deficit economy. This problem is not related to just one individual but is passed on from one generation to the next generation. Taking debt for the purpose of agricultural production is indeed necessary as it contributes to production. However, the rural people incur debts for non-productive purposes such as, to meet the family needs, to perform social functions (related to marriage, birth, and death), litigation, etc. Since, money borrowed does not contribute to production but rather to consumption, it drags the rural people into indebtedness. Thus, it becomes impossible to repay these loans and the rural population becomes an easy victim of exploitation by the greedy moneylenders and middle-men who take advantage of the situation and earn money at a very high rate of interest. As a result, the moneylenders snatch whatever little property these people have, such as, house or land, etc. This system is prevalent in most parts of our country.

What is Rural Indebtedness

- Indebtedness means an obligation to pay money to another party. In rural India when the poor farmers and wage labourers are unable to repay a loan which keeps on accumulating, it gives rise to the problem of rural indebtedness.
- Rural indebtedness is an indicator of the weak financial infrastructure of our country, which includes inability of our economic system to reach the needy farmers, landless people and the agricultural wage labourers in the villages.

Causes of Indebtedness



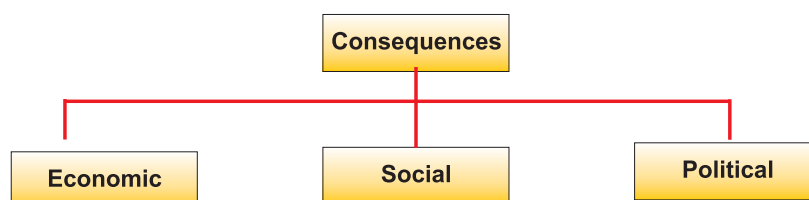
1. **Poverty:** The crucial cause of the rural indebtedness in India is the extreme poverty of the farmers. Sometime due to the failure of monsoon and floods their crops are destroyed and when they have to purchase seeds, implements, cattle etc., but have no past savings, then they are forced to borrow money.
2. **Ancestral Debt:** The most important cause of the existing rural indebtedness is the ancestral debt. Many agriculturalists start their career with a heavy burden of ancestral debt and drag the loan for the whole of their lives, taking it to be a religious and social obligation. Such increasing debt is passed on from one generation to another generation making its repayment increasingly difficult, whenever it is passed on. Thus, it has rightly been stated that the Indian farmer “is born in debt, lives in debt and dies in debt.”
3. **Litigation:** Litigation is another major cause of rural indebtedness. Agriculturists are generally involved in various kinds of disputes such as intra-family disputes, inter-family disputes, theft of crops and division of ancestral lands, property, etc. that often forces them to go to the court of law. Prolonged litigations involve heavy expenditures and to meet their expenses farmers take loans which further aggravates the burden of rural indebtedness.
4. **Backwardness of Agriculture:** Indian agriculture is an uncertain business. It virtually depends on unreliable rains for the supply of water. If there are no rains, the entire crop is lost and the credit invested in the agriculture goes waste. As a result, the loan taken for productive purposes also becomes a burden, leading to indebtedness for the farmers.
5. **Extravagant Expenditure:** Being bound to custom and tradition, the rural people consider the expenses on the occasion for marriage, birth, death and on some religious obligations as unavoidable. Being poor, they have no reserve to fall back upon and have to borrow money.
6. **Malpractices of the Money Lenders:** The private money lenders are known to have adopted various malpractices:
 - They charge exorbitant rates of interest varying from 40 to 60 percent per annum.
 - They have also been found to keep false accounts.
 - They are more interested in forcing the borrowers to part with their land by encouraging the farmers to borrow from them and get their lands mortgaged to them.
7. **High Rates of Interest:** The high rates of interest on their loans force the cultivators to borrow more and more. The rates vary from state to state but due to the poor economic conditions of the peasants, the interest accumulates every year. Quite often, it is extremely difficult to clear up even the interest charges alone. It is the high rate of interest and the malpractices followed by the money lenders that tend to perpetuate the indebtedness.
8. **Excess Burden of Land Revenue and Rent:** Land revenue levied by the government in some states is becoming an expensive burden upon small farmers. Paying rent and land revenue even during the floods and drought this makes the farmers run into debts.

Activity 2.2

Make a list of reasons why the rural people become indebted.

Consequences of Indebtedness

There are numerous economic and non-economic consequences that are caused by rural indebtedness. They are discussed below:



1. **Economic Consequences:** Due to the ever-rising debt, the farmer loses interest in agricultural production, which results in low agricultural production and income. The farmer is forced to sell all the produce to the moneylender and is deprived of selling the produce in the open market and obtaining the prices of the market. Such a situation adversely affects the inducement for work of the farmer.

- The trade between the moneylender and the farmer is always beneficial to the moneylender. The farmer is charged heavily for what one purchases and receives little for what one sells to the moneylender. Thus, such trade leads to loss of a substantial part of one's income.
- In the process of obtaining loans, payment of interest and repayment of principal to the moneylender, the farmer often loses the land, due to the inability to repay the loan. Therefore, the farmer (the owner of the land), becomes landless.

2. **Social Consequences:** The relations between the moneylenders and the farmers become venomous and poison the village social life. Therefore, the social groups in the village get divided into two classes – the exploiting class and the exploited class.

- Due to the loss of land, the farmer feels deprived and pushed down in the social hierarchy. Land ownership gets concentrated in few hands, which builds up tensions between the moneylenders and farmers.
- As the farmers lose their lands, they have to render services to the new owners of the land. Their self-respect is lost as they become slaves. Although, there are many laws to protect them but due to the illiteracy and lack of resources they are unable to approach the courts.

3. **Political Consequences:** The indebted farmers are treated by the moneylenders as commodities. The moneylenders use them as their private property. Since, their economic position is not sound, they do not have a political status of their own.

- Their political participation is completely dominated by the moneylenders who use them for their own political advantages.
- In order to free themselves from the clutches of the moneylenders, the farmers indulge in illegal means to repay loans. The moneylenders attempt to drag and squeeze the farmers to indulge in all kinds of illegal practices and poison the political atmosphere of the villages.

Thus, the rural indebtedness adversely affects all the aspects of rural life. It hampers the agricultural production and rural economic life of the petty rural farmers.

The Green Revolution

Green revolution in India was a period during which agriculture in India increased its yields due to improved agronomic technology. It chiefly refers to the breakthrough accompanied by sudden increase in the yield per acre as a result of introducing High Yielding Varieties (HYV) of seeds and seedlings, increasing application of the recommended chemical fertiliser in the areas with assured water supply, adoption of mechanised farming and use of pesticides. Prof. M. S. Swaminathan is considered as the father of Green Revolution in India.



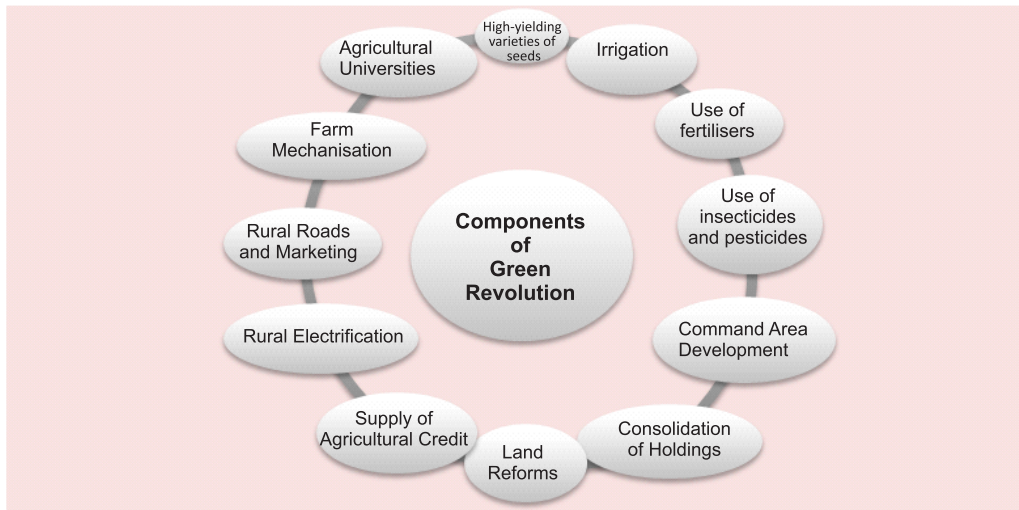
In the mid 1960s the government introduced Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP). The traditional practices were gradually replaced. The new technology was tried in 1960-61 as a 'Pilot project' in seven districts. Later on, high yielding varieties programme was also added to the IADP and extended to the entire country. The HYV was put into practice in India in the year 1966. After 1966, there was a substantial increase in food grains production especially, wheat production as a result of new agricultural strategy. However HYV Programme was restricted to only five crops, namely, wheat, rice, jawar, bajra and maize. HYVP of non-food grains were excluded from the new strategy.

Green Revolution in Punjab

The state of Punjab in India has been one of the world's most remarkable examples of agricultural growth. Growth in Punjab has been clearly associated with the well known "Green Revolution", which saw the development and adoption of new, High-Yielding Variety of seeds (HYVs) of wheat, rice, and other food crops. The agricultural growth in Punjab is exemplified by the increase in Punjab wheat production, as well as, rice production. The economic growth in Punjab occurred as a result of an increase in inputs used in the production process and adoption of technological innovations such as high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilisers, pesticides, tube wells, diesel pump sets and tractors.

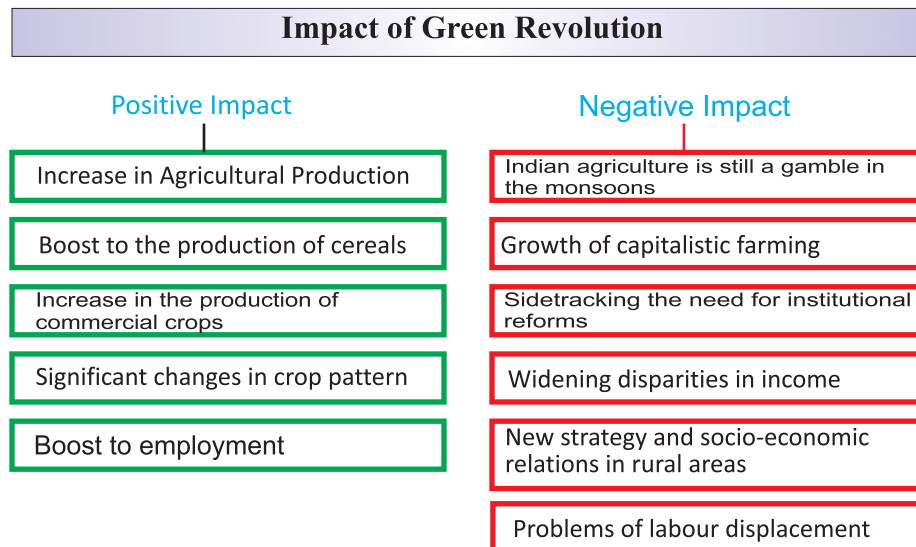


The Components of Green Revolution:



1. The use of high-yielding varieties of seeds contributed to augmented production.
2. The use of chemicals, fertilisers, pesticides also played a key role in boosting agricultural production.
3. The use of modern agricultural machines like tractors, harvesters, threshers, pump sets, sprayers, etc. led to greatly enhanced agricultural output.
4. The adoption of better methods of cultivation like Japanese methods also improved the productivity.
5. More and more irrigational facilities were made accessible to the farmers and these added to the agricultural output.
6. The adoption of double and multiple cropping also helped the cause of increased agricultural production.
7. More and more credit facilities made accessible to the farmers by several institutions like cooperative credit societies, land development banks, regional rural banks or Grameena Banks, Commercial Banks, State Bank of India, etc. helped the farmers to grow more.
8. The government's incentive price policy induced the farmers to produce more.
9. The soil conservation schemes helped the conservation of soil fertility and thereby, contributed to increased output.

10. The expansion of marketing facilities for agricultural products by the co-operative marketing societies, regulated markets, etc. contributed to increased productivity.
11. The implementation of land reforms including the adoption of intermediaries, security of the tenure, conferring of ownership rights on the tenants, consolidation of holding, regulation of rent, etc. contributed in no small measure to augment the productivity.
12. The Community Development Projects, National Extension Services and various Rural Development Programmes also helped in causing the revolution.



Positive Impact

- **Boosted the production of cereals:** The major achievement of new strategy was to boost the production of major cereals, viz., wheat and rice. The ratio of wheat to rice steadily increased from one-third in 1960-61 to 84 percent in 1999-2000. This means that, even though rice continued to be the most important cereal in the country, wheat was catching up fast. Green Revolution did not cover coarse cereals like maize, jawar, barley, ragi and minor-millets.
- **Increase in the production of commercial crops:** The Green Revolution was mainly directed to increase the production of food grains. It did not affect initially the production of commercial crops or cash crops such as sugarcane, cotton, jute, oilseeds and potatoes; these crops did not record any significant improvement initially. However, significant improvement in the output of sugarcane took place after 1973-74. Likewise there was considerable improvement in the production of other cash crops such as oilseeds and potatoes etc.

- **Significant changes in crop pattern:** As a result of the Green Revolution, the crop pattern in India underwent two significant changes. Firstly, the output of cereals rose at the rate of 3 to 4 percent per annum but the output of pulses remained stagnant or even declined. Secondly, among cereals the proportion of rice in total cereals output came down from 48 percent to 45 percent between 1950-51 and 2008-2009.
- **Boost to employment:** The adoption of new technology also gave a boost to agricultural employment because of diverse job opportunities created by multiple cropping and a shift towards hired workers. At the same time, there has been displacement of agricultural labour by the extensive use of agricultural machinery.

Negative Impact

The new agricultural technology made the farmers market-oriented. The farmers became largely dependent on the market for the supply of inputs and for the demand for their outputs. Therefore, there were some negative impacts of the Green Revolution as well, which have been discussed below:

- **Growth of Capitalistic Farming in India:** The new agricultural strategy consisted of heavy investment in seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and water. These heavy investments were beyond the capacity of small and medium farmers. Therefore, it helped the growth of capitalistic farming in India and led to concentration of wealth in the hands of the top 6 percent of the rural population. The poor and marginal peasants did not directly benefit from Green Revolution.
- **Sidetracking the need for institutional reforms in Indian agriculture:** The new agricultural strategy did not recognise the need for institutional reforms in agriculture. The bulk of the peasant population did not enjoy ownership rights and slowly large scale evictions took place. As a result, the tenants were forced to accept the position of sharecroppers.
- **Widening disparities in income:** Technological changes in agriculture had adverse effects on the distribution of income in rural areas. Technological changes have contributed to widening the disparities in income between different regions, between small and large farms and between landowners on the one hand, and landless labourers and tenants on the other.
- **Problem of labour displacement:** Green Revolution unaccompanied by a massive programme of 'rural industrialisation' caused nothing but frustration among the large mass of Indian peasantry. Unemployment or underemployment of agricultural labour landed us in a situation which became explosive both politically and economically and led to the rise of Naxalite movement in many parts of the country.

Criticism of the Green Revolution

- It has been limited in its coverage of crops, land and regions. It has been largely confined to wheat and rice. In India, a majority part of cultivable land is without proper irrigation facilities and in the dry lands this technique has failed to make any breakthrough. The Green Revolution has been practically limited to Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh.
- The crop coverage of the new technology led to the increase in production of wheat and to some extent in rice. But other crops remained practically outside the ambit of new technology. Initially, in the first few years the commercial crops were not covered by the new technology. Most of the HYV seeds were developed for and used during rabi seasons leading to seasonal instability in production. It has become amply evident that there are indications that inappropriate use of fertilisers has led to substantial erosion of natural productivity of the soils. Therefore, some people are of the opinion that the Green Revolution did not fulfil its objectives fully and has outlived its utility.

Changes in Rural Society

The villages in India are passing through a transitional period. The old relational bonds and ties have fallen into disfavour and they cannot be reinstated in the original form. The community consciousness in village life is steadily decreasing. The control of the caste Panchayats is almost non-existent. The convention of hospitality is no longer observed. Sex relations are marked by a lack of responsibility. The joint family is fast disintegrating. The number of thefts, abortions, murders, assaults, litigation etc., is steadily increasing. The old customs are being violated. The bonds of caste and society are disregarded. Similarly, family ties are also being discarded. Individualism, materialism



and rationalism are increasing. Hence, the only element which now characterises village life is agriculture which is the major occupation of villages. Even now the villages can be given an equally simple if not simpler, plainer and higher life by improving the conditions in these villages, through the establishment of panchayats, spread of educational and economic reforms in agriculture. As a result of these endeavours the village will once again become as well organised and integrated as before.



Alongside the study of the foregoing factors which bring about change in the rural community it is also necessary to know factors by means of which social organisations or political parties can create change in the rural community. The following are some of the important ones:

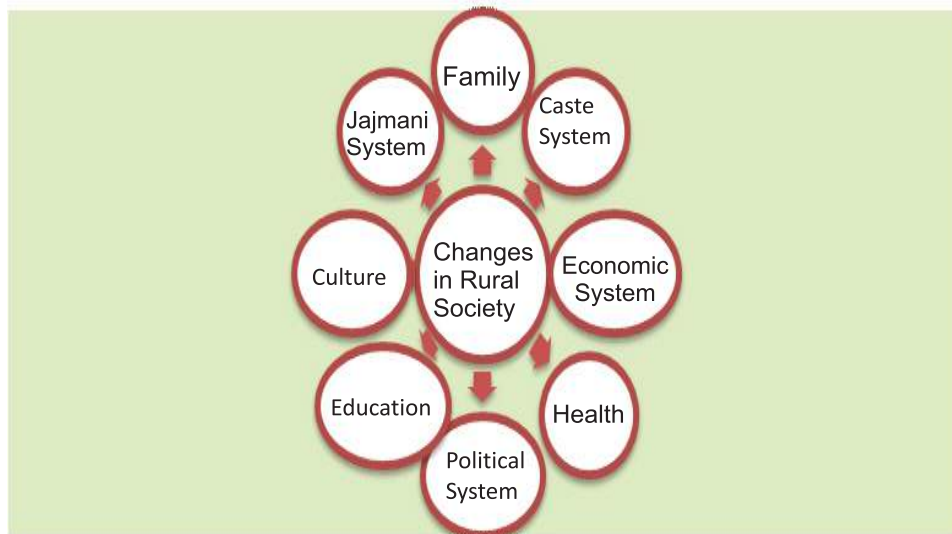
1. **Change in the Caste System:** During the British rule the caste system suffered a severe setback in the villages. Due to the British economic policy and new laws different castes abandoned their occupations and adopted other professions. Many Brahmins and Kshatriyas started farming. The members of the untouchable caste became agricultural labourers. The status of an individual in the village was now determined not only by his/her caste but also by their personalities, financial conditions and economic activities. The control of the caste panchayats weakened. But even then the power of the caste panchayat, exercised in the form of control over the individual's behaviour, food habits, ways of living etc., has not completely died away. In fact, casteism is increasing due to vested interests.
2. **Jajmani System:** The Jajmani system, a feature of village society in India has now weakened due to governmental efforts to raise the status of the lower castes and due to the impact of modernisation and globalisation. The occupations adopted by the village people are not hereditary nor is the payment of services rendered by the lower caste in kind. It is now mostly done on the basis of cash payment.

3. **Family:** The joint family system is no longer the peculiar characteristic of village society. Although, the joint families are still viewed with respect, they are no longer the unit of rural community, having been replaced by nuclear families. With the increase of individualism the families are becoming smaller and the control exercised by the family over the individual members is also decreasing.

Activity 2.3

Talk to some elderly person in your family or neighbourhood and collect information about changes in rural society. Discuss your findings in the class.

4. **Culture:** The clothes worn by the population in the villages are undergoing change. Both among the women and men, western dress is replacing the native wear. Previously, people used hand spun cloth but now-a-days mill-made cloth is used more extensively. The women folk in the villages are now consuming more clothes made of artificial silk, artificial jewellery and cheap cosmetics. Besides it the rural diet is consisting not only staple food but now it includes vegetables, bread, tea and junk food .



5. **Health:** With the progress of sanitation and an increase in the number of doctors in the village, health conditions have improved in villages. They now use soap for bath and washing clothes. The drainage system is also better. The Primary Health Centres have made the village people health conscious. The threat of epidemics has lessened due to the vaccination and preventive measures. The Family Planning Programme has been understood by the villagers who now adopt the measures to limit the family size.