SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Change is the law of nature. The Punjab State has been exposed to many forces of change from time to time and at times, it might become difficult to have a clear picture of this change. In the post independent period, a good many external and internal forces of change have been geared into operation to deliver the goods to the teeming millions by way of raising their standard of living. The Indian countryside has been the main focus of concentration of efforts due to wide cultural lag existing between rural and urban ends of the continuum. Desirable and directed change in the rural system automatically demand a change in the fundamental aspects of the society, i.e., the social structure. It is hard to expect a lasting, enduring and desirable change among the individuals if the changes taking place in the various elements of social structure are not thoroughly probed into. The present study, therefore, was an attempt in this direction.

The study was conducted in the nine purposively selected villages (along a folk-urban continuum) of the erstwhile State of Punjab. The data were collected through direct personal interviews on schedule from a sample of 528 respondents, i.e., about 25% of the
total heads of households inhabiting the nine villages.

Social structure has been viewed here as a network of institutional arrangements. Marriage, family, caste and religion have been taken as the institutions which have automatically evolved in the rural situation, whereas education, Community Development Programme, the enacted Panchayat and the Cooperatives are the institutions which originate outside the village and are being incorporated into the village social structure.

Change in the social structure of rural Punjab has been examined by assuming that the movement takes place from a folk society towards an urban society along the folk-urban continuum.

Findings:

Region-wise analysis of the age structure of the population represented in this study showed that at the folk end, the percentage of population in the age group above fifty was higher than that of the stage that followed it, whereas after that near the urban end it again showed an increase. Caste-wise analysis of the age-structure led to the conclusion that the percentage of population in the age group above fifty was the highest among the Commercial castes which were followed by the Priestly, Agricultural and Artisan castes in descending order.

Again, towards the folk end, the percentage of population in the age group below ten was the lowest, which arose substantially in the next stage again to decline substantially near the urban end. On the other hand, the percentage of population in the age-group below ten was the highest among the Artisan and the labouring group of castes,
which showed a consistent and gradual decrease with the Agricultural, Commercial and Priestly castes. These two observations viewed together, led to the conclusion that longevity is comparatively lower among the labouring and Artisan castes whereas the birth rate or the percentage of population in the lowest age group was the highest among them in comparison with other caste groups.

The differences between the male and the female population was less marked than that towards the urban end. Further, the disparity between these two sexes was the highest among Agricultural castes, followed by Artisan, Priestly and Commercial castes.

The percentage of married population was the highest near the folk end which showed a gradual and consistent decrease while the movement took place along the continuum though nearest to the urban end of the continuum, there was a slight increase caused by young married population migrating from outside. Likewise, the percentage of unmarried population was the lowest near the folk end and this also showed a gradual and consistent increase near the urban end of the continuum. Caste-wise differences in the marital status of the population of different caste groups did not show much difference. The Agricultural castes had slightly greater number of population as married but the difference was very minor and incidental.

The males tended to marry at a higher age than the females at every stage. Near the folk end, however, child-marriage was non-existent and a greater number of population married at a higher age. None of the males married before reaching the sixteenth year of age. In the next stage, represented by Haryana, over 40% of the marriages were contacted
before the male completed the fifteenth year of his age, out of which about ten percent of the marriages were contacted below the tenth year.

In the next stage, however, the marriages tended to be contacted at a higher age. This pattern applied to the female population also. At the folk end, none of the females married below ten whereas in the next stages represented by Haryana, New Punjab and Union Territory, Chandigarh, 26.4%, 10.0% and 2.2% of the females respectively were married before completing the tenth year of their age - which showed that even among the females, child-marriage did not take place near the folk end. Its incidence was the highest in the traditional society after which it showed a clear decreasing tendency of early-marriage in females.

Caste-wise differences in age at marriage did not show so vivid differences but the tendency in case of both the males and the females (more clearly for the females than the males) was that Agricultural and Artisan castes tended to marry at an earlier age than the Commercial and Priestly castes.

Besides, some other differences were also observed. Marriage by elopement was frequent at the folk end, which was almost non-existent in the stages that followed. The male and the female in a folk society had a greater say in the selection of their companions and after the marriage was exclusively an affair between them and the parents acted as helpers only. In the traditional society, however, the young ones had little say in the selection of the mates and even could not see each other before marriage. In the trend following this, there seemed to be a greater tendency for consulting the young ones before settling the issue. In the folk society, bride-price was paid by the bridegroom to compensate the loss of labour to her parents. In the traditional society, however, dowry was given to the bridegroom. The tendency to
give the dowry in the next stage, did not seem to have shown an appreciable decrease but some of the castes, particularly lower ones, did show a clear cut tendency towards simple marriage. In a folk society, village exogamy was not a rule and the gote had no importance while selecting a mate. In traditional society, village exogamy was practised and in some cases as many as seven gotes were left while selecting a mate. The latest trend, however, was to leave only one gote - while selecting a mate.

The predominant form of family at the folk end was the nuclear family, whereas in the next stage represented by Haryana, joint family dominated. The trend that developed later, showed that nuclear family had again started increasing whereas joint family was shrinking. Caste-wise differences in the form of family showed that the incidence of nuclear family was the highest among Commercial castes, whereas Artisan, Agricultural and Priestly castes came next in descending order. The incidence of joint family was the highest among the Priestly castes followed by the Agricultural, Commercial and Artisan castes.

The total number of castes in the villages studied, in the whole of the Punjab, was 55. In the village taken from Himachal Pradesh, lying nearest the folk end, there were only two castes. The differentiation between them was not occupational. The upper caste known as Rajputs had migrated from the Punjab plains and subjugated the indigenous population. In Haryana, there were seventeen castes and with the exception of a few, all of them were occupational castes. In New Punjab, there were twenty two castes whereas in Union Territory, Chandigarh, there were only nine.
These castes were classified into four groups on the basis of the commonality of traditional occupation. But in the Priestly castes, it was found that only 5.5% of the population was engaged in its traditional occupation, whereas 21.0%, 5.5%, 42.2% and 1.7% had taken to trade and commerce, craftsmanship, service and labour respectively. It was also noted that in Himachal Pradesh, this caste group did not exist, whereas its number regularly increased along the continuum.

The development of Commercial castes, was comparatively a recent phenomenon, and in the village taken from Himachal Pradesh, it had not yet reached. But even in case of this caste, substantial change took place from the traditional occupation, 61.4% of the working members in these castes were pursuing the traditional occupation, whereas 1.5%, 1.5%, 5.5%, 18.7% and 12.0% of them had taken to Priestly, Agricultural, Craftsmanship, Service and labouring occupations respectively.

Occupational mobility in the Agricultural castes was the lowest, where 78.8% of the working members were still pursuing their traditional occupation. 0.5%, 0.7%, 1.1%, 12.3% and 6.6% of them had become Priests, shopkeepers, craftsmen, servicemen and labourers respectively.

Among the Artisan castes, 29.3% were engaged in the traditional occupation whereas 0.5%, 10.5%, 2.9%, 10.0% and 47.2% had adopted the occupations of Priest, Agriculturists, Shopkeepers, Servicemen and Labourers respectively.

The analysis of occupational change showed that the place of an individual in the traditional social structure affected his place
in the new set up as well. Priestly and Commercial castes were more successful in entering the professions whereas majority of the persons from Artisan castes had to become labourers.

Belief in caste-hierarchy was maximum near the folk end and whereas it showed a gradual decrease towards the urban end. The caste-Panchayat did not exist near the folk end but it showed an increase towards the urban end. Ex-communication also showed a similar trend. The occurrence of both of these was very rare and even there it was confined to a few castes only mostly from lower strata that happened to live near the urban end and adopted these techniques just to raise their status, called the process of Sanskritization by Srinivas. On the whole, only 2.4% of the respondents said that they had caste-panchayats and 1.3% said that they resorted to temporary ex-communication.

Near the folk end, none was prepared to take water or meals from the lower castes. These restrictions, however, gradually relaxed and near the urban end, 92% respondents said that they did take water and meals from the lower castes. Same was the case of taboos on smoking. Inter-caste marriage was also a taboo near the folk end but near the urban end, there was a notable change indicating willingness for inter-caste marriage. In Badheri, village of Union Territory Chandigarh, it was learnt that at least five inter-caste marriages had taken place and in all the cases the Jats had taken wives from lower castes from outside the village. The total effectiveness of the caste as viewed by the respondents also showed a consistent and gradual decrease along the folk-urban continuum.
Its caste-wise analysis showed that the belief in hierarchy was, on the whole, the highest among the Priestly castes, whereas Agricultural, Artisan and Commercial castes followed in descending order. The caste-panchayats were also found only in the Agricultural and Artisan castes in ascending order. The tool of ex-communication which had become obsolete, was used only by the Artisan castes and even in their case, only 5.4% said that they sometimes used it. The restriction on taking water from the lower castes was flouted the most by the Artisan castes, whereas Commercial, Priestly and Agricultural castes came next in descending order. Restrictions on accepting meals from lower castes were observed most strictly by Agricultural castes while Artisan, Priestly and Commercial castes came next in ascending order. Smoking with lower castes was most frequent among Artisan castes. Willingness for inter-caste marriage was the most among the Artisan castes, followed by Agricultural, Priestly and Commercial. The effect of the caste system, as a whole, had decreased most for the Commercial castes and least for the Agricultural castes. Thus, it was found that not only the occupational basis of the caste had undergone a radical change in some cases but also the belief structure associated with it.

All the respondents near the folk and knew the deities they worshipped but in Haryana, the knowledge about the deities was much lower after which it showed a consistent increase. The percentage of the daily and weekly temple goers showed an increase along the continuum and except for Himachal Pradesh, it applied to those also who visited the temple monthly or say six monthly, which suggests the increase in the religiosity of the people. But the average score indicating the
over all effectiveness of religion showed a fall as the movement took place from the folk towards the traditional society after which it showed a gradual increase.

On the whole, Agricultural castes showed a better knowledge of the deities they worshipped and they were followed by the Artisan, Commercial and the Priestly castes.

Willingness for inter-religious marriage was the most among the Commercial castes, while the Priestly castes did not want it at all. The effectiveness of the religion as a whole, had decreased most for the Priestly castes and the Commercial, Agricultural and Artisan castes were the next in ascending order showing a lesser decrease in its effectiveness. This again, supports the idea of Sanskritization put forward by Srinivas.

The general hypothesis put forward about the religion was that its effectiveness should normally decrease towards the urban end. The findings, however, led to the conclusion that after some decrease, to start with, it showed increase in its effectiveness. But in this process, the nature of religion itself changed. The new form of religion that developed or that was practised by the people was not so much a result of the fear of individuals about the hidden forces but it was a conscious tool in his/her hand for the realisation of his/her social and political ends. There was a tendency among the lower castes, however, to rally round the new type of religious ideologies perpetuated by their own brethren and the new religion existed more as a socio-political force.
Effectiveness of some modern means of communication, particularly newspaper and the radio, showed a clear and consistent tendency to increase along the continuum. The newspaper was mostly read by the Commercial castes while Priestly, Agricultural and Artisan castes came next in order. The radio-listening was most common among the Priestly castes followed by the Artisan, Commercial and the Agricultural castes in descending order.

Education in the form of literacy, was almost non-existent in the folk society but as the movement took place along the continuum, its extent increased, reaching 44% near the urban end. The Commercial castes were the most educated group in the rural society having about 80% of their male population educated, whereas the percentages of educated males in Artisan and Agricultural castes were 39.4 and 35.8 respectively. The percentages of educated females were 55.9, 81.6, 14.5 and 9.4 in Commercial, Priestly, Agricultural and Artisan castes respectively. The observations about education showed that the extent of education was increasing fast in the rural society and the Artisan castes were ahead of Agricultural castes at least in respect of male education.

More than half the population could tell the name of the block in which its village was situated while the score indicating the work done by the block for the whole of the village was 1.85 out of a maximum average score of 5.00. Except for the village in Himachal Pradesh, where special attention had been paid by the block authorities, its score showed a gradual increase along the continuum. This applied to the activities of the block for the individual also. The total success
was also rated in the same order and it showed an increase along the urban end. Caste-wise analysis showed that Commercial, Agricultural, Priestly and Artisan castes were in descending order in respect of their knowledge about the location of their block headquarters. The utility of this programme for the community was rated the highest by the Priestly castes. Utility for individual was rated the highest by Agricultural castes, followed closely by the Artisan, and Priestly and Commercial castes. The success was rated the highest by the Priestly castes whereas the Agricultural, Commercial and Artisan castes came next. There was, however, a tendency in Priestly and Commercial castes to over-rate the success whereas the Artisan castes had a slight tendency to under-rate it.

Authority structure of the village seems to have undergone comparatively greater change. The Lambardars were left only with one duty, i.e. the collection of land revenue. Other functions were transferred to the village Panchayat. Thus, the leadership came into the hands of influential members of the community, who could get themselves elected to the village Panchayat. The traditional village Panchayat, however, still continued to influence the composition and the functioning of the enacted Panchayat. Participation in the election of new Panchayat showed a gradual increase along the continuum. The assessment of development work, however, depended on the performance of these Panchayats in different areas. The same was the case of impartiality exercised in deciding the disputes. It was, however, not very popular and was considered to be the cause of factionalism in the rural community. Attitudes towards this Panchayat tended to be more unfavourable as movement took place, along the continuum. The desire to
have a Panchayat which was substantially high, was the lowest at the folk end, after which it showed a substantial increase, after which it came down as the society moved towards urbanism.

Participation in the Panchayat election was the highest among the Agricultural castes and Artisan, Priestly and Commercial castes come next in descending order. The developmental work got the highest score with the Priestly castes, and were followed by Commercial, Artisan and Agricultural castes. Impartiality in deciding the disputes was rated the lowest by the Agricultural castes and highest by the Commercial castes. The Priestly, Commercial, Artisan and Agricultural castes were in descending order to indicate the positive effectiveness of the Panchayat. The desire for a Panchayat was also in the same order among these castes. One the whole, the Agricultural castes seemed to be less favourable to this new Panchayat.

Knowledge about the cooperatives showed a gradual and consistent increase along the continuum. Membership of the cooperatives also showed a similar trend and its usefulness also increased exactly in the same pattern. Its success also showed the same trend with the only exception that appeared at the folk end. The desire to have cooperative also increased along this continuum. The overall average score in respect of all these aspects of the effectiveness of the cooperatives also showed a gradual and consistent increase towards the urban end of the continuum.

The Priestly, Agricultural, Commercial and Artisan castes were in descending order in regard to knowledge about the cooperatives, membership of village cooperative, its usefulness and success of the cooperative and the desire for a cooperative. Thus, the overall utility
of the cooperative was the highest among the Priestly castes which were followed by the Agricultural and the Commercial castes, whereas the Artisan castes lagged behind all.

The Agrarian laws had, on the whole, little effect on the rural community. On the other hand, it created tensions between the owners and the tenants with the result that the land was taken away from the tenants and most of them joined the labour force of the rural community. None from the land-owning castes had to part with even a small portion of his land, but some of the respondents from the lowest castes did get some waste-land.

Knowledge about the political parties, political leaders, and the incumbents of the highest political offices in the State as well as the country, increased consistently along the continuum. The same trend was visible in the assessment of the utility and membership of political parties. The number of undecided votes decreased along the continuum and the percentage of fence-sitters who would decide at the time of election increased along the continuum. Another important change was that a higher percentage of the respondents tended to drift away from the Congress party in favour of other political parties.

Knowledge about the Congress was the highest among Commercial castes followed by Priestly, Artisan and Agricultural castes, whereas knowledge about the Communist party was the highest among the Priestly castes and Commercial, Agricultural and Artisan castes came next in descending order. The Akali party was most known to Commercial castes, followed by Priestly, Agricultural and Artisan castes, while the Priestly, Commercial, Agricultural and Artisan castes came in descending
order indicating their knowledge about Jan Sangh. This pattern was more
or less followed by these caste-groups indicating the knowledge about
other parties as well. The knowledge about political leaders was also
indicated more or less in the same order.

The membership of political parties was the highest among
the Commercial castes whereas the Priestly, Agricultural and Artisan
castes were next in descending order. The Congress party was most
popular among the Priestly, Commercial and Artisan castes and least
popular with the Agricultural castes. The Communist party had the
highest following among the Commercial castes whereas Agricultural,
Priestly and Artisan castes came next in a descending order showing
the popularity of this party. The highest number of respondents
from the Agricultural castes preferred to vote for the Akali party,
followed by Commercial and Artisan castes whereas none from the Priestly
castes wanted to vote for it. The influence of Jan Sangh was negligible
in the rural society and only an insignificant percentage of the
respondents from Priestly castes wanted to vote for it. The Agricultural
castes had the highest number of fluid votes and were followed by
Artisan, Commercial and the Priestly castes, in descending order.
Knowledge about the incumbents of the highest political offices of
the State and the country as well, was the highest among the Commercial
castes, whereas Priestly, Agricultural and Artisan castes came next in
descending order which shows the ability of these castes to make use
of the political party.
Conclusions:

It is thus evident that various stimuli of change of centripetal and centrifugal nature, have had considerable impact on the genetic and kinetic elements of rural social structure in the erstwhile Punjab. It is heartening to note that in most of the aspects of social structure, changes have been in the ascending order along folk urban continuum. But the social scientists and the planners of change in India including the State of Punjab, are basically sieved of the problem of planned and directed change. This, in turn, calls for a concerted and well directed efforts on the part of all concerned so that the rural society could make satisfactory progress in all directions without causing major imbalance in the rural system.

The study has focussed various changes taking place in different regions of the Punjab State and also in and around phenomena like family, caste, occupation, marriage, religion, etc. The findings of this study could very well serve as a benchmark for initiating many a related studies on changing nature of social structure in Punjab in order that a clear spectrum can be visible to all those engaged in the process of planned change.

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