INTRODUCTION

A. Need for the Study:

The word 'Punjab' comes into being as a result of Sandhi between the Sanskrit word 'Panch' meaning five, and the Persian word 'Aab' meaning water. Ideally, it refers to the land lying in between the five rivers - Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab and Jhelum - the tributaries of one of the biggest rivers of the world 'Sindh', after which the country is named. The fact, however, is that its political boundaries have seldom coincided with the conceptual framework provided by this word. With the Mughals, who first used this word, the province of Lahore meant Punjab and Sirhind was a separate province. The boundaries of the Punjab ruled over by Maharaja Ranjit Singh coincided with those of the Sutlej river on the eastern side but on the western and northern sides, they embraced Peshawar, Kashmir and Lahaul and Spiti as well. During the British Rule, the boundaries of the Punjab touched those of U.P. and Delhi in the east and Rajasthan in the South. After the partition of the country and the formation of Pakistan, the Punjab was divided into two halves, western side going to the Pakistan and the

* Technical word referring to the art of joining two words to form a new.
eastern side forming a part of Indian Union, and it is this Punjab which this study refers to. In 1966, however, it was further divided into four parts as a result of which Kangra District was merged into the Himachal Pradesh, its capital, i.e., Chandigarh became the part of Union Territory, and the rest of it was divided into two States - Punjab, called New Punjab in this study, and Haryana.

What is important to the sociologist, however, is not the political boundaries of a State but the people that live inside these boundaries because to a great extent and in the present context increasingly so, it is they who cause the boundaries to be drawn and determine what happens in, and to some extent even outside these boundaries. Past influences the present and also the future. It, therefore, seems to be in the fitness of things - particularly for an individual who is interested in the study of change - to have a look at the past even if the information available is scanty.

Before the development of navigation, i.e., when the French, the Portugese and later on the British entered India from the South, Punjab had been the Gateway of India. Hordes of people known as Aryans continued to pour into India for over 2000 years ago. These tribes who were mainly the pastoral people to start with, gradually, took to agriculture and settled in villages spreading over different tracts of land. Tribe, at this stage, was a full-fledged social and political unit, divided into different sections in some cases, and exogamous clans known as gote in Punjab and gotra or gotram in some other parts of the country. The pattern of distribution of gotes in different villages still suggests that gotes settled into separate habitations, because in the traditional villages,
most of the people, generally, belong to only one gote. This also speaks for the rule of village exogamy prevalent in the Punjab and elsewhere. The authority here at the village level lay in the gote and it was exercised by the elderly and wiseman of the gote in the interests of its component parts. At area - level, the authority lay with the tribe.

With the development of agriculture, some other occupations emerged which needed some specialisation in the activity of processing agricultural products. The weaver, the oil-presser, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the potter, the shoe-maker, etc. were some of the occupational groups that emerged in this new pattern. They were all inter-dependent and the payment for the services rendered to one by the other was made in kind at the time of harvest. Non-agricultural occupations were, generally, pursued by the indigenous population which was subdued by the invading tribes. Hatred for the subject and differential value attached to these occupations that prevails in a modern society too, caused some sort of stratification calling for a different way of life for those who pursued these occupations.

These caste-traditions seem to have grown stronger in the centuries that followed the beginning of Christian era, but they could never grow very strong in this border society, which was perpetually subject to tumults and invasions from outside. The traditions that prospered here the most, were those of war. They are well-reflected in the major form of poetry in Punjabi - even religious poetry - which is incidentally also called Var.

The British administration brought about a number of changes in the social structure of a Punjabi village community. One
of these was change in the authority structure of the village community. Previously, the disputes were settled by the village panchayat which was constituted by the aggregation of all the elderly and mature members of the village. The taxes were paid directly by the community in kind. The new administration, however, appointed Lambardar who used to be some influential man in the village, or some ex-armyman.

With the extension of the borders of money - economy, the commercial caste became another part of the social structure of a village - community. In its capacity of a middle-man to take the raw-product from the village to the market and to provide the villager with the finished goods, this section of village population prospered at the cost of the other sections, particularly, the agriculturists, by purchasing at a low rate and selling at a high rate in both the cases. The agriculturist whose products went so cheap and who had to pay the revenue in cash, was impoverished and his land started drifting into the hands of this newly emerging class. Village artisans were also hit adversely. The weaver could not compete with the cloth produced by the mill. The shoe-maker also fell a prey to the factory-made shoes and other artisans like oil-presser and potter etc. also could not stand. They became labourers.

After independence, the rural society in different parts of the country including the Punjab State, indicated a dissatisfaction, which found expression apart from other ways, in the voting pattern in the first general election. The introduction of Community Development Programme in 1952, intensification of the Cooperative movement, introduction of the Panchayat system to the whole of the State and provision of a primary school for almost every village, etc. are some
of the measures that have been taken to better the lot of the ruralites.

It was only after the Commercial castes were debarred from purchasing land that they started investing their capital in the cities. Industrialisation and urbanisation have just started and according to census 1961, out of a total population of 2,02,39,151 for the whole of the Punjab, 79.87% are living in the villages and only 20.12% are living in the urban areas. For the New Punjab, which is a much more industrialised than Himachal Pradesh or Haryana, 76.9% of the population is still living in the villages. It is, therefore, of immense importance to see as to what is happening to this major portion of Punjab population that is living in the villages and the changes that are taking place in the relationships of different sections of rural community. The need for a macroscopic view of the changes taking place in the social structure of rural Punjab is also necessitated by the fact that except for a village near Delhi, studied by Oscar Lewis, little attention has been paid by the social scientists to the study of a rural society that is known for its bravery in the battlefield, hardwork in the factory and the field, aversion to the observance of rigid rules of behaviour restricting its actions, liberalism and pragmatism.

B. Objectives of the Study:

The general objective of the study was to investigate into the changes that have taken place in the social structure of the erstwhile rural Punjab.

There is no doubt that a single study, particularly, of the type of the one in hand, cannot present an exhaustive and all-embracing account of the changes that are taking place in so broad and variable
a type of society as is under discussion. It was, therefore, necessary to focus the attention on some specific sub-structures that form the part of the rural social structure. The following sub-structures were, therefore, taken for study:

1. The role of Verna in the rural society;
2. The caste, its relationships with the traditional occupation and the changes that have taken place in it; the extent to which the castes are believed to be in a hierarchical order, and the extent to which the restriction based on inter-caste relationships are still operative;
3. The role of pata;
4. The changes that are taking place in the family structure in the rural society;
5. Changes taking place in marriage, particularly, in age at marriage and the proportion of the married population to the unmarried;
6. The extent to which the rural society can be called a religious society, and the changes that are taking place in the religiosity of the people;
7. The means of communication available to rural society;
8. The effectiveness of the Agrarian laws;
9. The role of enacted Panchayat in the village community;
10. The effectiveness of the Community Development Programmes;
11. The impact of education;
12. The extent to which the village cooperative has been able to meet the credit requirements of different sections of the rural society; and
13. The extent of the politicalisation of the ruralites their knowledge about the political parties and leaders, and their preference for vote because this is the channel
that provides outlet to the real feelings of the rural folk and the shape of the things to come.

C. Significance of the Study:

The term change refers to a state of things which is different at a different time. It is the law of nature that the things do not remain static. The things come into being, mature and meet their ends.

Man, who himself is the product of a long process of change, is the most developed form of animate existence. Through the process of actions, interactions and reflections, he has increasingly been acquiring the abilities to manipulate and change his environment. It has been possible through organizing and re-organizing his activities and setting some standards of behaviour acceptable to the members involved. This process of undirected change in the social structure of human beings has been going on till his inception. It was, however, a process of the survival of the fittest in which the weaker elements of society continued to be eliminated. To prevent it, efforts have been made to bring about a planned change for a harmonious development of all the sections of the society and to provide its various sections with better standards of living.

As a result of innovations and inventions and the efforts to bring about planned change, this process has been accelerated. India being predominantly an agricultural society, special attention has been paid to bring about desired changes in the rural society and a number of steps have been taken towards that end. Some of the changes are generally peripheral and their effects do not last long. The changes in the social structure, however, are more effective and enduring. This
study which is aimed at an enquiry into the changes both planned as well as unplanned, would be of interest and help to the planners, administrators and social thinkers in achieving a balanced view of the developments, taking place in the State of Punjab in particular, and the country in general.

D. Assumption of the Study:

The basic assumption underlying this study was that in so broad a country like India, different modes of social structure from a tribal structure to that of an advanced, urbanised and industrialised society - existed simultaneously. These different types, more or less, represented different types of social structure which would show the way the changes have taken place. The State of Punjab presents almost equally good a situation for the study of change in the social structure.

Thus Bhujlang, village of Himachal Pradesh, cut off and to some extent, a pastoral society, presents a situation that more or less resembles to that of a tribal people. Haryana, the next step in the continuum, presents the situation of a society which is jammed by the traditions, but is on its way out towards the urban end of continuum. The New Punjab, that marks the next stage, is more or less, free from traditionalism, whereas the village taken as the suburbs of Chandigarh presents the scene of an urban village having greater impersonality, multiplicity of occupations and a greater deviation from the tradition-bound society.

E. Sequence of presentation:

The chapter that follows this, presents the views of different social scientists on the concept of social structure and sums up the findings of the studies of the rural society conducted
in India. The III chapter deals briefly with the methodological procedures adopted in this study and is followed by presentation of findings and its discussion in chapter IV. This consists of (i) general information about the respondents, (ii) findings about castes and occupation, marriage and family, religiosity of the people — the institutions growing automatically among the rural folk which may be called Genetic institutions and (iii) means of communications used by the rural folk and the institutions like New Panchayat, Community Development Programme, Cooperation, Education and the penetration of the political parties into the village community — all of which may be called Kinetic institutions, that are being incorporated into the village community from outside. Finally, the presentation ends with summary and conclusion in Chapter V.