8.0 The last chapter discussed the income, expenditure and employment in the village. In this chapter it is proposed to discuss the social life of the villagers.

8.1 Basic Conditions of Social Organisation

Talcott Parsons analyses societies as social systems. In his view if any social system is to operate, four basic conditions have to be met, or alternatively put, four basic problems have to be solved. He calls these conditions or problems, 'functional imperatives' or 'functional prerequisites', and they concern not only social organisation but also personality needs of the members of the society. These four problems are adaptation to environment, goal attainment, pattern maintenance and tension management and integration. Of these the first two deal with the conditions and demands made from outside the system. They can be seen as largely 'instrumental' in that they require the
performance of tasks such as allocating means to the achievement of valued goals. The next two result from social interaction which produces problems within a society. In order to solve these four problems and thus to maintain its existence, any society has to have four major structural features. They are the sub-systems - the economy, the polity, kinship and community and cultural organisations. The sub-structure economy, provides for production and distribution of material resources. The political sub-system and its institutions select the collective goals and motivate the members to achieve these goals. The kinship institutions maintain accepted and expected patterns of social interaction and helps to control interpersonal tensions largely through the process of socialisation. The community and cultural institutions such as organised religion, education and mass communication, serve the function of integrating the various elements of the social system.¹

8.2 Role of Cultural Factors

However, sociologists emphasise that cultural factors are the key determinants of human behaviour.² Based on this

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2. Ibid., p.7.
Contention two basic approaches are evolved in sociology. They are the consensus and conflict perspectives - one perspective stresses on the co-operative and harmonious elements in social life, while the other focusses on coercive and divisive elements. Both these viewpoints converge on some basic issues i.e., they focus on social structure and the relationship of its parts, through which they analyse the society. According to Spencer societal parts are social arrangements to perform vital functions - regulation, distribution and sustenance; and parts of society are orderly systems of social organisation, termed as institutions. He adds that society evolves from simple structures to complex, from homogeneity to differentiation, and differentiation causes specialisation.

8.3 Definition of Village Community

According to the above digression, a village community is a part of society. Ramnath Sharma defines a village community 'as a group of persons permanently residing in a geographical area and whose members have developed community consciousness and cultural, social and economic relations, which distinguish them from other communities.'
According to him a rural society can be studied by rural sociology, a study of the web of rural social relationships, which includes an analysis of social organisation, structure, functions and process of change in the village.

In the light of the above analysis, the village under study is a part society. The sociological factors functioning in the village are kinship, community and cultural institutions. The respective roles of these institutions in integrating the various elements of the social system are as follows:

8.4 Kinship

The basic kinship institution found in the village is the family. Two types of families found in the village are - extended family, containing within it people of three generations, and nuclear family, constituted of father, mother and children. Out of 4370 households in the village 1495 (34.2 per cent) are extended families and 2875 (65.8 per cent), nuclear families. Extended families exist partly as a continuation of the past custom and partly as a social arrangement to take care of the old aged. However, the power structure in the extended families has changed and it remains transferred to the younger generation.
Sociologists point out that it is the influence of the town on the countryside which create nuclear families. In the State of Kerala, and therefore in the village an additional influence creating nuclear families is the Land Reform Acts, which has caused division of lands into small parcels. Taking this line of argument it can be said that the combined influence of the town on the village and of the Land Reform Acts is substantially high as nearly two-thirds of the families are nuclear families.

8.5 Factors Causing Interfamily Relationships

Apart from blood relationship, marriage is the most powerful bond of interfamily relationship. People prefer exogenous marriages - daughter married outside the village and daughter-in-law coming from outside the village, as well. Moreover, social mobility is not found in this interfamily relationship. In fact intercaste marriage or even intercommunity marriage in the same main caste are looked down upon. However, no social ostracism is being practised. Likewise children of intercaste marriage are not preferred for marital alliance. Family bondage arising out of other considerations like business-partnership, neighbourhood, working in the same office or company do not culminate in marital alliance, if not of the same caste or religion.
Small clusters of families of the same community or caste are found in different localities of the village, except the roadside buildings built anew for dwelling purposes. Families of the same religion or caste live around the respective temples, churches and mosques. Economic class-wise grouping of houses is not found generally, except the occupation of river side lands by the rich from different castes.

8.6 Community Organisations

Social life of different religious communities is guided by the respective religious institutions, as far as, marriages, festivals and other celebrations are concerned. Christians and Muslims are under obligation to follow the dictations of the concerned religious institutions, non-compliance of which will be seriously viewed. Major part of the time left for social living is spent this way. Hinduism, on the other hand, is a loosely knit religious
are financially sound and well contributed by the people. Muslims have no such priestly hierarchy or administrative set up, but their mosque is managed by the well to do community members. Hindu religious institutions in the village are not at all sound financially and they have no systematic control or direction over the faithful. However they are highly democratic and it is the popular committees which manage the affairs of different temples. Economic relations of different types cross-cut these community boundaries.

8.7 Social Organisations Prominent in the Village

8.7.1 Karshaka Sanghoms

There are two Karshaka Sanghoms (farmers organisations) which profess to take care of the interests of the farmers. They represent to the various government agencies, their difficulties with regard to farming, particularly in relation to water and fertilizers. Subsidised supply of fertilizers and continuous and year long supply of water, government-sponsored draining of excess water during rainy seasons are their demands. They also clamour for economic pricing of agricultural products. Number of
farmers actively co-operating with these organisations is very limited.

8.7.2 Trade Unions

Another social organisation found in the village is trade unions of head load workers and workers of a joint sector enterprise. There are two unions each in both the trades guided by political parties - Indian National Congress and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)). These trade unions work for the economic betterment of the concerned workers and have gained to some extent. They create tension in the village by organising strikes and processions. Occasional skirmishes occur between workers of rival unions and also between workers and the public. Interference of police, settles the issues. Social and economic life of the individuals involved will be disrupted so long as the tension continues. However, there is no long-lasting conflict between rival groups or others involved.

8.7.3 Political Parties

The third and final type of social organisations found in the village are the political parties. Two national parties and two state level parties have followers
and offices in different parts of the village. They toe the line taken by their central leadership. Public meet­
ings, processions and study classes are organised to edu­
cate the people on their rights and demands and the role of party members and workers.

8.8 Cultural Organisation

Arts and sports clubs and Grāmeena Vāyana Sālas (village reading rooms) are the cultural organisations found in the village. Arts and sports clubs organise seasonal sports competitions both among members of the clubs and among clubs, culminating in a village level finale. Activities in relation to arts are limited to some of the clubs conducting a drama annually, participated by their members. These activities are financed by donations from the people. At times drama is substi­
tuted by a film show in a temporary conclave, at a rate. Village youngsters are the participants in these feats and elders enjoy the celebrations.

The four reading rooms functioning in the village equipped with books mostly in local tongue and local news papers, help people of even the lowest level to keep ab­
reast with the state and national level happenings. The
very fact of these institutions having only books and newspapers of local tongue, means that they are meant for ordinary local people, who have no access to higher levels of knowledge.

8.9 Educational Institutions

The educational institutions in the village provide education up to high school level. Children attend the nearest school to their homes. At present, infrastructure facilities available in the village are more than what the people need. Admission is open to children without caste and community considerations. These institutions provide literacy and general education. High school level education is considered by people as a must, though there are drop-outs to the extent of less than 5 per cent at the levels of fifth standard and seventh standard put together.

A new trend found among the villagers is such that economically well-off and elite parents send their children outside the village to attain English medium education, though the curriculum remains the same. Free education in local tongue provided at the local level is eschewed by
these people and education in English is attained at a cost. The village has no English medium school.

8.10 Conclusions

Kinship institutions provide for intravillage connections over and above blood relationship. Exogamous marriage, the commonly preferred marital alliance creates inter-village and even further connections. The families belonging to different communities seek marital alliance from people of the same community living in different places of the State, thereby creating wide contacts and connections.

Religions have created little communities forming small groups of individuals living together, in whom all essential characteristics of communal living - distinctiveness, smallness, homogeneity and self-sufficiency - are found. Though, the religious communities do not conform to this ideal pattern, they show all other characteristics except self-sufficiency.

Among the different social organisations Karshaka Sanghoms Ventilate grievances of the farmers in relation to agricultural operation and tries consensus measures to
remedy it. Trade Unions work for the economic well-being of their members. Creating a temporary tension, they exert pressure on the opposite group for a solution of the problem. Creating tension intermittently and solving the problem through settlement is the way of operation of the trade unions. Technically it is creation of disequilibrium, so as to create a higher level of equilibrium. Trade unions do not seek permanent disequilibrium and violent change in the society.

Political parties make people conscious of their rights and duties and enable them to participate in the process of electing a government. They also enthuse people to acquire political power to the political party concerned at the local, state and national levels. It also builds up a new kind of unity among people - political party unity, above all other sectional feelings like that of community, caste, locality, trade etc.

Clubs and reading rooms try to develop the artistic talent, physical ability and organising capacity of the youngsters. Though functioning at the local level, these institutions cause higher level, both national and state level, aspirations among the youngsters. Reading rooms widen the horizons of knowledge and thinking.
Theoretically the educational mechanism provides for avoiding or reducing the potential conflict. The educational system at the village level provides for literacy and general education only. It serves all people alike. A new kind of unity and oneness which is above all sectarian feelings is kindled among children. Education strengthens national consciousness and patriotic feeling.

The social matrix of the village though cannot be considered as an exemplary paradigm of enlightened social life, definitely provides for a decent web of social relationship. Though the village is only a societal part, the different social institutions working in it provide for an integrated and co-ordinated system of social life. It can also be said that largely the working of these societal parts creates a state of equilibrium in which there is only consensus perspective for the maintenance of the social system than the conflict perspective of violent shake of the social organism and societal change.