SUMMARY

This study embodies the rural social system of Maharashtra. Although the setting of social system is restricted to a village in this study, the latter is not restricted to a single village, but as many villages for which empirical data were available. The author has used the primary data of seven villages, viz. Kamthadi and Natambi (Poona district), Bhilgaon and Ambadi (Nagpur district), Navari (Dhulia district), Koke (Parbhani district) and Dongargaon (Akola district) and the published secondary data. There is not a single study so far, which covers all aspects of village life, particularly in Maharashtra. This study would fulfill this long felt need.

Dr. Charles P. Loomis has developed the "Processually Articulated Structural Model" which provides the investigator with a frame of reference for the analysis of the empirical data, at the same time that it provides a procedure for comparative studies. Every social system, according to Loomis, contains a number of elements, elemental processes, master processes and conditions of social action which make up the structure of the system and which may be employed as units of analysis in explaining interaction. The elemental processes along with the elements that they respectively articulate are:

1. Cognitive mapping and validation which articulate the element belief (knowledge).

2. Tension management and communication of sentiment which articulate the element sentiment.
3. Goal attaining and concomitant "latent" activity as process which articulate the element - end, goal or objective.

4. Evaluation which articulates the element norm.

5. Status - role performance which articulates the element status - role (position).

6. Evaluation of actors and allocation of status-roles which articulate the element rank.

7. Decision making and its initiation into action which articulates the element power.

8. Application of sanctions which articulates the element sanction.

9. Utilization of facilities which articulates the element facility.

Locomis sets forth six comprehensive or master processes each of which activates many or all of the elements. These are (1) communication, (2) boundary maintenance, (3) systemic linkage, (4) social control, (5) socialization, and (6) institutionalization.

Locomis sets out the conditions for social action as: (1) territoriality, (2) size and (3) time.

In the chapter on "Review of Literature" conceptual models developed by other eminent social theorists viz. Karl Marx, Max Weber, Howard Becker, Pitirim A.Sorokin, Robert K. Merton, Kingsley Davis, George C.Homans, Talcott Parsons, Neil J.Smelser and Charles P.Loomis are briefly discussed.
Loomis' PAS Model has been tested for its suitability in the study of Indian rural social system and it has been found that this Model can be accepted for the study of any village social system. The conditions for social action, the master processes and the elemental processes along with the elements of the rural social system of Maharashtra are summarised in the following pages.

CONDITIONS OF SOCIAL ACTION:

1. Territoriality: The village community studied here is spread over a distinct cultural region, called Maharashtra. The chief characteristics of this cultural region are (i) commonness of language, (ii) common usages as regards marriage, kinship system and family organization, (iii) recognizable similarity in dress, utensils and food preparations of the people and (iv) people pay homage to same saints, tell same stories, sing same songs and even show the same attitude towards certain situation of life. Maharashtra is the transitional socio-cultural region between the north and south and thus a combination of Sanskritic northern traits and Dravidian southern traits are found in this region. Kunbi-Maratha is a dominant caste of this region forming 40 per cent of Members of this caste are mainly engaged in agriculture.

The Indian village was, for centuries, a complex stable group with internal differentiation of occupations, statuses, rewards and prosperity - all of these rigidly stratified according to the traditional rules of Hindu caste system. In Maharashtra there appear to be three types of villages which
are differently constituted as regards their gestalt, viz. (1) compact or nucleated village, (ii) scattered village and (iii) tribal village. Nucleated villages are found in plains, scattered villages are found in Konkan and tribal villages are found in forests and hills.

2. Size: The size of the rural social system varies from village to village not controlled by actors. There are three types of villages according to size viz. (i) small, (ii) medium and (iii) large. Nearly one-half of the villages in Maharashtra are small i.e. a population of which does not exceed 500.

3. Time: The rural social system of Maharashtra is as old as the Indian civilization. This system was not changed much till the establishment of the British rule. The agricultural system was also changed in order to supply the raw material to the industries in England. There is now a compelling pressure on agriculture to provide for feeding increasing population and industries and for exports to earn foreign exchange.

1. KNOWING:

Belief (Knowledge) as an element: Peasants' beliefs are classified as (1) philosophical beliefs, (2) religious beliefs, (3) social beliefs, (4) agricultural beliefs and (5) beliefs about animals, diseases and spiritual merit.

According to a theory of action (karma), almost every action of a man has a positive or negative value. The peasant
believes that every Hindu is born into a particular caste because of certain actions he performed in a previous life (janma). He also believes that the human life must be lived for the realization of four ideals of life, viz. dharma (right conduct), artha (wealth), kama (satisfaction of desire) and moksha (release from rebirth). The traditional values are centered around these concepts. To facilitate the fulfillment of four ideals of life an individual's life is divided into four stages viz. brahmacharya (studentship), grihastha (householder), vanaprastha (contemplation) and sanyasa (renunciation).

Although there are few people in Maharashtra, who are members of Manabhava and Nathapatha sect and members of mostly Mahar caste embraced Buddhism, majority of the rural people irrespective of their castes are influenced by the teachings of famous saints viz. Dnyaneshwar, Eknath, Namdeo and Tukaram of the Varakari sect. According to Varakari sect bhakti (love of god) and bhava (faith) are far superior in virtue to all other forms of worship. Followers of Varakari sect have to temper their daily conduct of life with morality and humanism. They objure the use of flesh as food.

The pantheon is much more elaborate among the rural people belonging to Hindu religion. It contains some of the gods of the great Indian tradition, as well as local spirits and deities. Reverence for mountains, rivers, ancestral spirits and village tutelary spirits is an important element in present Hinduism. The rural people are accustomed to classifying gods with special reference to caste, village, lineage, family and individual, each
unit having its special presiding deity.

Cognitive mapping and validation as process: There is a deep-seated feeling among the people that the everyday life should be guided according to the Dharmashastras, Sanskrit literature. Maharashtrian saints have translated most of the literature in simple Marathi language. Communication of this literature is a major function of many religious institutions such as village temple, fairs etc. The traditional texts are read in the temple and religious discourses are given by priests, shastri, kirtankar, haridas, sadhu, guru, etc. who often wander on foot in remote areas. The people visit religious places such as Pandharpur in procession on foot from all corners of Maharashtra. Thus there is far greater knowledge about the literary tradition of the last seven centuries of this land among the illiterate people than among the people who have received their education in schools and colleges. This indicates that there was an effective communication of knowledge among the rural people.

2. FEELING:

Sentiment as an element: The feeling of togetherness, based on the same clan, caste and village, is very strong among the villagers. The village population is divided among the gavacha (of the village) and upara (a stranger). The person whose families had lived in the same village for many generations is called the gavacha and the person immigrated to the village is called the upara. The peasants have strong attachment towards their land and cattle. The family and religious system
are particularly sentiment laden. The feeling of reverence to old people is stronger among the rural people. There is hierarchy in food. Vegetable food is superior to meat; thus eating flesh is a mark of lower castes. When a caste wants to rise in the hierarchy, it may adopt vegetarian diet.

a) Tension management: There are several occasions in the rural social system, when the tensions are aroused between high caste and low caste people. But the contentment of one's lot is maintained by a number of mutually reinforcing beliefs like reincarnation. Rituals are another societal device which reduce emotional tension. Fairs and festivals organised in the village also play an important role in relieving villagers' tension.

b) Communication of the sentiment: The village people form several small gossipping groups at the village community hall (chavadi), a temple, a tea-shop, a motor-stand, etc. Several village problems are discussed in the informal conversation. The women also form the conversation groups at the village well, river and in the same residential area. These conversation groups serve the purpose of communication of sentiments and relaxing the tension.

3. ACHIEVING:

End, goal or objective: The ultimate aim of good deeds in this life is to obtain Mukti (salvation), as believed by the villagers. The prime goal of every villager is to get married at a proper age and to raise a family, preferably a joint family.
His prime goal is to supply food, clothing and shelter to the family.

a) Goal attaining activity and (b) concomitant "latent" activity as a process: The activities of the villagers are directed to achieve four goals viz. right conduct, wealth, satisfaction of desire and salvation. All farmers know that thrift, industry, careful farm management and marketing are essential to accumulate wealth.

4. NOMING, STANDARDIZING AND PATTERNING:

Norm as an element: The rural family is patrilineal and patrilocal. Husband-father is dominant in the rural family and hence the head of the family. The husband is treated by wife as a deity. She performs many upatas (religious vows), the aim of which is to secure a long life for her husband. Men and women have their own clearly defined spheres of living corresponding to their particular functions of social life. The patrilineal family members have equal rights in regard to the property which they own jointly. The continued existence of such a unit of joint ownership is a potential source of social prestige in the village.

Considering the norms about marriage in Maharashtra there is no taboo against the marriage of a boy and a girl of the same village such as in the North India. The marriage of a man to his sister's daughter is a common custom in South India and this custom is prevalent in South Maharashtra. Levirate (marriage of a widow to the younger brother of her husband) is a North Indian custom and is prevalent in Eastern Maharashtra. Cross- cousin
marriage (a man marrying his mother's brother's daughter) has been accepted by all castes in Maharashtra. Sisters can marry the same man. Marriages are settled with the consent of parents or guardians. Monogamy is considered as an ideal.

Many families still follow their traditional caste occupations. The inter-familial behaviour is regulated by the caste council and tradition. Inter-caste marriages are extremely rare. The intercourse between castes is peripheral or tangential. The dress of the village differs according to his caste and occupation. The traditional pattern prescribes the giving of food by higher castes to lower castes and not vice versa.

**Evaluation as a process**: Evaluation is a process through which positive and negative priorities or values are assigned to concepts, objects, actors or collectivities. Merton's five modes of adaptation viz. conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion are described giving Indian examples.

5. **DIVIDING THE FUNCTIONS**

**Status-role as a unit incorporating both element and process**: Social system is a system of differentiated roles. There are no roles without corresponding statuses and vice versa. The status-roles of a member of a family vary with his age and position in the life cycle. Traditionally the father is a protector and provider and has undisputed authority in the household. Besides assisting her husband in his occupation the mother is entirely responsible for home making. In the traditional villages of Maharashtra there is a specialised system of village occupations called "baluta". In a typical village there are 12
balutedars and 18 alutedars. The balute system helped to make the community a unified whole. It minimised competition for work and gave security to the balutedars. The chavadi was the centre of village administration and Patil (Village Headman) and Patwari or Kulkarni (Accountant) were village administrators. They are now replaced by the Grampanchayat (village council).

6. RANKING

Rank as an element: Ranking in the rural family is based on age and sex. Older persons are respected, but more so the head of the family. Married persons are placed high in the ranking scale. Male members are accorded higher status than females. The wealth of the family is closely related to its social rank in the kinship group.

Caste is a hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. Caste rank is not a completely clear-cut matter. The members of each caste among the caste-cluster and each sub-caste within the caste think that their caste is superior to that of their neighbours, because different criteria for caste rank exists.

There are at least four distinct classes in agrarian stratification viz. landlords, landowners, tenants and agricultural labourers.

Evaluation of actors and allocation of status-roles as a process: Evaluation of actors can be studied to get an idea of ranking by asking who dined with whom, who sat with whom and who
lives near whom in the village. Important criteria of ranking actors are: (i) occupation, (ii) diet, (iii) commensality, (iv) pollution potential, (v) ritual and (vi) other behaviour.

7. CONTROLLING:

Power as an element: There are two major forms of control, authority, and influence. Brahmans retained their supremacy through the ages, although they were not wealthy or had no authority. They had influence over all villagers through their learning and moral behaviour. Villagers are considerably influenced by ascetics. The economic power in the rural area under study is today exercised by two classes: the trader money lender and big landlords.

In a nuclear family the authority is held by husband and father. In the joint family it is vested in the Karta (head). The power of the village headman is now transferred to the gram-panchayat.

Wealth is not the only determinant of power in villages. Unified action of large groups is another important determinant, for power. The groups most likely to display unity in this context are castes.

Decision-making and its initiation into action as a process: In the joint family only a few adult members participate in the decision-making. While making decisions regarding family matters the relevant family members are always consulted, otherwise the issue develops a conflict among the family members.
In the religious matters gurus bring out much of the decision-making in the traditional family. The caste council and leaders play important roles in decision-making.

8. SANCTIONING:

**Sanction as an element**: Conformity to norms by actors received rewards in various forms, while non-conformity is dealt with penalties of various types. The positive sanctions include satisfaction, prestige, rights, privileges or immunity from authority, esteem and other social or economic returns. Negative sanctions are the penalties or the deprivation of facilities.

**Application of sanctions as a process**: Group pressure is used to compel the deviator to mend his ways. The person who does not conform to the social norms, is first mildly reprimanded by family members, friends, neighbours and elders. When the person does not yield to these pressures, the matter is dealt by the caste council.

9. FACILITATING:

**Facility as an element**: Facilities are means used by the system to attain its ends and objectives. The facilities of worship are plentiful in India, which is often called the country of idols; but facilities for every day living are not so plentiful. In Maharashtra the cultural land is limited, the rainfall is scarce in one third area and irrigation is available only to 6 per cent of the land. Thus this state is deficit in food grains to the extent of 22 lakh tonnes.
In rural area nearly half of the adult male population was engaged in farm work, about one fourth in non-farm work and the remaining were either voluntarily or involuntarily unemployed. While employment on the farm was largely self-employment, non-farm employment was predominantly wage employment. Occupational mobility was still higher among Muslims and Christians than Hindus. Harijans appeared to be most conservative in retaining the traditional occupations.

Utilization of facilities as a process: The farm family in Maharashtra has an average of five acres of land. The peasant tries to put his small farm to maximum utilization with his limited resources in order to provide for the maintenance of his family all the year round. Efforts are being made by the Extension Service to motivate the farmers to adopt new farm practices, which have proven increased returns.

COMPREHENSIVE OR MASTER PROCESSES:

1. Communication: Communication is the process by which information, decisions and directives pass through a social system and the ways in which knowledge, opinions and attitudes are formed or modified. Of all the various means of communication, the transmission by word of mouth is most commonly used method since the Vedic times in India. Though illiterate any old villager, male or female, even now is able to recite continuously several verses such as slokas, abhangas, aratis, bhupalis, etc. Village women used to sing songs in melodic voices while grinding grains early in the morning. The women could compose new songs. There are specialists in communication such as Gondhalis, Shahir,
Thus the traditional literature was transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth and scriptures.

There are taboos of communication among certain members of the family and kinship. This device provided by culture is to prevent persons in status-roles between which there is tension from expressing their feelings in open conflict. In villages the informal groups are formed based on neighbourhood. News quickly spread through such informal groups.

The diffusion of innovations follows the "Y" pattern of communication in rural social system. The farm information from the extension agencies and mass media first reaches the larger farmers who are first adopters of the practice. This information is later transmitted to the smaller farmers, who are later adopters of a new practice.

2. Boundary maintenance: Boundary maintenance signifies activity to retain the identity, value orientation and interaction pattern of a social system. The head of the joint family attempt to throw up such boundaries as will prevent fission in breaking up of the joint family. The caste system functions as an interacting and cohesive force in the village life. The caste members are bound by kinship, by common traditions, norms, values, interests and social interaction. Each major caste lives in a separate neighbourhood in the village; the lower castes tend to live at the outskirts of the village. There is a separate habitation area for Harijans. The high castes look with indignation on those among lower castes who would imitate their customs.
3. **Systemic linkage**: Systemic linkage is the process by which the elements of at least two social systems come to be articulated to form a single system. The rural social system is articulated with several systems such as Dravidian, Tribal, Muslim, and Western. As discussed earlier, many Dravidian traits are adopted in the rural social system. The worship of animals, trees, spirits, ghosts, and devils, animal sacrifice, and some superstitions are tribal traits assimilated in the rural social system. Several Hindus worship Islamic saints, and they participate in Muslim festivals. The Hindu caste system has been adopted by Muslims. Sanskritization and westernization are linked processes in modern India. When there is Sanskritization mobility may be said to occur within the frame work of a caste, whereas westernization implies mobility outside the frame work of a caste. With industrialization the peasants have taken up growing cash crops such as cotton, peanuts, and sugarcane.

4. **Institutionalization**: Institutionalization is the process through which human behavior is made predictable and patterned. The caste system is the most important regulative institution, which is the social mould or channel within which the behavior of members is confined. Like caste, religion is also a regulative institution. The religion of peasants is the synthesis of sacred standards of the religion and tradition. The joint family and property are two inter-related regulative institutions, which may give prestige to the members in the community. Customs frequently develop into institutions and organizations. The customs, which serve large number of persons.
become so closely interwoven with social life that they may eventually be regarded as its characteristics, regular and even necessary components. The theatre (tamasha) is an institution that furthers the aesthetic interests of the large body of persons making up the aesthetic plurality pattern. The village temple and chavadi (community hall) are two facilities and are centers of activities of the village life which have been highly institutionalized from ancient times. Recently, the Grampanchayat and Consumers' Cooperative Society have become extremely important village institutions in the area of study.

5. Socialization: Socialization is the process through which the social and cultural heritage is transmitted. Socialization in rural Maharashtra may be studied among three groups viz. (i) big land holders, (ii) small land holders or peasants and (iii) agricultural labourers. Children are seldom excluded from any of the adult activities of village life. The personality of children of the peasant class and the labour class is developed more independently than the children of the landowner class. The big land holders family is often a joint family or the extended family. In such a family the child comes in contact with many members. The children of this group do not have to earn or to work hard in order to support the family such as the children of other two groups. The children of the peasant family assist their parents in field work as well as the household work. The children of the labour family have to earn in several ways since childhood. Tending cattle is generally the job of these children.
6. **Social Control**: Social control is the process by which deviancy is counteracted. Social control is of two types: (1) coercive control and (2) persuasive control. The former type is often resorted to by the Government, while the latter is used in informal groups. The conformity to social expectation is achieved by various means. Praise, elevation of prestige, recognition, and reciprocal response are the rewards for conformity; while criticism, ridicule, gossip, withdrawal, reciprocity, ostracism, excommunication and even beating are the penalties for non-conformity. The social control on the members of the caste is exerted by the caste council and recently in some villages by the caste association. Grama Panchayat and Gram Sabha are also effective in this respect.