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Rites and Rituals :
Media of Rural Integration

APPROACH

'Integration' is a commonly used term which carries a sense of unification of different units or parts of a larger thing into a whole. In social sciences this term is generally defined as the mosaic of unity resulting from human interactions and interrelationships. This unity, or integration, is rarely an observable phenomenon. It is usually a matter of inference drawn from the manifestation of certain actions of the people. However, as the nature of inference may vary from person to person for a particular event or for different events, we may find some difficulty in an objective analysis of integration. To overcome this difficulty, the researcher is required to observe and investigate the phenomenon repeatedly. Therefore, the pre-requisite of studying integration is to select some such social actions which have the probability of recurrence within the relevantly specified time-span.

Conceptually, the causal factors of integration in any society can be dichotomised into : (1) those which refer to the external forces, like, an epidemic, draught, flood, fire, etc., which force the people to unify and meet the catastrophy; and (2) those which are internal to the society and bind the people traditionally. Obviously, the first type of integration is not of a permanent nature. A set of catastrophic external forces may lead to the emergence of only a temporary manifestation of integration of the relevant societal elements. There will be a reversal to *status quo ante* when the

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external forces are withdrawn. Contrariwise, the very existence of a society proves beyond doubt that some internal forces of integration are in operation to hold together its different elements, viz., the societal groups, from falling apart. The first major concern of the study under reference is, therefore, to elicit that aspect of social integration which is always there, as embedded into the day to day living of the people accounted for.

Pursuant to the above, the nature of social integration examined is based on the voluntary association of the people, and the elements of social integration considered are with reference to those voluntary associations which are (a) *institutionalized*, (b) *sanctioned* by the society, and (c) *repetitive* in their operation. That is, for the present purpose, the concept of social integration has been brought to account by the socially sanctioned repetitive relationships based on voluntary participation of the societal groups concerned.

A social system is a relational entity, and not a substantive one. Therefore, the unity which we study within a social system is not something absolute or defined once and for all. It varies according to the social situation as well as the context which creates the situation. In order, therefore, to understand the phenomenon of social integration with reference to its situation and context, one has to examine not only the referent groups but also the *levels* in which they operate. The second major concern of the study under reference is, therefore, to identify the different levels of group-integration vis-a-vis particular societal events.

It is known that the group-interactions are dependent on the nature, importance, and the magnitude of any event. The third major concern of this study, therefore, is to observe the relative importance of different societal events with respect to the degree of group-participation in them.

METHOD

The rites and rituals of a people may be regarded as one of the media of social integration. These are highly institutionalized and sanctified by the passage of time. They can, therefore, be fruitfully utilized to study the levels of social integration in a society. Operationally, these rites and rituals (or ceremonies and festivals) can be dichotomized into 'person-oriented' and 'group-oriented' events. With the 'individual' as its *focus*, the events comprising the life-cycle or *rites de passage* fall under the former category. The individuals play the role of a 'sparking light' in the occurrence of such events since they revolve round particular persons on whose behalf these rituals take place. On the other hand, there are some events for which a societal group or a community *en bloc* becomes the focal

point. The collective may refer to a family-household, a village as a whole, and so on. For example, if we analyze the nature of occurrence of the events like deity worship by the family-households or by a village folk, we find that the major responsibility to carry out these events rests on the 'groups' specified respectively.

In order to _scertain the pattern and the degree of social integration with reference to the person-oriented and group-oriented rites and rituals of a people, one may examine the categories of persons who participated as guests in the respective events. Are they kinmembers (kins or affines) of the referants, mere friends and acquaintances, and/or connected with the latter by particular bonds of economic or political activities ? Do they live in the same village as that of the referant and thus maintain a sustained face to face relationship, or are they resident of other villages or towns ? The guests, thus, can be categorized by various bonds of integration, like, kinship, locality, economic or political relations, and so on ; and *indices of participation* of guests (= I. P., say) can be prepared to denote the nature and the degree of social integration desired and attained by the people with respect to particular events. For example, if N be the number of family-households which have kins in the resident village and have invited them on a particular occasion, and if N be the corresponding number of these family-households which have received such guests on that occasion, then the value of the relevant I. P. will be given by [(n/N) × 100].

The calculation of other I. P. values is simpler for the kins in places other than the resident village, and for the friends and acquaintances. Such persons can be present anywhere, while the referants may or may not have kins in their resident villages. Similarly, depending upon the nature of their economic activities, the referants may or may not have economically associated individuals in their resident villages. Anyhow, various sets of I. P. values, which are amenable to statistical tests of significance, can be prepared to denote the nature and the degree of social integration of a people by the relative order of participation of guests in their person-oriented and group-oriented rites and rituals. These values will also denote the relative importance of various forms of rites and rituals as the media of social integration. So that the adopted manner of quantification of the information may yield precise and objective data, which may be replicated, or made comparable, with reference to the data regarding other aspects of social integration of the people. Eventually, therefore, valid and unambiguous generalizations can be made on the phenomenon under reference.

FIELD AND DATA

Since 1958, the Sociological Research Unit of the Indian Statistical Institute is conducting a continuous survey of all the 2,070 villages falling within a radial distance of 20 miles from the town of Giridih in the district of Hazaribagh in Bihar. Some broad information is collected from each family-household in these villages ; e. g., the size and composition of the unit, its religious and caste affiliation, the sector of the national economy to which its economically effective persons are connected, their exact occupations, activity status, and place of work, etc. It was noticed from an analysis of these and allied characteristics of the rural folk that the villages tend to be differentiated according to their walking distance from the town, the distance from the nearest bus-route and their size in terms of the number of households they contain (Chattopadhyay and Bandyopadhyay 1962 : 42 (3) ; 1963 : XVIII (1) ; Mukherjee 1963 : 2 (2). The universe of all villages within the walking distance of 10 miles from Giridih town were, therefore, classified under 9 strata by a cross-classification of their 3 distance categories and 3 size categories ; and 2 villages were selected at random from each stratum (Chart I).

In 1963-64, preliminary enquiries were made by the writer and his colleagues in the 18 sampled villages, and several questionnaire-schedules were prepared in regard to the problem under study. The schedules were repeatedly tested in the field to ensure their usefulness and improve upon their efficiency ; and, when the trial period was over by 1964, the finally structured questionnaire-schedules were canvassed in these villages by a batch of 5 trained field investigators in order to record :

(1) The rites and rituals performed by the villages *en bloc* within 5 years, ending in 1965 ; who, other than the resident folk, came to participate in these festivals and ceremonies ; and so on.

(2) The rites and rituals performed by the resident family-households belonging to different religious communities, sects (e. g., Jolaha Muslims as against other Sunni Muslims), and castes within 5 years, ending in 1965 ; who were invited and participated as guests of the households on the respective occasions ; and so on.

(3) The rites and rituals connected with *rites de passage* (from birth to death) which have taken place in the family-households of different religious-sect-caste groups in the villages within 5 years, ending in 1965 ; who were invited and participated as guests on these occasions ; and so on.

(4) The relationships the economically effective persons have established within and outside the resident villages as employer-employee, co-workers, etc., or in terms of associations developed through an enterprise undertaken as an own-account workers or employer ; the extent to which the sustained economic relationship has influenced their social life ; and so on.

The informants for (1) above were chosen from all the available villagers who are in the knowhow of the things.   In all, there were about 5,000 such informants for the 18 villages.

For (2) and (3), heads of all family-households belonging to each religious-sect-caste group in the respective villages were approached, and details about family festivals and ceremonies, the life-cycle history of all family members, etc., were collected from two adult individuals of age-grade 30-55 as informants.   In all, about 4,000 life-cycle histories, and the incidence of about 3,000 family deity worship, etc., were thus collected for 2,606 family-households belonging to 50 religious-sect-caste groups in the 18 villages.

For (4), two adult and gainfully occupied persons out of all such persons present, of age-grade 30-35 were selected randomly from each family-households as per their different employment and occupational status.   In all, about 2,500 informants were thus selected.

Besides such an extensive collection of data, the author undertook intensive investigation of those aspects of social action and behaviour pattern of the inhabitants of the 18 villages which required the direct intervention of a sociologist.   A large body of information has, thus, been collected to analyse 'social integration' in the manner described earlier.

ANALYSIS

The data have been analyzed, in successive orders of complexity, to represent the social integration of the people according to the following courses of variation considered severally and jointly : (1) between-village difference, (2) between religious-sect-caste group difference, (3) between occupational-group difference, (4) between person-oriented and group-oriented events difference, and (5) between-events differences for the person-oriented and group-oriented categories, respectiyely. It is not possible in this paper to present the entire course of analysis.   It will also be premature and abrupt to present only the final conclusions derived from the course of analysis.   In the following pages, therefore, we shall briefly discuss the findings in *only one* of the 18 villages with reference to *group-*

oriented events. Our present objective is merely to *illustrate* the usefulness of the approach and method described earlier.

The village, comprising 169 Hindu and Muslim family-households, is situated at a walking distance of 7 miles from Giridih town and the nearest bus-route. All the Muslims belong to the sect of Jolahas ; the Hindus belong to various castes. There are 4 castes of the highest order : Brahmin, Bavan, Gosain and Mahuri ; 6 castes of the middle order : Koiri, Hazam, Gowala, Kahar, Barhi, and Dhanuk ; and 2 castes of the lowest order : Chamar and Dusadh. The Chamars represent the numerically dominant caste in the village, closely followed by the Jolahas and Koiris. Most of the villagers are engaged in agriculture as owner-cultivator ; a few pursue trading or other activities. There is no educational institution in the village ; the overwhelming majority of the residents are illiterate.

All the Hindu castes in the village worship Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity. The usual date and time of worship are the evenings of the Thursdays of the bright half of the months of Pausa (January), Chait (March), and Bhado (August) ; and especially on the fullmoon day of Aswin (September). It is believed that the goddess should not be worshipped on any other day in the year. The ceremony may be conducted by a professional priest or a member of the household, while guests are generally invited on the occasion. The I. P. values prepared for the different caste-groups, in terms of the households having kins in the resident village or not (Table 1), suggest two formulations : (1) the domestic worship has the strongest influence in integrating the kins among the lower castes, less among the high, and the least among the middle castes) and (2) the maximum social participation comes from the town, for the Hindu castes although in some cases (Chamar and Kahar) the kins from the town were invited (Table 2).

The household worship in the case of Jolahas refer to the reverence and offerings they pay to certain Pirs (saints) to mark the fulfilment of particular desires (e. g., the cure of a disease) or a specific success of the household (e. g., winning a lawsuit). Guests are invited on such occasions, and in this respect they are seen to be akin to the low caste Hindus like the Chamars (Tables 1 and 2). However, in their cases, town is playing some role in the process of integration.

The popular festival, that is celebrated by the local Hindu households is *Chhat*. In essence this is a festival to worship 'sun' as a benevolent power. It is generally celebrated in the month of Kartik (November) approximately after a week from another festival — *Dewali* or lamp ceremony of India.

The pattern of integration observed during this occasion shows that : (1) the bond of kinship integration is the strongest among the low castes, followed by the middle and high castes, and (2) as before, on this account also the residential village plays the dominant role.

The commonest domestic festival celebrated by the *Jolahas* is *Id-uz-Zuha.* This is observed at the end of the month of *Ramzan.* According to the Muslim Calendar it is the ninth month of the year which generally falls during the summer season. The examination of the I. P. values of this group confirms the nature of integration as was found previously, except, that town did not play any role in this case (Table 3).

Let us now consider the nature and extent of kinship integration as manifested in village events. The presiding deity of the local Hindu villages in general is known as Brahmo-Narayan. He is conceived as the supreme deity and a benevolent guardian of the rural folks. He is worshipped twice in every year. Once at the time of sowing paddy, and the other, just before harvesting. The first *puja* or worship locally termed as *Akhaderi* or *Akheri* has possibly derived its name from the season or month of worship, which is Asar (June-July). The Muslims, obviously, have no so called village deity to worship Instead, their *Friday Prayer* in the village 'masjid' *en masse* may be treated as village worship in the present context. Identical informations, available from the different social groups on the occasion of village worship (Table 4), indicate the strongest bond of integration among the *Jolahas*, followed by that among the lower, upper and middle castes in that order. On the spatial level, location of the kins in rural areas is playing the dominant role. It may be noted contextually, that as the celebration of village events is the responsibility of all the households, purposively an attempt has been made to measure and compare the societal integration on a beyond-the-village dimension.

Of all the festivals observed by the Hindu villagers *Ram Navami* is the most important. The celebration starts on the first of *Chait* (March-April) and lasts until the ninth day. The festival is connected with the birth of Rama, the hero of Ramayana—the Indian epic. It is said that he was born on the 9th day (which is called *navami*) of the month of *Chaitra* or *Chait.*

Similarly, the Muslims celebrated the village festival of *Muharram.* Muharram is the first month of Islamic year and is a period of mourning, observed annually, in rememberance of the martyrdom of *Hassan & Husain,* the grand-sons of the Prophet. Examination of the kinship integration through the village festival shows that although the value of index of participation varies from group to group, the limit of such variation is not so sharp. This indicates a lesser divergence among the societal groups

concerned in terms of kinship integration on the aforesaid event (Table 5).

If we are allowed to pool the data of the societal groups by categorizing them into the hierarchical orders to which they belong as per the local sayings, we find the existence of strongest integrating influence among the low castes. On this account the high and middle castes appear to resemble each other closely. Further, the pooled data encourage the following formulations :

(1) Among the Hindus, domestic festival appears to have the strongest influence in integrating the kins. This is followed by the domestic worship, village worship and village festival in that order of importance ;

(2) For the *Jolahas*, village worship and domestic festival seem to play an equally important role, followed by domestic worship and village festival, in terms of kinship integration ;

(3) In all cases, however, residential village unmistakably appears to be the most important spatial level of such integration (Tables 6 and 7).

Above inferences are drawn on the basis of apparent difference of proportional participation of kins in those events. For further scrutiny, statistical test of significance is applied on the data (Table 8). And on the basis of such results we can conceive and construct social interactional spaces or briefly, social spaces. The circogrammes* drawn are an attempt in that direction. Explanation forwarded is that the 'intra-circle' groups do not, as opposed to the 'inter-circle' groups, show any significant divergence among themselves. In other words, these 'intra-circle' groups are behaving as a relatively homogeneous unit in terms of the process of invitation-participation of their kins.

Again, keeping constant the groups, we can similarly measure the relative importance of the events. In the present case, however, as the sample (n) is also constant for the respective groups, so we can argue directly from the proportional difference that as media of social integration, domestic festival plays the most important role followed by domestic worship, village worship and village festival in that order.

Similarly, attempt can be made of conceiving social and economic spaces in terms of non-kins/friends participation and the guests and hosts, economic affiliation and/or economic relations. These two, among others, I believe are very important aspects of social integration and need to be treated quite elaborately and seperately. So no attempt has been made here to tread on those lines in this paper which has a limited scope.

Chart 1

Village size by total number of house-holds in the village	Sample	Distance (in miles) from Giridih town			Total
		0—5	6—10		
			Distance (in miles) from the nearest bus-route		
			0—5	6+	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1—25	1	Sr. No. 1119	Sr. No. 2274	Sr. No. 2053	—
	2	Sr. No. 1009	Sr. No. 2271	Sr. No. 2125	—
Total no. of villages		17	22	46	85
26—100	1	Sr. No. 1110	Sr. No. 2351	Sr. No. 2009	—
	2	Sr. No. 1072	Sr. No. 2043	Sr. N. 2132	—
Total no. of villages		40	39	48	127
101+	1	Sr. No. 1091	Sr. No. 2261	Sr. No. 2029	—
	2	Sr. No. 1074	Sr. No. 2241	Sr. No. 2058	—
Total no. of Villages		29	11	9	49
Total		86	72	103	261

[Sr. No.=Serial number of villages selected randomly]

Table 1

Caste/ Group (names)	Total no. of house- holds	Number of households having 'kins' at						
		Same Village (S)	Different Village (D)	Town Only (T)	S+D	S+T	D+T	S+D+T
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Bavan	3				3			
Brahmin	3				3			
Gosain	18	7			11			
Mahuri	1		1					
Barhi	1		1					
Dhanuk	1		1					
Gowala	12				12			
Hazam	23	1			22			
Kahar	5				3			2
Koiri	30				30			
Chamar	36	1			31			4
Dusadh	3				3			
Momin/ Jolaha	33	1			26			6
Total	169	10	3		144			12

Table 2

Attribute : Domestic Worship

Caste/ Group (names)	Number of households receiving 'kins' from			Index of 'Kins' participation		
	Same Village	Different Village	Town Only	Same Village	Different Village	Town Only
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Bavan	2	1		67	33	
Brahmin	2	1		67	33	
Gosain	9	7		50	64	
Mahuri	—	1		—	100	
Barhi	—	0		—	0	
Dhanuk	—	1		—	100	
Gowala	6	9		50	75	
Hazam	11	9		56	41	
Kahar	2	3	0	40	60	0
Koiri	16	14		53	47	
Chamar	28	24	0	77	69	0
Dusadh	1	0		33		
Momin/ Julaha	21	20	1	64	62	1/
Total	100	90	1	—	—	—

('—' or blank = no scope; '0' = no representation/irrelevent)

Table 3

Attribute: Domestic Festival

Caste/ Group (names)	Number of households receiving 'kins' from			Index of 'kins' participation		
	Same Village	Different Village	Town Only	Same Village	Different Village	Town Only
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Bavan	2	1		67	33	
Brahmin	3	1		100	33	
Gosain	13	5		72	45	
Mahuri	—	1		—	100	
Barhi	—	1		—	100	
Dhanuk	—	1		—	100	
Gowala	11	2		92	17	
Hazam	19	9		83	41	
Kahar	5	3	0	100	60	0
Koiri	27	6		90	20	
Chamar	36	19	0	100	54	0
Dusadh	3	1		100	33	
Momin/ Jolaha	27	14	0	82	44	0
Total	146	64	0	—	—	—

Table 4

Attribute: Village Festival

Caste/ Group (names)	Number of households receiving 'kins' from		Index of 'kins' participation	
	Different Village	Town only	Different Village	Town only
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Bavan	1		33	
Brahmin	2		67	
Gosain	3		27	
Mahuri	—		—	
Barhi	—		—	
Dhanuk	—		—	
Gowala	4		33	
Hazam	7		32	
Kahar	1	0	20	0
Koiri	4		13	
Chamar	19	0	54	0
Dusadh	1		33	
Momin/ Jolaha	28	2	87	33
Total	78	2	—	—

Table 5

Attribute: Village Worship

Caste/ Group (names)	Number of households receiving 'kins' from		Index of 'kins' participation	
	Different Village	Town only	Different Village	Town only
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Bavan	1		33	
Brahmin	1		33	
Gosain	—			
Mahuri	—			
Barhi	- -			
Dhanuk	—			
Gowala	4		33	
Hazam	4		18	
Kahar	1	0	20	0
Koiri	4		13	
Chamar	10	0	29	0
Dusadh	—			
Momin/Jolaha	9	2	28	33
Total	34	2	—	—

Table 6

Attribute: Domestic Worship

Location	Index of 'kins' participation			
	Hindu			Muslim Group Functional
	High Castes	Middle Castes	Low Castes	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Same Village	54	53	74	64
Different Village	55	51	63	6?
Town only	—	0	0	17
Attribute: Domestic Festival				
Same Village	75	88	100	8?
Different Village	44	31	53	4-1
Town only	—	0	0	0

Table 7

Attribute: Village Worship

Locations	Index of 'kins' participation			
	Hindu			Muslim Group Functional
	High Castes	Middle Castes	Low Castes	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Different Village	25	23	51	87
Town only	—	0	0	33
Attribute: Village Festival				
Different Village	28	18	29	28
Town only	—	0	0	33

Table 8

Attribute: Computed Values of 't' on kins participation in

Comparable Social Groups	Domestic				Village	
	Worship		Festival		Worship	Festival
	Same Village	Different Village	Same Village	Different Village	Different Village	Different Village
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
$H_1 — H_2$	0.0847	0.3024	1.5259	1.0392	0.1994	1.0422
$H_1 — H_3$	1.6318	0.5717	3.2827**	0.6291	2.0369*	0.0853
$H_1 — MF$	0.7602	0.4839	0.6412	0.0000	4.5604**	0.0000
$H_2 — H_4$	2.1500*	1.1624	2.2523*	2.2343*	2.9797**	1.3263
$H_2 — MF$	1.0508	1.0328	0.8208	1.2716	5.9331**	1.1547
$H_3 — MF$	0.9175	0.0867	2.7662**	0.7504	3.0472**	0.0936

(Note :   * = Significant at 5% level
          ** = Significant at 1% level)

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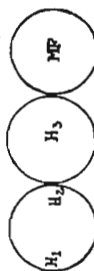SOCIAL SPACE : CIRCUMSCRIBED

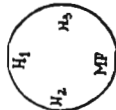DOMESTIC WORSHIP: Same Village.

DOMESTIC FESTIVAL: Same Village.

VILLAGE WORSHIP: Different Village.

VILLAGE FESTIVAL: Different Village.

Different Village

Different Village