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Directorate of Distance Education

M.A. [Sociology]

I - Semester

351 11

FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIOLOGY

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SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

Foundations of Sociology

Syllabi	Mapping in Book
BLOCK I: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY UNIT - I: Origin and Development of Sociology as an Independent Discipline UNIT - II: Nature and Scope - Its Relationship with Other Social Sciences - Uses of Sociology. UNIT - III: Basic Concepts of Sociology - Society, Community and Association	Unit 1: Origin and Development of Sociology as an Independent Discipline (Pages 1-21); Unit 2: Nature and Scope of Sociology (Pages 22-41); Unit 3: Basic Concepts of Sociology (Pages 42-58)
BLOCK II: INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY, THEORIES ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN SOCIETY UNIT - IV: Individual and Society: Theories about the Origin of Human Society UNIT - V: The Role of Heredity and Environment in the Development of Individual.	Unit 4: Individual and Society (Pages 59-69); Unit 5: Heredity, Environment and Individual (Pages 70-85)
BLOCK III: CULTURE, SOCIALIZATION AND SOCIAL ACTION UNIT - VI: Culture: Characteristics and Functions, Material and Non-material Culture, Cultural Lag, Acculturation, Relationship between Culture and Personality. UNIT - VII: Socialization: Importance - Process - Stages - Agencies - Theories. UNIT - VIII: Social Action and Interaction: Social Relationships and Social Processes.	Unit 6: Culture (Pages 86-105); Unit 7: Socialization (Pages 106-117); Unit 8: Social Action and Interaction (Pages 118-131)
BLOCK IV: SOCIAL PROCESSES, SOCIAL GROUPS AND SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS UNIT - IX: Associative/ Conjunctive: Cooperation, Accommodation, Assimilation, Diffusion, and Disassociative / Disjunctive: Competition and Conflict. UNIT - X: Social Groups: Primary and Secondary Groups - Characteristics - Functions - Differences - Reference Groups. UNIT - XI: Social Organizations: Formal and Informal - Characteristics and Functions. UNIT - XII: Social Institutions - Characteristics - Family and Marriage – Political – Education - 42 Economic - Religious Institutions.	Unit 9: Social Interactions: Associative and Disassociative (Pages 132-143); Unit 10: Social Groups (Pages 144-166); Unit 11: Social Organizations (Pages 167-183); Unit 12: Social Institutions (Pages 184-203)
BLOCK V: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND SOCIAL CONTROL UNIT - XIII: Social Stratification: Characteristics and Functions - Estate, Caste and Class Systems, Status. UNIT - XIV: Social Control: Types of Social Control - Formal and Informal. Agencies of Social Control.	Unit 13: Social Stratification (Pages 204-232); Unit 14: Social Control (Pages 233-242)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

BLOCK I: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

UNIT 1 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AS AN INDEPENDENT DISCIPLINE 1-21

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Ancient and Medieval Social Philosophy
- 1.3 Social Forces in the Development of Sociological Theory
- 1.4 Origin and Development of Sociology: An Overview
- 1.5 Emergence of Sociology as an Independent Discipline
- 1.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 1.7 Summary
- 1.8 Key Words
- 1.9 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 1.10 Further Readings

UNIT 2 NATURE AND SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY 22-41

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Nature and Scope of Sociology: An Overview
 - 2.2.1 Science of Sociology
- 2.3 Sociology and its Relationship with other Social Sciences
- 2.4 Uses of Sociology
- 2.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 Key Words
- 2.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 2.9 Further Readings

UNIT 3 BASIC CONCEPTS OF SOCIOLOGY 42-58

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Society
- 3.3 Community
- 3.4 Association

- 3.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 3.6 Summary
- 3.7 Key Words
- 3.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 3.9 Further Readings

**BLOCK II: INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY, THEORIES ABOUT
THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN SOCIETY**

UNIT 4 INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY 59-69

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Relationship Between Individual and Society
 - 4.2.1 An Individual's Dependence on Social Heritage
 - 4.2.2 Individual and Society
- 4.3 Theories about the Origin of Human Society
 - 4.3.1 Social Contract Theory
 - 4.3.2 Organismic Theory
- 4.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 4.5 Summary
- 4.6 Key Words
- 4.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 4.8 Further Readings

UNIT 5 HEREDITY, ENVIRONMENT AND INDIVIDUAL 70-85

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Environment and Man
- 5.3 The Role of Heredity and Environment in the Development of the Individual
 - 5.3.1 Heredity and Environment
- 5.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 5.5 Summary
- 5.6 Key Words
- 5.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 5.8 Further Readings

BLOCK III: CULTURE, SOCIALIZATION AND SOCIAL ACTION

UNIT 6 CULTURE 86-105

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 Meaning and Characteristics of Culture
 - 6.2.1 Functions of Culture

- 6.2.2 Types of Culture and Acculturation
- 6.2.3 Material and Non-Material Culture
- 6.2.4 Cultural Lag
- 6.3 Relationship between Culture and Personality
- 6.4 Culture and Civilization
- 6.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 6.6 Summary
- 6.7 Key Words
- 6.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 6.9 Further Readings

UNIT 7 SOCIALIZATION

106-117

- 7.0 Introduction
- 7.1 Objectives
- 7.2 Socialization: Meaning and Importance
- 7.3 Process, Stages, Agencies, Theories and Types of Socialization
 - 7.3.1 Process
 - 7.3.2 Stages of Socialization
 - 7.3.3 Agencies
 - 7.3.4 Theories
 - 7.3.5 Types of Socialization
- 7.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 7.5 Summary
- 7.6 Key Words
- 7.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 7.8 Further Readings

UNIT 8 SOCIAL ACTION AND INTERACTION

118-131

- 8.0 Introduction
- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 Social Action: An Overview
 - 8.2.1 Scope of Social Action
- 8.3 Social Relationships, Interaction and Social Process
- 8.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 8.5 Summary
- 8.6 Key Words
- 8.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 8.8 Further Readings

**BLOCK IV: SOCIAL PROCESSES, SOCIAL GROUPS AND
SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS**

**UNIT 9 SOCIAL INTERACTIONS: ASSOCIATIVE AND
DISASSOCIATIVE**

132-143

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Objectives
- 9.2 Associative/Conjunctive
 - 9.2.1 Cooperation
 - 9.2.2 Accomodation
 - 9.2.3 Assimilation
 - 9.2.4 Diffusion
- 9.3 Diassociative/Disjunctive
 - 9.3.1 Competition
 - 9.3.2 Conflict
- 9.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 9.5 Summary
- 9.6 Key Words
- 9.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 9.8 Further Readings

UNIT 10 SOCIAL GROUPS

144-166

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Objectives
- 10.2 Social Groups: An Overview
- 10.3 Types of Social Groups: Characteristics and Functions
 - 10.3.1 Primary Groups
 - 10.3.2 Secondary Groups
 - 10.3.3 Differences between Primary and Secondary Groups
 - 10.3.4 Reference Groups
- 10.4 Peer Groups in Modern Society
- 10.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 10.6 Summary
- 10.7 Key Words
- 10.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 10.9 Further Readings

UNIT 11 SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

167-183

- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Objectives
- 11.2 Social Organizations: An Overview
 - 11.2.1 Formal Organizations: Characteristics and Functions
 - 11.2.2 Informal Organizations: Characteristics and Functions

- 11.3 Bureaucracy
- 11.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 11.5 Summary
- 11.6 Key Words
- 11.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 11.8 Further Readings

UNIT 12 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

184-203

- 12.0 Introduction
- 12.1 Objectives
- 12.2 Social Institutions: An Overview
 - 12.2.1 Characteristics
 - 12.2.2 Functions
- 12.3 Forms of Social Institutions
 - 12.3.1 Family
 - 12.3.2 Marriage
 - 12.3.3 Political
 - 12.3.4 Education
 - 12.3.5 Economic
 - 12.3.6 Religious Institutions
- 12.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 12.5 Summary
- 12.6 Key Words
- 12.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 12.8 Further Readings

BLOCK V: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND SOCIAL CONTROL

UNIT 13 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

204-232

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Social Stratification: An Overview
 - 13.2.1 Characteristics
 - 13.2.2 Functions
- 13.3 Theories of Social Stratification
- 13.4 Social Stratification and Social Mobility
- 13.5 Types of Social Stratification
 - 13.5.1 Slavery Class Systems
 - 13.5.2 Social Class
 - 13.5.3 Social Caste
 - 13.5.4 Estate
 - 13.5.5 Status

- 13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 13.7 Summary
- 13.8 Key Words
- 13.9 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 13.10 Further Readings

UNIT 14 SOCIAL CONTROL

233-242

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Objectives
- 14.2 Social Control: An Overview
 - 14.2.1 Types of Social Control: Formal and Informal
 - 14.2.2 Agencies of Social Control
- 14.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 14.4 Summary
- 14.5 Key Words
- 14.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 14.7 Further Readings

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

Sociology is a science based on the study of humans and their culture. It is a combination of the organized study of the growth, architecture, relationships and attitudes of systematic groups of human beings. Sociology paves the way for scientists, social thinkers and activist in understanding the society. It also helps them in improving the quality of life, of the people living in the society.

The basic principles of sociology are:

- The behaviour of individuals in social groups is different than that when they are independent.
- Individuals, who are part of a social group, follow the rules of that social group.
- These rules are created and implemented socially.
- Some people have more authority in the creation of rules, than others.
- Those who follow the rules are awarded and those who break them are penalized.
- The rules of social groups have a scientific base.

This book—*Foundations of Sociology*—focuses on the scope, nature and definitions of sociology and society, behaviour of individuals in societies, effects of culture on the human personality, characteristics, and types and functions of culture. It also analyses the relationship between social interaction and socialization. It familiarizes the reader with the basic concepts in sociology, such as customs, competition and conflict, social institutions, roles, social stratification and the social control and formal and informal agencies of social control, polity and religion.

This book has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with the Introduction followed by the Objectives for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner and is interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of Self-Assessment Questions and Exercises is also provided at the end of each unit. The Summary, Key Words and Further Reading further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

BLOCK - I

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

*Origin and Development
of Sociology as an
Independent Discipline*

**UNIT 1 ORIGIN AND
DEVELOPMENT OF
SOCIOLOGY AS AN
INDEPENDENT DISCIPLINE**

NOTES

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Ancient and Medieval Social Philosophy
- 1.3 Social Forces in the Development of Sociological Theory
- 1.4 Origin and Development of Sociology: An Overview
- 1.5 Emergence of Sociology as an Independent Discipline
- 1.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 1.7 Summary
- 1.8 Key Words
- 1.9 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 1.10 Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sociology is one of the first social sciences to be acknowledged. The word 'sociology', owes its origin to the Latin word, *socius* (companion) and the Greek word, *logy* (study of). Sociology incorporates the study of social phenomena, social life, groups, institutions, associations and societies. Sociology focuses on society from a scientific point of view. Sociology has a vast scope. It ranges from individual to grouped social systems.

Undoubtedly, humans have always pondered over various issues related to their lives and the conditions of their existence. These thoughts and reflections are the life-blood of religion, philosophy, ideology and various other ways through which humans can analyse about themselves and the world. Therefore, there is nothing new in the basic urge which finally led to the emergence of sociology as a discipline concerned about understanding human behaviour, interaction and organization. We can say that sociology is just a more *systematic study* of what we do in our daily lives and routines. Nonetheless, sociology did not emerge as a predictable extension of what people characteristically do; rather, it arose from the rebirth or Renaissance in Europe after a long period of perceptible stagnation.

NOTES

These 'dark ages' were the result of the collapse of the last remnants of the Roman Empire, and they were only dark in retrospective comparison with the apparent achievements of the Greeks and Romans.

However, life was not so stagnant. New inventions and ideas were gradually accumulating, regardless of the oppressive poverty among the masses, perpetual warfare among feudal lords and the unyielding religious dogma. New systems and schemes of commerce were unhurriedly emerging. New forms and experiments in the field of political organization were arising from the patterns of war and conquest. Further, new religious ideas were delicately working their way around the dogmas of the dominant Church. So the great awakening in intellectual thought, art, commerce, politics and other human domains was erected on little achievements and advances which were slowly gathering between the fifth and thirteenth centuries in Europe. Still, once the critical threshold was reached, human thinking took sudden leaps and recaptured much that had been lost from the Greeks and Romans. More significantly, it re-created systematic thought about the universe in terms of scientific thinking.

Sociology gained the status of independent discipline only in the 19th century, prior to this period, it was considered to be a part of other disciplines of studies such as the broad subjects of social philosophy or philosophy of history. If we, look at the historical references, we can find sociological studies being mentioned as early as in the writing of Confucius (551-479). Later on, sociological conflicts and advance social reasoning was found in the works of Ibn Khaldun in 14th century. But the comprehensive study of sociology as an independent discipline began with its coinage by the Father of Sociology, August Comte. In this unit, we will study about the origin and development of sociology, the emergence of sociology as an independent discipline and the important milestones in the field of sociology.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the origin and development of sociology
- Discuss the emergence of sociology as an independent discipline
- Trace the important milestones in the field of sociology

1.2 ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Beginning with the time of the Egyptian social prophets onwards, thinkers were approaching, and to a certain extent successfully formulating, the chief problems of sociology.

Anything like a systematic discussion of social phenomena began with the Greeks. The writers of oriental antiquity were prevented by the general conditions of their social environment from offering any strikingly original generalization concerning the origin and nature of social institution. An agrarian economy, caste, superstition, inflexible religious system and sumptuary legislation tended to give social institution a fixity and sanctity which discouraged any extensive speculation as to their origin, nature or possible means of improvement. When social institutions were 'frozen' by a tyrannical customary code and upheld by an inscrutable Providence, there could be no 'science' of society. Consequently, in oriental antiquity most of the thinking upon social problems comprised formulating justification of the existence of the given social regime, fervently upholding the sanction of a unique revealed religion or the wisdom of ancestors. The first coherent analysis of social phenomena and processes, so far as extant records furnish the basis for judgement, originated with the Greek philosophers of the post-Socratic period.

The outstanding traits of ancient oriental social thought may safely be characterized somewhat as follows: the social thinking was informal, sporadic and unorganized rather than systematic or the product of deliberate study. It was highly personal and individual in origin and expression, and not the outgrowth of schools or types of social thought or of conscious social analysis. The individual rather than the group was the centre of most of the social thinking. Social theory was pre-eminently practical and utilitarian, devoted to supplying advice and admonition concerning everyday life. It was decidedly hortatory and emotional in attitude and intent. Such social thinking was related to groups rather than to individuals. Also, it was concerned mainly with the so-called 'primary' groups, such as the clan, the neighbourhood and the village. However, law and government received some attention. The trend of the social thinking was conservative, traditional and mainly retrospective in outlook. There was no conception of social progress, and such social change as was envisaged was believed to be brought about by supernatural forces, which were held to be the source of all social causation.

While it is impossible to account for Greek originality and freedom of thought entirely upon the basis of the surrounding conditions, it is nevertheless true that the characteristic trends in the sociological thinking of the Greeks can be traced back to the social environment.

In the first place, there was rarely any extensive or highly centralized political organization, bringing together in one unified state many different peoples. This allowed the tribal spirit of **localism** and **provincialism** to have free play, and this spirit pervaded most of the Greek thinking upon social phenomena. The contrast between Greek and barbarian stands out clearly in most of the important Greek studies of social institutions. But if the Greek city-state fostered a rather narrow local conceit, it also rendered possible a high degree of like-mindedness on the part of the citizens. This led to that group self-consciousness which lay at the basis

NOTES

NOTES

of those utopian or idealistic theories of society that appeared in the Republic of Plato and the politics of Aristotle.

Again the freedom and liberty of the Athenian city-state and the absence of a coercive state religion made for that critical philosophy which first appeared on a considerable scale among the Attic Greeks. Despite the pretensions of Athens to be a commercial empire, Greek civilization was based primarily upon an agricultural economy, which, through its routine and repetition, encouraged a static outlook upon the social process. Consequently, one is not surprised to find Aristotle setting up stability as the most perfect test of the excellence of a state. Despite their intellectual activity, there was little inductive study of social phenomena among the Greeks. Aristotle furnishes the only notable exception to this statement. The Greeks despised the humble and commonplace methods of natural science and preferred the freer and wider ranges of a priori generalization. The possibilities of deductive thinking about the social process were, accordingly, exhausted by the Greeks. It was not until natural science had established inductive methods in social science that the Republic and the Laws of Plato and the Politics of Aristotle were surpassed as analyses of social phenomena by the works of Comte, Quetelet, Spencer and Ward.

Plato (427–347 B.C) in his search for an adequate definition of justice was led into making an analysis of society and of the state. He outlined the organic theory of society. He believed that not only the economic but also the ethical basis of society is embodied in the functional division of labour. In this respect, his *Republic* contributed what is probably the most satisfactory analysis of the economic foundation of society to be found in the works of any writer in antiquity.

Plato recognized the existence and importance of the social mind, though he wrongly believed it to be merely the sum of the individual minds in the social group. Adopting the premise that man can control his own relations and that concerted volition is the inevitable result of similar external surroundings, he constructed one of the most nearly complete of the utopia plans for an ideal society of which history bears any record. It is interesting to note that, aside from its communistic aspects, this utopia of Plato provided for the first comprehensive scheme of eugenics in the history of social or biological philosophy. Plato's theory that the elite should govern society stimulated later aristocratic political theory and has been embraced by the Fascist and 'managerial' philosophers in our own age.

Especially interesting was Plato's contribution to historical sociology in his *Laws*. With almost the perspective of a nineteenth-century evolution, he discerned something of the true nature of social evolution and of the time required for its consummation. He presented his own theories on the subject, which were exceedingly accurate for one possessed of just small data. Finally, in decided contrast to his predecessors and many of his successors, Plato tried to comprehend and analyse society as a unity and in its entirety.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C), the most influential of all Greek writers on social philosophy, both on account of the profundity of his insight into social processes and because of his pontifical relationship to medieval thought, made many advances over Plato in his investigation of the basis of political and social relationship. In the first place, Aristotle's *Politics* introduced to some extent the inductive method of studying social phenomena, while Plato had relied almost entirely upon the far less scientific deductive mode of approach. But probably more important than this was Aristotle's direct and clean-cut assertion that man is by nature social being.

It was Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626) who firstly articulated the new mode of inquiry—Conceptualizations of the nature of the universe should always be taken with skepticism and tested against observable facts. It sounds like a commonplace idea presently, but it was very much radical during those times. This idea both legitimated and stimulated the great achievements of the 16th and 17th centuries in astronomy, ultimately shaping in Sir Isaac Newton's famous law of gravity. Thoughts about the universe acquired a systematic character. It was but more than just systematic: Thinking also became abstract, articulating basic and fundamental relationships in very general terms and, then, observing if tangible events in the empirical world conformed to these general statements. It is the essence of science, and it in fact changed the world.

Sociology as a discipline emerged during the beginning of the 19th century. However, it was not so much a dramatic breakthrough in human reasoning as an extension of what is usually termed 'The Enlightenment'. Perhaps enlightenment can be considered as an intellectual revolution, because it turned thinking about the human condition towards the opinion that progress was not only possible, but inevitable as well.

Classical sociological theories possessed great scope and ambition. These were either created in Europe between the early 1800s and the early 1900s or have their roots in the culture of that period. The works of such classical sociological theorists like Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel and Vilfredo Pareto were really significant for those times and played a pivotal role in the consequent development of sociology. In addition, the ideas of these theorists are still relevant to sociological theory because contemporary sociologists still read them and get references on the fundamentals. These have become classics because they possess a comprehensive range of application and concern very important social issues.

One cannot really establish the precise date when sociological theory began. People have been thinking about developing theories of social life since early in history. However, we will not go back to the early historic times of the Greeks or Romans or even to Middle Ages. This is not because people in those epochs did not have sociologically relevant ideas, but because the return on our investment in time would be small; we would spend a lot of time getting very few ideas that are relevant to modern sociology.

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1.3 SOCIAL FORCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

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Social settings have a profound affect in shaping the intellectual fields. This is specifically true of sociology, which is not only derived from that setting but takes the social setting as its subject matter. We will briefly discuss some of the significant social conditions of the 19th century and early 20th century, which were of the supreme significance in the development of sociology.

Political Revolutions

The long series of political revolutions ushering in the French Revolution of 1789 and then carrying over through the 20th century was the immediate factor responsible for the rise of sociological theorizing. These revolutions had enormous impact on many societies resulting in many positive changes. However, what caught the awareness of many early theorists was not the positive consequences, but the negative effects of these changes. These thinkers were disturbed by the resulting chaos and disorder, especially in France. They had a common desire to reinstate the social order. Some of the more intense thinkers of the age literally wanted a return to the peaceful and comparatively orderly days of the Middle Ages. However, more sophisticated thinkers felt that social change had made such a return almost impossible. These thinkers tried to find new bases of order in societies which had been changed by the political revolutions.

French Revolution

The French revolution of 1789 in various aspects overshadowed the 19th century as a revolution which challenged and successfully dismantled the old social order. This revolution strengthened the state which aimed to represent the will of the people. Therefore, it is very crucial to recognize that the political and cultural climate which existed before the revolution was dominated by the monarchy and the church.

The abolishment of all religious order falls into Comte's theory that throughout history society has traversed through three discrete stages: theological, metaphysical and scientific. Comte believed that a country with religious order meant a theological approach that deemed the condition of society to be the God's will. The monarchy had always justified its position of power by emphasizing that the right to rule derives from God. In practice it meant that kings are answerable for their actions to God alone. By abolishing the monarchy and religious order, the revolution marked the move away from Comte's 'theological' stage.

The French citizens were provided new legal rights, a comprehensive centralized education system and a new inheritance system. These changes challenged the preceding traditional model, and hence provided to the individual citizens a different perspective of society.

The study of this new perspective and the introduction of individual rights heralded the beginning of sociology as a discipline. It also confirmed the French revolution's tremendous influence on the field. Karl Marx, one of the major philosophical, economic and sociological personality of modern times, was tremendously influenced by the revolution of 1789. He expected that other similar revolutions elsewhere against feudal or oppressive societies will follow. When Marx's ideas ultimately were put into practice after the Russian revolution in October 1917, Leon Trotsky wrote an analysis of this event in terms of the French Revolution. Therefore it proves how this event still has relevance when studying social uprisings presently.

There was a greater stress on the state as opposed to an established monarchy and church system. Consequently, a new social movement called as 'nationalism' came into existence because some of the thinkers replaced allegiance to God and the monarchy with an allegiance to the state. Nationalism has given rise to several uprisings since the French revolution (particularly National Socialism in Germany during the 1930's) and again gave people another perception of the society they are part of. It is pertinent because Nationalism is studied in depth in social scientific fields like anthropology and sociology presently.

The Industrial Revolution

Industrial Revolution was at least as important as the political revolution in the shaping of sociological theory. It swept through many Western societies, mostly in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Industrial Revolution did not involve a single event but various interrelated developments which ended up transforming the Western world from a basically agricultural to a tremendously industrial system. Huge number of people left farms and agricultural work for the industrial occupation available in the mushrooming factories. These factories themselves were transformed by a long series of technological innovations and improvements. Huge economic bureaucracies came into being to provide various services required by industry and the upcoming capitalist economic system. In this economy, a free marketplace was most appropriate wherein the various products of an industrial system could be exchanged. Within this system, few profited greatly while the majority worked long hours for low wages. A reaction against the industrial system and against capitalism in general followed and led to the labour movement as well as various radical movements aimed at overthrowing the capitalist system.

The industrial revolution, capitalism and the reaction against them all involved an enormous upheaval in Western society, an upheaval that affected sociologists greatly.

The Rise of Socialism

One set of changes aimed at coping with the excesses of the industrial system and capitalism can be combined under the heading '**socialism**'. Although some sociologists favoured socialism as a solution to industrial problems, most were

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personally and intellectually opposed to it. On the one side, Karl Marx was an active supporter of the overthrow of the capitalist system and its replacement by a socialist system. Although he did not develop a theory of socialism per se, he spent a great deal of time criticizing various aspects of capitalist society.

Most early theorists, such as Weber and Durkheim, were opposed to socializing (at least as it was envisioned by Marx). Although they recognized the problems within capitalist society, they sought social reform within capitalism rather than the social revolution argued for by Marx. They feared socialism more than they did capitalism. This fear played a far greater role in shaping sociological theory than did Marx's support of the socialist alternative to capitalism. In fact, as we will see, in many cases sociological theory developed in reaction against Marxian and, more generally, socialist theory.

Urbanization

Partly as a result of the Industrial Revolution, large numbers of people in the 19th century and 20th centuries were uprooted from their rural homes and moved to urban settings. This massive migration was caused, in large parts, by the jobs created by the industrial system in the urban areas. However, it presented many difficulties for those people who had to adjust to urban life. In addition, the expansion of the cities produced a seemingly endless list of urban problems—overcrowding, pollution, noise, traffic and so forth.

The first major school of American sociology, the Chicago school, was in large part defined by its concern for the city and its interest in using Chicago as a laboratory in which to study urbanization and its problems.

Religious Change

Social change brought on by political revolutions, the Industrial Revolution and urbanization had a profound effect on religiosity. Many early sociologists came from religious backgrounds and some were professionally involved with religion to improve social lives. They brought to sociology the same objectives as they had in their religious life. For such thinkers sociology was transformed into a religion. For others, their sociological theories bore an unmistakable religious imprint. Durkheim wrote one of his major works on religion. A large portion of Weber's work also was devoted to the religions of the world. However, Marx's orientation was far more critical.

The Growth of Science

When sociological theory was being developed, there was an increasing emphasis on science in society as a whole. As science was acquiring enormous prestige, those associated with most successful sciences (physics, biology and chemistry) were accorded honored places in society. Sociologists (especially Comte and Durkheim) from the beginning were preoccupied with science, and many wanted to model sociology after the successful physical and biological sciences. However, a debate

soon developed between those who wholeheartedly accepted the scientific model and those (such as Weber) who thought that distinctive characteristics of social life made a wholesale adaptation of scientific model difficult.

*Origin and Development
of Sociology as an
Independent Discipline*

The Enlightenment and the Founding of Sociology in France

Many observers believe that the **Enlightenment** constitutes a critical development in terms of the later evolution of sociology. Reason became the God of these philosophers who were enormously inspired by the scientific achievements of the preceding centuries. Truth became the central goal of the intellectuals of this age; but not the truth founded on revelation, tradition or authority. Instead, it was the reason and observations that were to be the twin pillars of truth. The prevailing institutions were contrary to man's nature and thus inhibitive of his growth and development. Unreasonable institutions prevented men from realizing their potential. Therefore, these thinkers waged constant war against the irrational and criticism became their major weapon. They fought what they considered to be superstition, bigotry or intolerance; they struggled against censorship and demanded freedom of thought; they attacked the prerogatives of the feudal classes and their restraints upon the industrial and commercial classes; and finally, they tried to secularize ethics. They were very knowledgeable about the positive intellectual achievements up to their time, but they were also critical, skeptical and secular. Basically, it was their faith in reason and science which provided so strong an impetus to their work and led them to become humanitarian, optimistic and confident.

The 18th-century thinkers had lost faith in the closed and self-sufficient metaphysical systems of the preceding century; they had lost patience with a philosophy confined to definite immutable axioms and deductions from them.

Investigations and inquiries are emphasized. Enlightenment thought is not merely reflective, nor is it satisfied to deal solely with axiomatic truths. It attributes to thought a creative and critical function. Philosophy is no longer merely a matter of abstract thinking; it acquires the practical function of criticizing existing institutions to show that they are unreasonable and unnatural. It demands that these institutions and the entire old order be replaced by a new one that is more reasonable, natural and hence necessary. And the fulfillment of the new order is the demonstration of this truth. Enlightenment thinking, then, has a negative and critical as well as a positive side. It is not so much the particular doctrines, axioms and theorems which lend it a new and original quality; rather, it is the process of criticizing, doubting and tearing down as well as building up. The unity of the 'negative' and 'positive' tendencies is eventually split and after the French revolutions they manifest themselves as separate and conflicting philosophical principles.

The Mind of the Enlightenment

For the enlightenment thinkers all aspects of man's life and works were subject to critical examination—various types of sciences, religious revelation, metaphysics, aesthetics, etc. These thinkers felt and sensed the mighty forces impelling them

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along, but they refused to abandon themselves to these forces. Self-examination, understanding of their own activity, their own society and their own time was an essential function of thought. By knowing, understanding and recognizing the main forces and tendencies of their epoch, men could determine the direction and control the consequences of these forces. Through reason and science man could attain ever greater degrees of freedom and, therefore, ever greater degrees of perfection. Intellectual progress, an idea that permeated the thinking of that age, was to serve constantly to further man's general progress.

They turned not to Descartes but primarily to Newton, whose method was not pure deduction but analysis. Newton was interested in 'facts' and the data of experience. His principles, the goal of his investigation, rested to a significant degree on experience and observation, i.e., the empirical basis. Newton's research was based on the assumption of universal order and law in the material world. Facts are not a chaotic, haphazard jumble of separate elements; quite to the contrary, they appear to fall into patterns and exhibit definite forms, regularities and relationships. Newton believed that order is imminent in the universe and is discovered not by abstract principles but by observation and compilation of data. This is the methodology most characteristic of 18th-century thought, and it is this emphasis which distinguishes it from that of the 17th-century Continental philosophers. Condillac, for example, in his *Treatise on Systems* (basing himself on Locke), explicitly justifies this methodology and criticizes the great systems of the 17th century for having failed to adhere to it. Facts, the phenomena of the real world, were, for all practical purposes, ignored by the 17th century rationalists. Single ideas and concepts were elevated to the status of dogma. The rational spirit dominated knowledge completely. Thus Condillac argues the necessity for a new method which unites the 'positive' and scientific as well as the rational. One must study the phenomena themselves if their immanent forms and connection are to be known. Condillac, D'Alembert and others now call for this new method as a prerequisite to intellectual progress.

By observing the actual practice of science, the synthesis of the 'positive' and the 'rational' was not an unattainable ideal but the one fully realizable. The natural sciences were proving themselves; their progress could be clearly perceived as the result of the triumphant march of the new scientific method. In the course of a century and a half, science had made a number of significant advances and then with Newton a truly qualitative step forward: the complex multiplicity of natural phenomena was reduced to, and comprehended as, the workings of a single universal law. This was an impressive victory for the new method.

Newton's general law of attraction was not the exclusive result of theorizing nor of sporadic experimentation or observation unguided by theory; its discovery was the fruit of the rigorous application of the scientific method. Newton completed what others had begun. Newton retained, used and substantiated the method employed before him by Kepler and Galileo, the main feature of which was the interdependence of its analytical and synthetic aspects. Here was a magnificent triumph of reason and observation—the new method which takes observed facts

and advances an interpretation which accounts for what is observed, so that if the interpretation is correct it can guide observer in their quest for new facts.

What is new and original about Enlightenment thought, therefore, is the whole-hearted adoption of the methodological pattern of Newton's physics. What is even more important for our consideration of the philosophical foundations of sociological theory is the fact that immediately with its adoption it was generalized and employed in realms other than the mathematical and physical ones. It became an indispensable tool in the study of all phenomena. Here again this may be contrasted with the 17th-century rationalist understanding of the term 'reason'. For Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, to select the most typical thinkers of that period, reason was the realm of 'eternal verities'—truth held in common by man and God.

Reason bows neither to the merely factual, the simple data of experience; nor to the 'evidence' of revelation, tradition or authority. Reason together with observation is a facility for the acquisition of truth. The change did indeed become increasingly manifest. An analysis was now applied to psychological and even sociological phenomena and problems. In these realms too it had become clear that reason is a powerful instrument when employed in that special method—analysis into separate elements as well as synthetic reconstruction.

It should be clear, then, why the Enlightenment is a most logical point of departure if one is interested in the origins of sociological theory. It is in that period that one may see more consistently than before the emergence of the scientific method. Reason in itself will not yield knowledge of reality; neither will observation and experimentation alone yield such knowledge. Knowledge of reality, whether natural or social, depends on the unity of reason and observation in the scientific method. The enlightenment thinkers were as interested in society and history as they were in nature, and these were treated as an indivisible unity. By studying nature—including the nature of man—one could learn not only about what is, but about what is possible. Likewise, by studying society and history one could learn not only about the workings of the existing factual order, but about its inherent possibilities as well. These thinkers were 'negative' in that they were always critical of the existing order which, in their view, stifled man's potential and did not allow the 'possible' to emerge from the 'is'. The existing factual order was studied scientifically by these men in order to learn how to transcend it.

Conservative Reaction to the Enlightenment

The theorist who was most directly and positively influenced by Enlightenment thinking was Karl Marx, but he formed his early theoretical ideas in Germany. On the surface, we might think that French classical sociological theory, like Marx's theory, was directly and positively influenced by the Enlightenment. 'The ideology of the counter-Enlightenment represented a virtual inversion of Enlightenment liberalism. In place of modernist premises, we can detect in the Enlightenment critics a strong anti-modernist sentiment.'

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The most extreme form of opposition to Enlightenment ideas was French Catholic counter-revolutionary philosophy, as represented by the ideas of Louis De Bonald (1754–1840) and Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821). These men were reacting against not only the Enlightenment but also the French Revolution, which they saw partly as a product of the kind of thinking characteristic of the Enlightenment. De Bonald, for example, was disturbed by the revolutionary changes and yearned for a return to the peace and harmony of the Middle Ages. In this view, God was the source of society; therefore, reason, which was so important to the Enlightenment philosophers, was seen as inferior to traditional religious beliefs. Furthermost, it was believed that because God had created society, peoples should not tamper with it and should not try to change a holy creation.

The conservative turned away from what they considered to be the ‘naïve’ nationalism of the Enlightenment. They not only recognized the irrational aspects of social life but also assigned them positive value. Thus they regarded such phenomena as tradition, imagination, emotionalism and religion as useful and necessary components of social life. In that they disliked upheaval and sought to retain the existing order, they deplored developments such as French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, which they saw as descriptive forces. The conservatives tended to emphasize social order, an emphasis that became one of the central themes of the work of several sociological thinkers.

Check Your Progress

1. Which stage of history society as per Comte was crossed after the French Revolution?
2. What was the general opinion of Weber and Durkheim towards socialism?

1.4 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

Sociology is a relatively new academic discipline among the social sciences, which include economics, political science, anthropology, history and psychology. The ideas behind it, however, have a long history and can trace their origins to a mixture of common human knowledge and philosophy.

Sociology emerged as a scientific discipline in the early 19th century, as a fundamentally new type of society based on new principles of social organization and new ideas of enlightenment. This led to a change in the mindset of people. Sociologists hoped not only to understand what held social groups together, but also to develop an antidote to the social breakdown. In terms of science, sociology pertains to social groups, their hierarchies or forms of organization. It combines functions which are inclined to maintain or modify these forms of organization and

their inter-group network. Sociology is concerned with interaction itself. A social group is a system of social interaction. Sociology is interested in social relationships, not because they are economic, political, religious, legal or educational, but because they are social at the same time. Further, in sociology we do not study everything that happens in a society or under social conditions, but we study culture, social relationships, their specific forms, varieties and patterns. We study the combination of relations, how they build up smaller or greater systems and how they respond to changes and changing demands or needs.

Auguste Comte invented the term ‘sociology’ in the year 1838. He was a French philosopher and sociologist. Comte attempted to combine all the faculties of mankind, including history, psychology and economics. His own pattern of sociology was typical of the 19th century; he put across the theory that every man had experienced the same distinct historical stages and that the success of this progress was the solution to every social ill. Sociology would lead social sciences in future. Comte defined **sociology** as the science of social phenomena, subject to natural invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation. He advocated for sociology to be used as a positive method as in natural sciences. He further believed that social evolution went hand in hand with progress, in accordance with the law of three stages. These three stages are: the **theological**-military, the **metaphysical**-legalistic and the **positive**-industrial laws. According to Comte’s hierarchy of sciences, sociology occupies the summit. This is because it is considered to be the most complex of sciences, as it deals with humanity.

The systematic study of society gained prominence due to the upheavals caused by the French and industrial revolutions. The intellectual community of that time attempted to analyse and establish reasons for these rapid changes. So the study of sociology emerged as a distinct discipline dealing with social order and change. Although all social sciences study different aspects of social life, but the approach of sociology is distinct. It is a more detailed picture explaining why things are the way they are. Sociology has also been labelled as a ‘debunking science’ because a sociologist is interested in looking beyond the commonly accepted meaning of social phenomenon and understands reality as a social construction; that is how reality gets established in the way we understand it. Peter Berger argued that ‘sociology is a distinctive way of thinking, a particular awareness of the nature of social life, an unwillingness to accept the superficial and the apparently obvious’.

Emile Durkheim was a pioneer in demonstrating scientific methodology in sociology. In his most acclaimed work, *Rules of Sociological Method* (1897), he emphasized on the methodology that he has described in his study, *Suicide* (1897).

The discipline of sociology appeared in many universities in the 1890s. Urbanization and industrialization were posing several social issues and the sociologists of those times were trying hard to find a scientific solution. However, they did not succeed. It was their strong belief that sociology was the key to the scientific growth of the society. Later, sociology emerged as a branch of scientific

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knowledge with theories resulting from scientific inferences, rather than mere guesswork or comments that were based on impressions.

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Check Your Progress

3. In which century did sociology emerge as a scientific discipline?
4. How did Comte define sociology?

1.5 EMERGENCE OF SOCIOLOGY AS AN INDEPENDENT DISCIPLINE

Sociology has emerged as a distinct intellectual endeavour with the development of modern societies and the study of such societies is its principal concern. However, sociologists are also preoccupied with a broad range of issues about the nature of social interaction and human societies in general. Sociology also enables us to see the world from others' perspective rather than our own.

Comte and Spencer were, for the most part, the first sociologists. Their concerns were with the means and paths of societal development and the conditions for harmony and continued development. They presented quite different views on these issues and a comparison of their work set the stage for discussion by the three famous personalities, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber.

Emile Durkheim stressed on the practical existence of a society. He emphasized on social realities and saw sociology from a different point of view, as compared to that of psychology. Social realities restrict the freedom of members of the society to act, think and feel differently, with respect to the society. Beliefs and moral codes are transferred from one generation to the next and are imbibed by the individuals who form a society. One way of explaining social realities involves focusing on the cause of a social reality to explain its origin. The decisive cause of a social reality should be looked for among the facts that precede it. It should not depend on an individual's level of consciousness. Nevertheless, this social reality can be explained in a better way after a detailed study of its functions in the society, its role in contributing to the general needs of the social beings and its utility in establishing a social order. Durkheim believed that this social reality still survives because it is useful to the society. They owe their existence to their contributions to the maintenance of a society, in one or more ways.

Durkheim is more inclined to find harmony and he attempts to uncover the essential features of collective life which are responsible for producing it. He determines that there is a realm of 'social facts', ways of thinking, acting and feeling, which are produced by group existence, which tend to produce an integrated society. Modern society is the product of the development of the division of labour and its recent complexity presents some problems for integration. However,

Durkheim is confident that he has found the essential features of harmonious, collective life which will allow sociology to intervene.

Weber views the development of modern society as a much less orderly affair and is rather pessimistic about the possibility of discovering some means of harmonizing its present condition. He attempts to understand various institutions and states of society, in terms of the actions of individuals. His central concept for this purpose is 'social action'. He analyses the organizations of individuals in different positions on the basis of their levels of motivation. These, in turn, rest on subjective meanings which persons attach to the things and other persons in their environment. On this basis, he examines the relation between different forms of authority, social organizations and economic distribution of rewards. He is pessimistic about the bureaucratic form of domination that is found in modern society. In his view, it is a very stable form of domination of powerful interests.

Sociology differs from most of the natural sciences in dealing with a phenomenon, which is often difficult and sometimes impossible to measure or calculate, or to subsume under relations of causality. However, this does not involve a total divergence in the methods of inquiry. It involves considering the limits of sociological enquiry and assessing what can be practically achieved. In sociology, five important methods or approaches can be distinguished, they are as follows:

- (i) Historical
- (ii) Comparative
- (ii) Functionalist
- (iv) formal or systematic
- (v) Structural

(i) Historical Method: This method has taken two principal forms. The first is that of early sociologists, influenced by the philosophy of history and afterwards by biological theory of evolution. This approach involves a certain order of priorities in the problems for research and theory. It concentrates on problems of the origin of development and transformation of social institutions, societies and civilization. It is concerned with the whole span of human history and with all major institutions of society, as in the work of Comte, Spencer, etc. In Marx's view, the most important thing about people is their practical activity. The way people produce for themselves, gives shape to other aspects of their society and culture. In this way, they relate to nature and to one another in society. These are the most fundamental sets of relations. These sets of relations change and develop over the course of history. They change from one 'mode of production' to another.

(ii) The Comparative Method: This method was considered the method par excellence of sociology for long. It was first used by evolutionist sociologists, but its use did not involve a necessary commitment to an evolutionary approach. Durkheim, in the *Rules of Sociological Method*, clearly explained

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the significance of the method. After claiming that sociological explanation consists entirely of the establishment of causal connections, he observes that the only way to demonstrate that one phenomenon is the cause of another is to examine cases in which the two phenomena are simultaneously present or absent. Thus it is to be established whether one does depend on the other, or not. In many natural sciences the establishment of causal connections is facilitated by experiment, but since experiment is impossible in sociology, Durkheim suggests the use of the method of indirect experiment, i.e., the comparative method.

- (iii) **Functionalist method:** In sociology, this method first emerged in the form of a response against the approach and assertions of evolutionists. It criticized the immature and outward application of the comparative method and the methods of 'conjectural history'. These methods used data that was neither verified nor systematic, on ancient societies, for the reconstruction of early stages of human social life. The functionalist method also criticized the objective or claim made by evolutionists to present the complete social history of mankind in scientific terms. The notion of social function was formulated by Herbert Spencer in the 19th century. Durkheim defined the function of a social institution as the correspondence between it and the needs of social organism.
- (iv) **Formal or systematic method:** Formal or systematic sociology represented a reaction against the evolutionary and encyclopedic science of early sociologists. Its originator was George Simmel and it remained largely a German approach to sociology. Simmel argues that sociology is a new method, a new way of looking at facts which are already treated by other social sciences. According to him, this new approach consists of considering the 'forms' of sociation or interaction, as distinguished from the historical content. Sociology is therefore also concerned with forms of interaction which have not been studied at all by traditional social sciences. These forms appear not in major institutions, such as the state, the economic system and so on, but in minor and fleeting relationships between individuals.
- (v) **Structural method:** Claude Levi-Strauss proposed the structural method. Levi-Strauss offered new insights of analysis. According to Edmund Leach, 'Levi-Strauss has provided us with a new set of hypotheses about familiar material. We can look again at what we thought was understood and begin to gain entirely new insights'. The structural method began to have a certain influence, particularly in renewing the discussion of the concept of social structure.

Check Your Progress

5. How does Weber view the development of modern society?
6. Which method/approach of sociology criticizes the immature and outward application of the comparative method and the methods of 'conjectural history'?
7. Who proposed the structural method of sociology?

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1.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The French revolution crossed the theological stage of history society as per Comte.
2. Weber and Durkheim, were opposed to socializing (at least as it was envisioned by Marx). Although they recognized the problems within capitalist society, they sought social reform within capitalism rather than the social revolution argued for by Marx. They feared socialist more than they did capitalism.
3. Sociology emerged as a scientific discipline in the 19th century.
4. Comte defined sociology as the science of social phenomena, subject to natural invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation.
5. Weber views the development of modern society as a much less orderly affair and is rather pessimistic about the possibility of discovering some means of harmonizing its present condition.
6. The functional method/approach of sociology criticized the immature and outward application of the comparative method and the methods of 'conjectural history'.
7. Claude Levi-Strauss proposed the structural method of sociology.

1.7 SUMMARY

- Sociology is one of the first social sciences to be acknowledged. The word 'sociology', owes its origin to the Latin word, *socius* (companion) and the Greek word, *logy* (study of). Sociology incorporates the study of social phenomena, social life, groups, institutions, associations and societies.
- Sociology gained the status of independent discipline only in the 19th century, prior to this period, it was considered to be a part of other disciplines of studies such as the broad subjects of social philosophy or philosophy of history. If we, look at the historical references, we can find sociological studies being mentioned as early as in the writing of Confucius (551-479).

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Later on, sociological conflicts and advance social reasoning was found in the works of Ibn Khaldun in 14th century.

- Social settings have a profound affect in shaping the intellectual fields. This is specifically true of sociology, which is not only derived from that setting but takes the social setting as its subject matter.
- The long series of political revolutions ushering in the French Revolution of 1789 and then carrying over through the 20th century was the immediate factor responsible for the rise of sociological theorizing. These revolutions had enormous impact on many societies resulting in many positive changes.
- The French revolution of 1789 in various aspects overshadowed the 19th century as a revolution which challenged and successfully dismantled the old social order. This revolution strengthened the state which aimed to represent the will of the people. Therefore, it is very crucial to recognize that the political and cultural climate which existed before the revolution was dominated by the monarchy and the church.
- Industrial Revolution was at least as important as the political revolution in the shaping of sociological theory. It swept through many Western societies, mostly in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Industrial Revolution did not involve a single event but various interrelated developments which ended up transforming the Western world from a basically agricultural to a tremendously industrial system
- One set of changes aimed at coping with the excesses of the industrial system and capitalism can be combined under the heading ‘socialism’. Although some sociologists favoured socialism as a solution to industrial problems, most were personally and intellectually opposed to it.
- Partly as a result of the Industrial Revolution, large number of people in the 19th century and 20th centuries were uprooted from their rural home and moved to urban settings. This massive migration was caused, in large parts, by the jobs created by the industrial system in the urban areas. However, it presented many difficulties for those people who had to adjust to urban life. In addition, the expansion of the cities produced a seemingly endless list of urban problems—overcrowding, pollution, noise, traffic and so forth.
- Social change brought on by political revolutions, the Industrial Revolution and urbanization had a profound effect on religiosity. Many early sociologists came from religions background and some were professionally involved with religion to improve social lives. They brought to sociology the same objectives as they had in their religious life. For such thinkers sociology was transformed into a religion. For others, their sociological theories bore an unmistakable religious imprint.
- When sociological theory was being developed, there was an increasing emphasis on science in society as whole. As science was acquiring enormous

prestige, those associated with most successful sciences (physics, biology and chemistry) were accorded honored places in society.

- Many observers believe that the Enlightenment constitutes a critical development in terms of the later evolution of sociology. Reason became the God of these philosophers who were enormously inspired by the scientific achievements of the preceding centuries. Truth became the central goal of the intellectuals of this age; but not the truth founded on revelation, tradition or authority. Instead, it was the reason and observations that were to be the twin pillars of truth.
- Sociology emerged as a scientific discipline in the early 19th century, as a fundamentally new type of society based on new principles of social organization and new ideas of enlightenment. This led to a change in the mindset of people.
- In terms of science, sociology pertains to social groups, their hierarchies or forms of organization. It combines functions which are inclined to maintain or modify these forms of organization and their inter-group network. Sociology is concerned with interaction itself. A social group is a system of social interaction. Sociology is interested in social relationships, not because they are economic, political, religious, legal or educational, but because they are social at the same time.
- Auguste Comte invented the term 'sociology' in the year 1838. He was a French philosopher and sociologist. Comte attempted to combine all the faculties of mankind, including history, psychology and economics. His own pattern of sociology was typical of the 19th century; he put across the theory that every man had experienced the same distinct historical stages and that the success of this progress was the solution to every social ill.
- Comte defined sociology as the science of social phenomena, subject to natural invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation. He advocated for sociology to be used as a positive method as in natural sciences.
- Emile Durkheim was a pioneer in demonstrating scientific methodology in sociology. In his most acclaimed work, *Rules of Sociological Method* (1897), he emphasized on the methodology that he has described in his study, *Suicide* (1897).
- The discipline of sociology appeared in many universities in the 1890s. Urbanization and industrialization were posing several social issues and the sociologists of those times were trying hard to find a scientific solution. However, they did not succeed. It was their strong belief that sociology was the key to the scientific growth of the society. Later, sociology emerged as a branch of scientific knowledge with theories resulting from scientific inferences, rather than mere guesswork or comments that were based on impressions.

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- Sociology differs from most of the natural sciences in dealing with a phenomenon, which is often difficult and sometimes impossible to measure or calculate, or to subsume under relations of causality.
- In sociology, five important methods or approaches can be distinguished, they are as follows.
 - (i) Historical
 - (ii) Comparative
 - (iii) Functionalist
 - (iv) Formal or systematic
 - (v) Structural

1.8 KEY WORDS

- **Sociology:** The science of social phenomena, subject to natural invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigation.
- **Industrial revolution:** Unprecedented technological and economic development that began during 1830s in UK and spread in varying degrees to the rest of Europe, US and Japan.
- **Socialism:** An economic system in which the means of production are commonly owned and controlled cooperatively; or a political philosophy advocating such a system.
- **Urbanization:** The rapid and massive growth of, and migration to, large cities.

- **Enlightenment:** Enlightenment in a secular context often means the ‘full comprehension of a situation’, but in spiritual terms the word alludes to a spiritual revelation or deep insight into the meaning and purpose of all things, communication with or understanding of the mind of God, profound spiritual understanding or a fundamentally changed consciousness whereby everything is perceived as a unity.

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1.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the law of stages which goes hand in hand with social evolution as per Comte?
2. Why is sociology labelled as ‘debunking science’?
3. How did the Industrial Revolution impact the sociology as a discipline?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write an essay on the development of sociology.
2. What was the effect of French Revolution on the development of sociology? Discuss.
3. Explain the movement of Enlightenment and the Founding of Sociology in France.
4. Describe the major approaches to Sociology.

1.10 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 NATURE AND SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY

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Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Nature and Scope of Sociology: An Overview
 - 2.2.1 Science of Sociology
- 2.3 Sociology and its Relationship with other Social Sciences
- 2.4 Uses of Sociology
- 2.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 Key Words
- 2.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 2.9 Further Readings

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Sociology has always studied societies, both taken separately and together, as 'human societies'. The balance between the two aspects may vary, but at the end, the study of the one absolutely requires study of the other. Neither of them makes sense independently. For instance, considering India as a society, one can think of it in terms of cities, factories, schools, farms or prisons. One can also think of it in terms of politics, media or divinity. It is simple to connect all these factors. They can also be visualized as confined within the boundaries of Indian states and referred under the general heading of Indian society. In this unit, you will get acquainted with the nature and scope of sociology.

Sociology is primarily a social science and not a natural science. Hence, it is a social science which is concerned with man and his activities in society. Other social sciences like psychology, history, anthropology, political science and economics, examine different parts of man's social behaviour which is the general theme of sociology. The life of man is multifaceted, that is, there is an economic, legal, religious, political aspect to life, and so forth. Thus, sociology can comprehend social life entirely taking assistance from other social sciences. In this unit, you will study about the relationship of sociology with other sciences such as social anthropology, social psychology, history, and political science and the uses of sociology.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the nature of sociology
- Discuss the scope of sociology
- Explain the relationship of sociology with other social sciences
- Discuss the uses of sociology

2.2 NATURE AND SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW

Sociology is the study of human interactions, their conditions and consequences. It is a type of science that comprises investigative techniques which are objective and systematic. It gives rise to the evolution of the social truth that is based on empirical evidence and interpretation. However, it cannot be directly based on natural sciences, since human behaviour is a unique phenomenon. It also differs from natural sciences such that the contents of natural sciences are constant, while human behaviour, exhibits variations and flexibility.

Sociology as a branch of knowledge has its own unique characteristics. It is different from other sciences in certain respects. An analysis of internal logical characteristics helps one to understand its nature, which is discussed as follows:

- (i) Sociology is an independent science:** It is not treated and studied as a branch of any other science. As an independent science, it has its own field of study, boundary and method.
- (ii) Sociology is a social science and not a physical science:** As a social science, it focuses its attention on man, his social behaviour, social activities and social life. It is related to other social sciences such as history, political science, economics, and so on.
- (iii) Sociology is a categorical and not a normative discipline:** Sociology does not make any kind of value judgments. Its approach is neither moral nor immoral but amoral. It is ethically neutral. It makes no recommendations on matters of social policy or legislation or programme. Sociology cannot deal with problems of good and evil, right and wrong, moral and immoral.
- (iv) Sociology is a pure science and not an applied science:** The main aim of pure science is acquisition of knowledge, irrespective of whether the acquired knowledge is useful or can be put to use. On the other hand, applied science applies acquired knowledge into life.
- (v) Sociology is relatively abstract and not concrete science:** It is not interested in concrete manifestation of human events. It is more concerned

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with the form of human events and their patterns. For instance, sociology is not specifically concerned with wars and revolutions but in the general social phenomena, as types of social conflict.

(vi) **Sociology is not based on particular subjects or individuals but is a general science:** Sociology tries to find out general laws or principles about human interaction and associations about the nature, forms, and content and structure of human groups and societies. It adopts a general approach on the basis of a study of some selected events.

(vii) **Sociology is a rational and empirical science:** There are two broad ways of approach to scientific knowledge: one is empiricism and the other is rationalism. Empiricism emphasizes experiences and facts that result from observation and experiment. Rationalism stresses on reason and theories that result from logical inference. In sociological inquiry, both are significant.

Scope of Sociology

According to the British sociologist Morris Ginsberg, the scope of sociology includes a broad study of human interactions, their conditions and consequences. Some writers would restrict its scope to the relations arising out of acts of will, but this is an unjustifiable and unworkable limitation. Many interactions between individuals are not consciously determined or apprehended. One of the most interesting problems confronting the student of society is to determine the respective roles of reason or rational purpose, and of impulse and the unconsciousness in social life.

In this case, sociology must be capable of dealing with the complete issue or network of social relationships. However, these relationships are assumed to be dependent on the nature of individuals, to one another, to the community, and to the external environment. This can be explained if every social event can be traced back to its origin, as influenced by complex interactions. A combination of these interactions is comprised within a community, with respect to external influences. But this ideal, if generously conceived, is clearly too ambitious.

Sociology involves a systematic and objective study of human society. Sociologists study individuals' social actions. Social relationships, for instance, those between a husband and a wife, a teacher and a student, a buyer and a seller, and social processes, namely, cooperation, competition, conflict and organizations, communities and nations, and social structures (family, class and state), give rise to sociological queries. Explanations that are derived from norms and values result in the formation of social institutions.

Thus, sociology can be defined as the study of social life. Sociology comprises a variety of apprehensions and interests. It is aimed at providing classified forms of relationships within societies, institutions and associations. These relationships pertain to economic, political, moral, religious and social aspects of human life. Although, so far no collective agreement has been reached on the essence of sociology, so far yet it is established that sociology deals with the study of interaction

systems, which shape social institutions, the state and the non-native order. Therefore, in sociology, we study about social organization, social structure, institutions and culture.

Sociology was defined differently by two schools of thought, pertaining to its range and theme:

- (i) Formal school
- (ii) Synthetic school

(i) Formal school

The formal school defined sociology as a social science that has definite characteristics. This school was advocated by eminent sociologists including George Simmel, Ferdinand Tonnies, Alfred Vierkandt and Leopold Von Wiese. On the other hand, the synthetic school with well-known sociologists, namely, Durkheim, Hobhouse and Sorokin attempted to bring together a type of coordination among all social sciences.

The formal school supported the idea of giving sociology a suitable subject matter to make it a distinct discipline. It stressed on the study of forms of social relationships and considered sociology as independent. Simmel defined sociology as a specific social science that describes, organizes, analyses and visually explains the forms of social relationships. To put it in a different way, social interactions should be classified into various forms or types and analysed. Simmel argued that social interactions have various forms. He conducted researches on formal relationships such as cooperation, competition, sub and super ordinate relationships, and so on. He said, 'however diverse the interests are that give rise to these sociations, the forms in which the interests are realized may yet be identical.' His main emphasis was to conceptualize these forms from human relationships which are not affected by different scenarios. Vierkandt believed that sociology should pertain to people being extremely attached mentally or psychically. Von Wiese believed in the existence of two types of basic social processes in a human society. These are as follows:

- (i) Associative processes that are related to contact, approach, adaptation, and so on.
- (ii) Disassociative processes like competition and conflict

Additionally, a blend of associative and disassociative processes also exists.

Each of these processes can be further segregated into subclasses. These subclasses result in 650 categories of human relationships. Sociology should concentrate on discovering a basic force of change and consistency, and should be influenced by the history of concrete societies. Tonnies suggested two types of societies, namely Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (association). These were based on the level of closeness between members of the society. Based on the types of relationships, he attempted to differ between community and society. German sociologist Max Weber outlined a particular field for sociology. He

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recommended that the aim of sociology was to identify or explain social behaviour. However, social behaviour does cover all aspects human relations, since all exchanges between of human beings cannot be called social. Sociology deals with learning and identifying the different types of social relationships.

Criticism of formal school

The formal school has come under criticism because it has focused only on abstract forms and ignored the more feasible parts of social life. It is not possible to study abstract forms that have been alienated from concrete relations. According to Ginsberg, the study of social relationships would never be complete if it is carried out in isolation, without a thorough knowledge of the terms that are associated with it. Sociology is not the only branch of social sciences that focuses on the types of social relationships. Political science and international law also study the same. Since it is not possible to study social sciences as a separate entity from other sciences, the concept of pure sociology is not practical.

(ii) Synthetic school of sociology

The synthetic school defines sociology as a combination of social sciences.

It stresses on widening the range of sociology. Durkheim divided sociology into three main sections. These were social morphology, social physiology and general sociology. **Social morphology** pertains to the lifestyle of people on the basis of their location or region. It comprises factors like population, density, distribution and so on. One can further divide this into two categories: (i) analysis of density and type of population that influences social relationships and social groups, and (ii) learning about social hierarchy or details related to the main categories of social groups and institutions, along with their operation. **Social physiology** deals with the origin and character of different social institutions, namely religion, morals, law, economic institutions, and so on. The prime objective of **general sociology** is to frame general social laws. Efforts are still on to find out the links between different types of institutions that are treated independently in social physiology and the possibilities of emergence of general social laws as a byproduct.

Hobhouse, a British sociologist, defined sociology as a field of science which focuses on the whole social life of man. It relates to other social sciences in a way that can be regarded as a blend of mutual exchange and stimulation. Classical sociologist Karl Mannheim has explained sociology in terms of two key divisions: systematic, and general sociology and historical sociology. Systematic sociology provides a methodical review of the main factors of coexistence, such that they are evident in every kind of society. Historical sociology deals with the historical array and existence of general forms of the society. This can be divided into two sectors: comparative sociology and social dynamics. Comparative sociology basically deals with identical historical changes and tries to highlight the general features by comparing them. It also separates general features from industrial

features. Social dynamics is concerned with the interrelations that exist among different social factors and institutions in a given society, for example, in an ancient society.

Ginsberg has combined the main features of sociology in a way that they classify the different types and structures of social relations, specifically those that are clearly specified as institutions and associations. He tried to find connectivity between various parameters of social life, for example, economic, political, moral and legal, intellectual and social elements. It attempts to make the basic conditions of social change and persistence simpler, and evaluates the sociological principles that influence social life.

Thus, on the basis of the viewpoints of many sociologists, the scope of sociology can be generally defined. To begin with, sociology should be concerned with the analysis of various institutions, associations and social groups, which have resulted from social relationships of individuals. The second step is an understanding of the different links between various sections of the society. This objective is catered to by the functionalist school of sociology, as required. The Marxist school also exhibits the same opinion. Thus, the main area of discussion of sociology pertains to social structure. Sociology should also focus on aspects which are important in bringing about social stability and social change. Finally, sociology should also tackle issues related to the changes in pattern and the consequences of societal changes.

2.2.1 Science of Sociology

The nature of sociology as a science has become a controversial issue. Some critics do not support the ideology of sociology being regarded as a science like all other social sciences. Sociology can be regarded as a science since it comprises objective and systematic methodologies of examination and assessment. It can also be evaluated as a social reality on the basis of empirical data and explanation. However, it cannot be directly compared to natural sciences, since human behaviour is not similar to natural sciences. A science may be defined in at least two ways:

- (i) A body of organized, verified knowledge which has been secured through scientific investigation
- (ii) A method of study whereby a body of organized and verified knowledge is discovered

However, if the first definition is accepted, then sociology can be termed as a science, based on the theory that it creates a body of organized and verified knowledge, after scientific investigation. To the extent that sociology forsakes myth, folklore and wishful thinking and bases its conclusions on scientific evidence, it is a science. If science is defined as methods of study, then sociology can be defined as a science because it uses scientific techniques of study.

In the history of human thinking, few of our actions have been based on verified knowledge, for people through the ages have been guided mainly by

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folklore, norms, values and anticipations. Recently, very few people accepted the idea of systematic observations and analysis. W. F. Ogburn, an American sociologist, opines that sociology is a science. According to him, science is to be judged on the basis of the following three criteria:

- The reliability of its body of knowledge
- Its organization
- Its method

Sociology depends on reliable knowledge. Thus, sociological studies of population, families, group behaviour, evolution of institutions and the process of social change are regarded as considerably reliable. Secondly, disjointed collection of facts cannot be a science. Science should be organized and the organization of science rests upon relationships. Sociology provides a scope for interrelationships, which is enough to encourage more discoveries. Moreover, with reference to method, a branch of knowledge can be called a science if it follows a scientific method in its studies and investigations. Sociological studies employ various methods such as the historical method, case study method, social survey method, functional method and statistical method.

Though sociology can be considered as a science, its scientific character cannot be established because it is not as accurate as natural sciences. There is no denying the fact that sociology cannot experiment and predict in the same way in which physical sciences do because human behaviour and relationships are peculiar and uncertain. Objectivity in sociology is not possible as man has his own prejudices and bias. Social phenomena cannot be exact as it is too vast and human motivations are complex, and it is difficult to make predictions about human behaviour.

However, such objectives raised against sociology as a science are refutable. Sociology does make use of scientific methods in the study of its subject matter. Though sociology does not support laboratory experiments, yet it does employ the techniques of science, such as the measures of sociometry, schedule, questionnaire, interview and case history. These relate measures of quantity with social phenomenon. Moreover, a sociologist also uses observation and comparison. Sociology delineates the cause-effect relationship. So sociology is a scientific discipline which obeys the demands of validity that are implied by the word 'science'. It classifies the form of social relationships and determines the connectivity between different sectors of social life. American sociologist Robert Bierstedt in his book, *The Social Order*, considered sociology as a social and not a natural science.

Thus, it can be said that science is a way to find out the truth, and if sociology involves application of a range of techniques and methods in the right manner, then it will achieve a scientific character.

Human social activities can be observed through scientific exploration just like any other natural phenomenon. This exploration uses scientific techniques,

such as scales of sociometry, schedule, questionnaire, interview and case history. These, in turn, apply quantitative measurements to social phenomenon. Hence, they can be compared to the technique of experimentation. Sociology attempts to identify the types and forms of social relationships, especially of institutions and associations.

It tries to establish relations between different factors of social life. It also involves the deduction of general laws through a systematic study of its material. The outcome of the study of sociological principles is used as a means to resolve social problems. Consequently, sociology can be compared to a science, such as social psychology, clinical psychology and other sciences that relate to the existence of mankind. A sociologist can also make optimum use of two other fundamental techniques of scientific reasoning, which are observation and comparison. Sociology can also be used in the building of laws and for futuristic calculations. These laws are usually relevant and are independent of cultural changes. Sociology also explains the cause-effect relationships by the analysis of social procedures and relationships.

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Check Your Progress

1. Differentiate between empiricism and rationalism.
2. Define sociology according to the formal school.
3. Distinguish between comparative sociology and social dynamics.

2.3 SOCIOLOGY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCES

Sociology could be considered to be a method of objective inquiry that involves testing of beliefs against evidence. Sociology and other social sciences focus on certain aspects of human behaviour. All of us can claim to be familiar with human behaviour. All of us rely on our common sense to function in our daily lives. Even when faced with an obstacle, we tend to use our common sense to cross that hurdle. Common sense does not rely upon any specific education as it is believed to be shared by all. However, sociologists believe that this common sense that we depend upon may not always be reliable as it is based on commonly-held beliefs rather than a systematic analysis of facts. Sociology is the systematic study of society, its people and their behaviour.

Critics often claim that all that sociology does is repeat the obvious; things that we can witness and analyse through common sense, and as such, there is not much difference between sociology and common sense. However, there are some major differences between sociology and common sense. They are as follows:

- Common sense views are built upon people's limited experiences and give an inaccurate view of society. Sociological views, on the other hand, are based on thorough qualitative or quantitative research and evidence.

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- Common sense views are built upon social tradition and customs, and are resistant to change. Sociological views often raise serious questions that challenge the status quo.
- Common sense views are specific and particular to time and place, thus, they are culture-specific and full of stereotypes. Sociological views recognize the fact that many stereotypes are social constructs.
- Common sense views lack academic credibility and reliability. Sociological views, since they are based on data and research, have academic credibility and validity.

Sociologists, like other scientists, are unwilling to accept something as fact simply because it is common knowledge. They believe that all information must be tested and analysed in relation to the data at hand.

Ethnomethodology is a recent sociological theory. It is the study of ‘folk’ or common sense methods employed by people to make sense of everyday activities by constructing and maintaining social reality. It means that common sense is so important that it helps in understanding the methods of constructing reality.

1. Sociology and Social Anthropology

Sociology and social anthropology are related but different fields with dissimilar origins. While sociology has its roots in philosophy and history, anthropology began as a study of physical measurements of humans. However, the two subjects have developed hand-in-hand, especially when it comes to concepts and scientific methods.

Social anthropologists generally study small societies that are often considered primitive, such as in the Pacific Islands. They tend to live in the particular community they are studying, witnessing their daily activities and almost becoming a part of the community themselves.

Sociologists, on the other hand, study facets of a society, such as family or social mobility, and their organization and processes. A sociologist uses methods that are loaded with values, therefore, their conclusions are lined with ethical considerations.

Perhaps, the biggest difference between sociology and social anthropology is in their method of research. A social anthropologist uses qualitative methods to collect information, usually by immersing oneself into the society that is being studied (see Figure 2.1). Sociologists generally collect quantitative data based on which they make their conclusions.

2. Sociology and Social Psychology

Social psychology involves the study of social and mental processes, and how they act together to determine action. Essentially, it studies the interaction between psychological and sociological processes. It is the ground where sociology and psychology converge.

Psychologists look at the mental processes and personality characteristics that make people act in a certain manner. Sociologists tend to look at not just the social setting and structure, and the processes that go on within them but the influence they exert upon individuals. Sociology particularly looks at human connections and interrelationships.

Social psychologists look into the following factors to study how an individual's behaviour, beliefs, moralities and identity are determined by his/her position in social space:

- Culture
- Time period
- Gender
- Class
- Race
- Age
- Peers

3. Sociology and History

Sociology as a discipline owes a lot to history. History has influenced the way sociology views and classifies historical types of society. The two subjects interact and overlap with each other to a great degree. A large volume of data that sociologists use is provided by historians. At the same time, historians also draw upon a lot of sociological research.

Does that mean there is very little difference between the two disciplines? According to English social anthropologist Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, 'Sociology is nomothetic, while history is idiographic', which means that a historian describes unique events, while the sociologist derives generalizations.

A sociologist utilizes quantitative data to infer generalizations about the social forces at work. A historian, on the other hand, is concerned with the interplay of these social forces and personality. History is concerned with the past and looks at the changes that take place over time. A sociologist looks for patterns to build generalizations.

4. Sociology and Political Science

Political sociology lies at the intersection of the disciplines of political science and sociology. Giovanni Sartori, an Italian political scientist, had suggested that there was an ambiguity in the term 'political sociology' because it could be construed as a synonym for 'sociology of politics'. There was ambiguity concerning the objects of study and the approaches of inquiry within the field of political sociology. Therefore, there arose the need for clarification.

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For Sartori, such a clarification would be possible only ‘when the sociological and “politicological” approaches are combined at their point of intersection’. This point of intersection is a site of interdisciplinary studies. However, to understand the dynamics of such a site, one must delineate the contours of the two parent disciplines—political science and sociology. Although the discipline of political science traces its history back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, it evolved into an academic field of study in the United States of America. According to American political sociologist Beymour Martin Lipset, one of the earliest usages of the term ‘political science’ occurred with the founding of the Faculty of Political Science at Columbia University, New York, in the late 19th century. A few years later, in 1903, the American Political Science Association was founded. Not much later, the first issue of the *American Political Science Review* was published, and is now more than a century old.

Gradually, as the 20th century unfolded, political science acquired many a focus. It included a historical study of political thought, an analytic and comparative study of distinct polities as well as a normative approach to politics. Notwithstanding such a broad scope, if one were to narrow down the object of study of the discipline of political science to a single theme, it would be the State.

If political science is largely focussed on the study of the state, sociology may be understood as the study of the society. The latter discipline was the consequence of the Enlightenment—an intellectual epoch in the history of Europe that awarded primacy to the critical application of human reason as opposed to blindly following the dictates of human and divine authorities.

Nature: Political sociology seeks to understand the process of interaction between government and society, decision-making authorities, and conflicting social forces and interests. It is the study of interactions and linkages between politics and society, and between the political system and its social, economic and cultural environment. It is concerned with problems regarding the management of conflict, the articulation of interest and issues, and political integration and organization. The focal point in all these concerns is the independence of the interplay of socio-cultural, economic and political elements.

The perspective of political sociology is distinguished from that of institutionalism and behaviouralism. The institutionalists have been concerned primarily with institutional types of political organization, and their study has been characterized by legality and formality. The behaviouralists have focussed on the individual actor in the political arena; and their central concern has been the psychological trait, namely, motives, attitudes, perception and the role of individuals. The task of political sociologists is to study the political process as a continuum of interactions between society and its decision-makers, and between the decision-making institutions and social forces.

Political sociology provides a new vista in political analysis. Yet, it is closely linked with the issues which have been raised in political philosophy. Political

philosophy has a rich and long tradition of political thought that began with the ancient Indian and Greek philosophers, and that has amply followed since the Italian historian Machiavelli, who made a bold departure from Greek idealism and medieval scholasticism. It was German sociologist Karl Marx, however, who strongly focussed on issues concerning the nature of political power and its relationship with social or economic organization. The Marxist theory of economic determinism of political power laid the foundation for the sociology of politics. Marx was, however, neither the first nor the only thinker to conceive of government as an organ of the dominant economic class. The Arabian scholar Ibn Khaldun and several European predecessors of Marx had argued that ideology and power were superstructures of economy.

As we have learnt before, the early origins of sociology are often traced to Auguste Comte's six-volume work *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830–42). This work offered an encyclopedic treatment of sciences. It expounded positivism and initiated the use of the term 'sociology' to signify a certain method of studying human societies. Comte proposed a historical law of social development, and according to this scheme, human societies pass from an initial stage of interpreting phenomena theologically to an intermediate stage of metaphysical interpretation before arriving at the final stage of positivist interpretation (see Figure 2.1). This is known as Comte's law of three stages. In the theological stage, which Comte divided into three sub-stages of animism, polytheism and monotheism, humans blindly followed what they believed was the law of god and supernatural powers. In the metaphysical stage, humans started questioning such concepts and also started offering impersonal, abstract explanations of various concepts. In the positivist stage, humans started relying on what was called the scientific method, based on observation, experiment and comparison. This idea of a historical development of human societies obeying laws of nature was adopted by Karl Marx.

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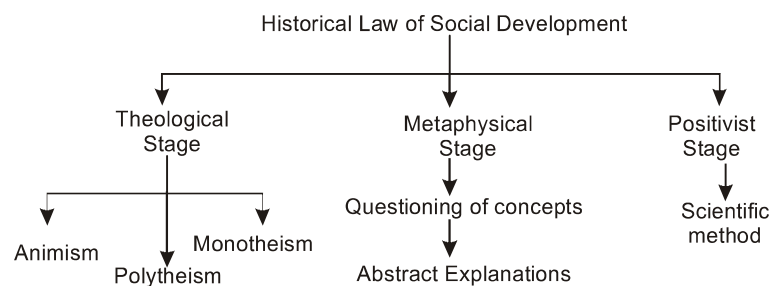


Fig. 2.1 Comte's Law of Three Stages

The work of Marx, which emphasized the role of capitalist mode of production, and Marxism in general were important stimuli for the development of sociology.

The early Marxist contribution to sociology included the works of well-known philosopher Karl Kautsky on the French Revolution; German historian

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Franz Erdmann Mehring's analysis of art, literature and intellectual history; and German Marxist philosopher Carl Grunberg's early studies on agrarian history and labour movements. It is important to note that Marxist studies of society also developed independent of universities as they were intimately related to political movements and party organizations.

In the decades following the death of Marx, sociology was gaining ground as an academic discipline, and the critics of Marxism had an important role to play in its development. The most notable critics were Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. Weber's work on capitalism, the State, and methodological writings were largely directed against historical materialism. In the later works of Durkheim, an attempt was made to distinguish the social functions of religion from the explanation provided by historical materialism.

Given the inevitability of political role in society, thinkers from Aristotle to Tocqueville (French political thinker and historian) have rightly emphasized the point that instead of deploring the evils of human nature or social circumstances, it is more prudent and worthwhile to accept the 'given' and improve it for the good of man and society. It is wiser to face it and to manage it so as to achieve reconciliation and accommodation. Conflict, though apparently an evil, is a condition of freedom, as it prevents the concentration of power. This kind of political realism recognizes the necessity and utility of the political management of conflict through compromise and adjustment among various social forces and interests. Political sociology aims at understanding the sources and the social bases of conflict, as well as the process of management of conflict.

Scope: The broad aim of political sociology is to study and examine the interactions between social and political structures. The determination of the boundaries of what is social and political, however, raises some questions. The relevant question in delineating the scope of political sociology is of the kinds of groups which form part of the study of the discipline of political sociology. Some scholars believe that politics depends on some settled order created by the state. Hence, the state is political and is the subject matter of political sociology, and not the groups.

There is another school according to which politics is present in almost all social relations. Individuals and small groups try to enforce their preferences on their parent organizations, family, club or college, and, thus, indulge in the exercise of 'power'.

Sheldon S. Wolin, a political philosopher, takes quite a reasonable view of the word 'political', which according to him, means the following three things:

- (i) A form of activity that centres around the quest for competitive advantage between groups, individuals or societies
- (ii) A form of activity conditioned by the fact that it occurs within a situation of change and relative scarcity

- (iii) A form of activity in which the pursuit of advantage produces consequences of such a magnitude that they affect, in a significant way, the whole society or a substantial portion of it

Two groups of scholars have discussed the scope of political sociology in two different ways. According to Greer and Orleans, political sociology is concerned with the structure of the state; the nature and condition of legitimacy; nature of the monopoly of force and its use by the state; and the nature of the subunits and their relation with the state. They treat political sociology in terms of consensus and legitimacy, participation and representation, and the relationship between economic development and political change. By implication, whatever is related to the state is alone held as the subject matter of political sociology. Eminent sociologist Andreu Effrat takes a broader view of the picture and suggests that political sociology is concerned with the causes, patterns and consequences of the distribution and process of power and authority 'in all social systems'. Among social systems, he includes small groups and families, educational and religious groups, as well as governmental and political institutions.

Lipset and Reinhard Bendix (German American sociologist) suggest a more representative catalogue of topics when they describe the main areas of interest to political sociologists as voting behaviour, concentration of economic power and political decision-making; ideologies of political movement and interest groups; political parties, voluntary associations, the problems of oligarchy and psychological correlates of political behaviour; and the problem of bureaucracy. To sociologist thinkers Dowse and Hughes, one area of substantive concern for the political sociologist is the problem of social order and political obedience.

Sociologist Richard G. Braungart has pointed out that political sociologists are concerned with the dynamic association among and between (a) the social origin of politics, (b) the structure of political process, and (c) the effects of politics on the surrounding society and culture. Political sociology should include four areas that are as follows:

- (i) Political structures (social class/caste, elite, interest groups, bureaucracy, political parties and factions)
- (ii) Political life (electoral process, political communication, opinion formation, and so on)
- (iii) Political leadership (bases, types and operation of community power structure)
- (iv) Political development (concept and indices of its measurement, its social bases and prerequisites, and its relationship to social change and modernization)

To illustrate, it can be pointed out that on one hand, sociologists focus their attention on the sub-areas of the social system, and political scientists concentrate on the study of law, local, state and national governments, comparative government,

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political systems, public administration and international relations. On the other hand, political sociologists ought to be concerned with topics of social stratification and political power: socio-economic systems and political regimes, interest groups, political parties, bureaucracy, political socialization, electoral behaviour, social movements and political mobilization.

A significant concern of political sociology is the analysis of socio-political factors in economic development.

Importance: There are four main areas of research that are important in present-day political sociology. They are as follows:

- (i) The socio-political formation of the modern state.
- (ii) 'Who rules?' How social inequality between groups (class, race, gender, and so on) influences politics.
- (iii) How public personalities, social movements and trends outside of the formal institutions of political power affect politics.
- (iv) Power relationships within and between social groups (e.g., families, workplaces, bureaucracy, media, and so on). Contemporary theorists include Robert A. Dahl, Seymour Martin Lipset, Theda Skocpol, Luc Boltanski and Nicos Poulantzas.

This introductory purview of the disciplines of political science and sociology should allow us to now characterize the field of political sociology. The latter may be understood as the study of the varied and multiple relationships between the state and society. In this sense, political sociology evolved into an interdisciplinary field lying between the academic disciplines of political science and sociology.

2.4 USES OF SOCIOLOGY

The discipline of sociology is recognized widely today. Nowadays, there is a growing realization about the importance of the scientific study of social phenomena and means of promoting what American sociologist and economist Franklin Henry Giddings calls 'human adequacy'. It is of great value in modern complex society.

- **Sociology makes a scientific study of society:** Sociology has made it possible to study society in a systematic and scientific manner. Scientific knowledge about human society is needed in order to achieve progress in various fields.
- **Sociology throws more light on the social nature of man:** Sociology delves deep into the social nature of man. It tells us why man is a social animal and why he lives in groups. It examines the relationships between individuals and the society.

- **Sociology improves our understanding of society and increases the power of social action:** The science of society assists an individual to understand himself, his capacities, talents and limitations. It enables him to adjust to the environment. Knowledge of society and social groups helps us to lead an effective social life.
- **Sociology has contributed generously to enhance the value of human culture:** Sociology has trained us in building a rational approach to questions that concern ourselves, our religion and customs. It teaches one to have an object-oriented and balanced approach. It emphasizes the importance of ignoring petty personal prejudices and ambitions that are influenced by ego and envy.
- **Sociology studies the role of institutions in the development of the individual:** The home and family, school and education, church and religion, states and government, and marriage and family are important institutions through which a society functions. Furthermore, they are conditioners of an individual's knowledge of sociology.
- **Sociological knowledge is indispensable for understanding and planning of the society:** Sociological planning has been made easier by sociology. Sociology is often considered a vehicle of social reform and social organization. It plays an important role in reconstruction of the society.
- **The need for sociology in underdeveloped countries:** Sociologists have drawn the attention of economists regarding the social factors that have contributed to the economic backwardness of a few countries. Economists have now realized the importance of sociological knowledge in analysing the economic affairs of a country.
- **Study of society has helped several governments to promote the welfare of tribal people:** Not only civilized societies but tribal societies also have several socio-economic problems. Studies conducted by sociologists and anthropologists regarding tribal societies have helped many governments in undertaking various social measures to promote the welfare of tribal people.

Check Your Progress

4. List the important institutions through which a society functions.
5. Define ethnomethodology.
6. State the concept of social psychology.
7. What are the fields of concern of the institutionalists and behaviouralists?
8. State the broad aim of political sociology

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2.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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1. Empiricism emphasizes experiences and facts that result from observation and experiment. Rationalism, on the other hand, stresses on reason and theories that result from logical inference. In sociological inquiry, both are significant.
2. The formal school defined sociology as a social science that has definite characteristics. This school was advocated by George Simmel, Ferdinand Tonnies, Alfred Vierkandt and Leopold Von Wiese.
3. Comparative sociology basically deals with identical historical changes and tries to highlight the general features by comparing them. It also separates general features from industrial features. Social dynamics is concerned with the interrelations that exist among different social factors and institutions in a given society, for example in an ancient society.
4. The home and family, school and education, church and religion, states and government, and marriage and family are important institutions through which a society functions.
5. Ethnomethodology is a recent sociological theory. It is the study of 'folk' or common sense methods employed by people to make sense of everyday activities by constructing and maintaining social reality. It means that common sense is so important that it helps in understanding the methods of constructing reality.
6. Social psychology involves the study of social and mental processes and how they act together to determine action. Essentially, it studies the interaction between psychological and sociological processes. It is the ground where sociology and psychology converge.
7. The institutionalists have been concerned primarily with institutional types of political organization, and their study has been characterized by legality and formality. The behaviouralists have focussed on the individual actor in the political arena; and their central concern has been the psychological trait, namely, motives, attitudes, perception and the role of individuals.
8. The broad aim of political sociology is to study and examine the interactions between social and political structures.

2.6 SUMMARY

- Sociology is the study of human interactions, their conditions and consequences. It is a type of science that comprises investigative techniques which are objective and systematic.

- Sociology involves a systematic and objective study of human society. Sociologists study individuals' social actions.
- Sociology comprises a variety of apprehensions and interests. It is aimed at providing classified forms of relationships within societies, institutions and associations.
- The formal school defined sociology as a social science that has definite characteristics. This school was advocated by George Simmel, Ferdinand Tonnies, Alfred Vierkandt and Leopold Von Wiese.
- The synthetic school defines sociology as a combination of social sciences. It stresses on widening the range of sociology.
- Sociology could be considered to be a method of objective inquiry that involves testing of beliefs against evidence. Sociology and other social sciences focus on certain aspects of human behaviour.
- While sociology has its roots in philosophy and history, anthropology began as a study of physical measurements of humans.
- Social psychology involves the study of social and mental processes and how they act together to determine action. Essentially, it studies the interaction between psychological and sociological processes.
- Political sociology seeks to understand the process of interaction between government and society, decision-making authorities, and conflicting social forces and interests.
- The broad aim of political sociology is to study and examine the interactions between social and political structures.
- Although sociology may appear to be a rerun of common sense, there is a significant difference between the two. Common sense views are built upon people's limited experiences and give an inaccurate view of society. Sociological views, on the other hand, are based on thorough qualitative or quantitative research and evidence.
- A social anthropologist uses qualitative methods to collect information, usually by immersing himself into the society that is being studied. Sociologists generally collect quantitative data based on which they make their conclusions.
- Psychologists look at the mental processes and personality characteristics that make people act in a certain manner. Sociologists tend to look at the social setting and structure, the processes that go on within them, and the influence they exert upon individuals.
- History is concerned with the past and looks at the changes that take place over time. A sociologist looks for patterns to build generalizations.
- Political science is largely focussed on the study of the state, while sociology may be understood as the study of society.

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- There are several uses of sociology: It makes a scientific study of society, throws more light on the social nature of man, improves our understanding of society and increases the power of social action, contributes generously to enhance the value of human culture, studies the role of institutions in the development of the individual, its knowledge is indispensable for understanding and planning of the society, it is very crucial to underdeveloped countries, and it has helped several governments to promote the welfare of tribal people, etc.

2.7 KEY WORDS

- **Empirical:** It refers to a research/study based on, concerned with, or verifiable by observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic.
- **Social anthropology:** It is the immersive study of small, isolated societies.
- **Political sociology:** It is the study of the process of interaction between government and society, decision-making authorities, and conflicting social forces and interests.
- **Politology:** It is an alternative term offered for political science which argues that politics is more of a cultural aesthetic than a science.
- **Positivism:** It is a philosophical system recognizing only that which can be scientifically verified or which is capable of logical or mathematical proof, and, therefore, rejecting metaphysics and theism.
- **Historical materialism:** It is a methodological approach to the study of human societies and their development over time first articulated by Karl Marx (1818–1883) as the materialist conception of history.

2.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. List the main characteristics of sociology as a branch of knowledge.
2. Name the two schools of thought that had different perspectives with respect to the scope and theme of sociology.
3. Write a short note on the criticism of the formal school.
4. Outline the major differences between sociology and common sense.
5. Briefly describe Comte's law of three stages.
6. What are the four areas of political sociology?
7. Outline the four main areas of research in political sociology.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the nature and scope of sociology.
2. 'Sociology was defined differently by two schools of thought, pertaining to its range and theme'. Explain in detail.
3. What is social anthropology? What can sociology learn from psychology?
4. What is political sociology? Explain the concept of political sociology in terms of its nature, scope and importance.

2.9 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3 BASIC CONCEPTS OF SOCIOLOGY

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Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Society
- 3.3 Community
- 3.4 Association
- 3.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 3.6 Summary
- 3.7 Key Words
- 3.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 3.9 Further Readings

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Sociology is the study of human society or societies. But such a simple initial definition of the subject poses the question, ‘What is human society?’ There is a difference of emphasis between the singular form of a society and its plural form. Society, as a singular term, appears general and unlimited. The plural term, societies, sounds more like a set of container units distinct from each other, such that you can take them one by one to inspect their contents.

As stated before, sociology has always studied societies, both taken separately and together, as ‘human societies’. The balance between the two aspects may vary, but at the end, the study of the one absolutely requires study of the other. Neither of them makes sense independently.

Human society in general extends to all human beings, that is, the total number of members of the animal species—Homo sapiens. However, we should not equate all human species with the human society. As with other animals, the qualities of the species are distributed among individual members. In total, they make up humankind. It is through their social relations that they constitute societies. The total set of relations at any time makes up the world society. For any animal species, the essential requirements for survival include genetic inheritance, functioning organisms, a favourable environment and social relations. Society, as such, is not especially human. If we take our closest animal relatives, chimpanzees, in their natural habitat in Africa, they constantly form and reform social relations based on the practices of fission–fusion; theirs are male-dominated societies within larger territorially based exclusive communities. In captivity, female coalitions develop to reduce male dominance. But both, in the wild and in captivity, chimpanzees exhibit

a diversity and adaptability in their social behaviour which permits wide variation in prevalent social relations.

This adaptability, which is also possessed by human beings, makes it impossible to show that any particular type of society is determined by biology. Individuals, during their lives, are capable of sustaining and experimenting with vastly differing types of social relations. Societies can undergo total social transformation as the history of revolutions shows. In evolutionary terms, the human organism has not just adapted but has evolved adaptability. It provides for versatility and a collective freedom to draw on a vast repertoire of possible social behaviour in different conditions. The range of social relations which human behaviour can support extends from individual freedom of choice to the arbitrary rule of a few over others. Hence, the variations in human society are vast even while the biology remains stable.

Explaining the sources of these variations is a distinct field of inquiry in its own right. The development of culture, ways of acting, thinking and feeling makes human society a special case as compared with the societies of other species. These features are transmitted from one generation to the next and across societies through learning, not through inheritance. Culture includes language and technology, both of which involve the communication of ideas and the possibility of sophisticated coordination of action. This vastly enhances adaptability.

Only when a set of research practices and exchange of ideas and results among members of an organized occupation begin to take place, we can talk of the arrival of sociology as a discipline. So the invention of the word 'sociology' in 1839 by the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) was only a preliminary first step, though his idea that there was a law of three stages governing the development of society became widely known.

In this unit, you will study about the basic concepts of sociology.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Analyse the concept of society
- Describe the forms of social institutions and social structures
- Differentiate between communities and associations

3.2 SOCIETY

The term 'society' is not easy to define. In general, it refers to people and their community. Man is a social animal who relies on others around him for his basic needs. People form society. The interaction between people brings them closer to

NOTES

NOTES

each other and makes them mutually dependent. Society can, thus, be defined as a formal association of people having the same interests. British sociologist Morris Ginsberg has defined society, thus: 'A society is a collection of individuals united by certain relations or mode of behaviours which mark them off from others who do not enter into these relations or who differ from them in behaviour.' Well-known sociologist R. M. MacIver has defined society as 'Society is a web of social relationships'.

The origin or emergence of society may be viewed as one of the great steps in evolution. However, this step was taken only by a few species. Like other steps, it represents a new synthesis of old materials, possessing unique qualities that are not found in old materials which are considered separately. It is, thus, a true example of what is known as an emergent evolution. To realize that society is a true emergent, one needs to trace its independent origin in countless animal types. One merely needs to grasp the difference between it and the organisms which it is composed of. Several decades ago, it was normal to compare society with an organism. The idea was to demonstrate that a social system, after all, is a system. The analogy was helpful but never perfect. The cells of an organism are rigidly fixed in their mutual relations, completely subordinated to the organism and too specialized to be called members of the society. They are not spatially detached and independently mobile. So the organism is not, strictly speaking, a society of cells. The organism possesses a consciousness, which no society possesses.

Like an organism, a society is a system of relations between organisms themselves rather than between cells. Like the organism, a society has a determined structure and the parts of this structure, when in operation, contribute to the existence of the whole. This gives it continuity, which is apart from that of the constituent individuals. It is this possession of continuity and structure of its own that makes it impossible to reduce the study of society merely to a study of its individual members. It is like a house which, though composed of bricks, nails, mortar and pieces of lumber, cannot be understood purely in terms of these materials, as it has a form and functions as a complete house.

A **society**, or a **human society**, is a group of people related to each other through persistent relations, or a large social group, sharing the same geographical or virtual territory, subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.

Human societies are characterized by patterns of relationships between individuals who share a distinctive institutions and culture. A given society may be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituent members. In social sciences, a society invariably entails stratification and hierarchy. A society helps its members benefit in ways not possible had the members existed individually. It consists of like-minded people governed by their own values and norms. Within

a society one almost always finds smaller cultures or sub societies with their own idiosyncratic set of rules.

Broadly, a society may be described as a social, economic and industrial infrastructure made up with varied kinds of people. A society may constitute of different ethnic groups, a nation state or a broader cultural group.

Definitions

Society has been differently defined by different sociologists. Here are a few definitions:

American sociologist Gerhard Lenski defined society as is a form of organization involving:

- (1) Relatively sustained ties of interaction among its members.
- (2) Relatively high degree of interdependence among its members.
- (3) A high degree of autonomy.

Gerhard Lenski (1970) Human Societies. New York: McGraw-Hill

The Latin word *socius* denotes a companion or ally, and in their specific sense, the words 'society' and 'social' refer to associations of individuals to group relations. When we speak of social structure, or the organization of society, it is clear what is meant: the way a mass of people is constituted into families, clans, tribes, states, classes, sets, clubs, communities, and the like. A society is a group of interrelated individuals.

A. L. Kroeber (1948) Anthropology. New York: Harcourt, Brace

A society is a collection of people who are linked to one another, either directly or indirectly, through social interaction...The term society can be applied to the total human community, encompassing all of humanity. Alternatively, we may speak of American or Canadian society, or we may restrict ourselves to even smaller geographical or social groupings.

Michael Howard and Patrick McKim (1983) Contemporary Cultural Anthropology

For convenience of study, aggregates of individuals in their relational aspects are arbitrarily isolated as social units. Where these show a number of common features in distinction from other such units, they are conveniently termed societies.

Raymond Firth (1951) Elements of Social Organization. Boston: Beacon Press

There are important theories about the origin of human society, but we will study about them in the next unit.

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Check Your Progress

1. Define society.
2. State the major characteristics of human society.
3. How does Gerhar Lenski define society?

3.3 COMMUNITY

Human society is a group of people related to each other through persistent relations. Societies are characterized by patterns of relationships between individuals sharing a distinctive culture and institutions.

Community is also an important concept in social and political life. The social life led by people is affected and influenced by the kind of community in which they live.

The word 'community' is derived from Latin, where the prefix 'com' signifies 'together' and the noun *munia, munium* means 'duty'. Thus, community refers to fulfilling duties together. It implies that the 'community' is an organization of human beings framed for the purpose of serving together. According to a widely quoted definition, 'a community is a local grouping within which people carry out a full round of life activities.'

Other definitions of community

Community is 'any circle of people who live together and belong together in such a way that they do not share this or that particular interest only, but a whole set of interests'.

–Karl Mannheim

Community is 'a group of social beings living a common life including all the infinite variety and complexity of relations which result from that common life which constitutes it'.

–Morris Ginsberg

Community is 'the smallest territorial group that can embrace all aspects of social life'.

–Kingsley Davis

MacIver's conception of community

R. M. MacIver has given one of the most salient definitions and analyses of community. According to him, 'Wherever the members of any group, small or large, live together in such a way that they share, not this or that particular interest, but the basic conditions of a common life, we call that group a community.'

A village, a city, a tribe and a nation are examples of community. The mark of a community, according to MacIver, is that one's life may be lived wholly within it.

One cannot live wholly within a business organization or a church; but one can live wholly within a tribe or a city. The basic criterion of community is that all of one's social relationship may be found within it. However, all communities need not be self-sufficient.

While some communities, especially among primitive people, are all-inclusive and independent of others, modern communities, even very large ones, are much less self-contained. Economic and political interdependence is a major characteristic of modern communities. As MacIver has stated, 'Communities exist within greater communities: the town within a region, the region within a nation, and the nation within the world community, which, perhaps, is in the process of development.'

According to MacIver, the basis of community is locality and community sentiment. A community always occupies a territory. The members of a community derive from the conditions of their locality a strong bond of solidarity. Locality, however, is not enough to create a community. A community is an area of common living. There must be common living along with its awareness of sharing a way of life as well as the common earth which is known as community sentiment.

Integral elements of community sentiments

- **We-feeling:** This is the feeling that leads men to identify themselves with others so that when they say 'we', there is no thought of distinction and when they say 'ours', there is no thought of division.
- **Role-feeling:** This involves the subordination to the whole on the part of the individual.
- **Dependence-feeling:** This refers to the individual's sense of dependence upon the community as a necessary condition of his own life.

Characteristics of Community

Like most things in sociology, the term 'community' is difficult to define with any degree of accuracy or certainty. The term is a construct, a model. We cannot touch, see or experience a community. It may come in varying shapes, sizes, colours, and so on with no two communities being alike.

Also, a community is much more than the people who already exist in it.

That community, more likely than not, was already in existence much before the current residents were born, and will continue to flourish long after they are all gone. A community will have members who go to other places and who may eventually return.

A 'community' sometimes may not be any tangible location but a group of people with similar interests. Let us now look at some characteristics of a community.

Sociological construct: A community is a 'sociological construct'. In other words, it is a set of human interactions and behaviours that have meaning between the

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members. They have actions that are based on shared expectations, values, beliefs, and so on between individuals.

Blurred boundaries: When a community is a tiny village, separated by a few kilometres from other villages, in a rural region, its boundaries appear simple. That pattern of human interaction may seem to consist only of relations between community members inside that village. The residents, however, may interact with people outside the village. They may marry and move out or bring a partner with them to the community. At any one time, the village may have residents living elsewhere.

Communities within communities: There may be communities within bigger communities, such as districts, regions, nations, and so on. There may be interaction that connects villages on different countries.

Movement of communities: Community residents may be nomadic herders walking with their cattle. They may be mobile fishing groups and may also be hunters.

Urban communities: A community may be a small group in urban areas, consisting of a few people of a common origin. That community may be a subpart of a neighbourhood community or a local urban division and so on. As the boundaries become bigger, one will find differences in origin, language, religion, and so on. In general, urban communities are more difficult to demarcate, are varied, and more difficult to organize, than rural communities.

A human community is more than a collection of houses. It is a social and cultural organization. Also, it is not merely a collection of human beings but a socio-cultural system.

A key characteristic of a community is its social cohesion and its willingness to set and strive for common goals. This depends on various factors, such as historical, social, economic and cultural factors.

These characteristics provide the necessary incentives to cooperate and obey community rules, and consider the needs of future generations of the community.

Historical factors: All activities in a community take place in a historical backdrop. How well a community functions and how its members strive towards a common goal depends on factors such as population history and the history of conflict, or the lack thereof, in the community.

Social factors: These may include ethnicity and language, caste, class and other social divisions, family structure and gender relations.

Economic factors: These include differences or similarities in livelihood strategies, and the degree of economic stratification in the community.

Cultural factors: Cultural factors such as religion, tradition and custom can determine the extent to which members of a community share common goals and cooperate with each other.

Traditional, socialist and liberal conceptions of community

Traditional or conservative thought emphasizes the idea that community is based upon commonality of origin—the blood, kinship and historic ties—of people living in a particular location. Village localities as much as national groups are considered to exist on such basis. This commonality of origin may also be derived in another locality or by reference to a homeland as is the case in the ‘Jewish community’.

Socialist thought identifies conservative versions of community as hegemonic devices to bind members of different classes together in capitalist society, preventing them from seeing their real clash of economic interests, and, thus, averting social conflict. Conservatives and socialists may stress different basis for the existence of community, but both identify the social relations inherent in community as something greater than the concerns and interests of each individual living in it added together, and as providing the basis for the longevity of a community.

Liberals are reluctant to conceptualize community on the same elevated basis because of their commitment to individual freedom. Instead, they see community as based on the freely chosen associations of individuals with common interests and needs.

Community and Association

MacIver has distinguished community from association. An association is a group of people organized for the pursuit of a specific purpose or a limited number of purposes. An association is not a community but an organization within a community. A community is more than any specific organizations that arise within it. It is a permanent social group embracing a totality of ends or purposes. As the association is organized for particular purposes for the pursuit of specific interests, one belongs to it only by virtue of these interests. Membership in an association has a limited significance. A community, on the other hand, is a permanent social group embracing a totality of ends or purposes.

This distinction between community and association is also in evidence in German sociologist and philosopher Ferdinand Tonnies’ concept of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (association). Societies characterized by *Gemeinschaft* relations are homogenous, largely based on kinship ties and have a moral cohesion often founded on common religious sentiment. In small homogenous societies, members interacted with one another on face to face on an informal basis. In these groups, tradition dictated social behaviour. Relationships seemed to be more natural, organic and emotional. They seemed to have more meaning than today. These relationships are dissolved by the division of labour, individualism and competitiveness, i.e., by the growth of *Gesellschaft* relationships.

In societies that are large and heterogenous, such as modern industrial societies, relationships among members are impersonal, formal, functional and specialized. According to Tonnies, these societies have contractual relationships, which are based on clear-cut, legal contracts rather than being governed by

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traditions. Impersonal, superficial and transitory (utilitarian) relationships tend to characterize modern urban life. He called these societies *Gesellschaft*, or 'associational societies'.

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State and Community

The state is frequently confused with the community. MacIver has stressed the associational character of the state. The state is one form of social organization, not the whole community in all its aspects. The state is an agency of peculiarly wide range,

but nevertheless an agency. It may assume at times an absolutist or totalitarian form, claiming to control every aspect of human life. Even if this claim was fully realized, which could never be the case, the state would not become the community, but an association controlling the community.

People are certainly citizens or subjects of the state. Yet, however, significant the citizen role may be, it is only one of the many roles each person exercises as a social being. The state, it should also be recognized, is different in important respects from all other associations. Its peculiarities, its power, its limitations and the interests that it can and does pursue, are all different in important respects from those common to other associations. However, we should keep in mind that the state as a form of social organization is, like the church or business organization, an association.

Recently, however, the term 'community' has been used to indicate a sense of identity or belonging that may or may not be tied into geographical location. In this sense, a community is formed when people have a reasonably clear idea of who has something in common with them and who has not. The tremendous advance in communication technology has contributed to the reduced importance of the territorial aspect. The growth of information technology has led to the growth of cyber communities. Communities are, therefore, essentially mental constructs formed by imagined boundaries between groups.

Communitarianism and Social Order

Communitarianism is the 'advocacy of a social order in which human beings are bound together by common values that foster close communal' (community) bonds. This term is used to describe the ideas of a number of writers, who attach importance to the value of community. They are critical of modern liberal political thought on account of its apparent lack of emphasis on this important aspect of social and political life.

The commitment to the individual and his rights forms the core of liberalism. It is the individual, rather than any social group or collective body, who is of supreme importance in liberalism. Human beings are seen as individuals who are of equal moral worth, and each individual possesses a separate and unique identity.

The origins of communitarianism are usually traced to German philosopher Friedrich Hegel and the English idealists, especially T. H. Green. Hegel's concept of *sittlichkeit* or shared values of the community, and the English idealists' emphasis on the obligations of citizenship are important ingredients that have formed the nucleus of communitarian philosophy. The socialist and anarchist traditions have also influenced communitarian ideas, especially with its focus on the possibility of community in the absence of state coercion. Ferdinand Tönnies' work on community and association drew attention to the value of community and the threat posed to it by the industrial society.

Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer—outstanding philosophers of the Anglo-American world—are some of the leading philosophers of communitarianism today. Not all critics of liberal theory identified with the communitarian movement. Neither did they envisage a grand communitarian theory as a viable alternative to liberalism. Nevertheless, certain core arguments meant to contrast with liberalism's devaluation of community recur in the works of these four theorists.

Communitarians have sought to critique the universal claims of liberal theory. They argue that liberal theory uses a 'universalist' perspective, disregarding the social and cultural particularities of specific societies and communities. While many liberal thinkers have insisted that ideas of justice have universal validity, communitarians argue that the parameters of justice must be found in ways and modes of life, and traditions of particular societies. As these practices vary considerably, so do notions of justice.

Thus, there can be no single universal system for measuring notions of what is morally right, or just, which would be applicable to all societies and communities.

The British political philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre and the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor have insisted that value judgments are determined by the languages of reason and worldviews of those who inhabit these sites. Therefore, one ought not to abstract ideas from the interpretative dimensions of human beliefs, practices and institutions. American political theorist Michael Walzer developed the argument that effective social criticism must derive from the habits and traditions of actual people living in specific times and places.

There are reasons that support the communitarian argument for cultural particularism that contrast with traditional arguments of liberal universalism.

The prioritization of rights is determined by cultural factors. Consequently, different societies would have a correspondingly different ordering of rights. This explains why American citizens may be inclined to compromise an economic benefit to protect a civil right. This case may be contrasted with the case of Chinese citizens. Being more nationalistic, the Chinese are wont to surrender political liberties for the economic interests of their nation-state.

Cultural factors can also affect the justification of rights. Even when the same rights are acknowledged in different societies, those rights may be justified

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on different grounds in different societies. This has led communitarians like Michael Walzer to argue that justifications for particular practices of liberal democracy, when applied to Asian and African societies, should not be made by relying on an abstract and unhistorical universalism, but rather should be made from the inside, from specific examples and argumentative strategies relevant to particular societies.

Cultural factors can provide moral foundations for distinctive political practices and institutions, which differ from those found in Western-style liberal democracies.

American moral and political philosopher John Rawls has tried to eliminate or tone down the 'universalist' pre-suppositions from his theory. He explicitly allows for the possibility that liberalism may not be exportable at all times and places, sketching a vision of a 'decent, well-ordered society' that liberal societies must tolerate in the international realm. He argues that such a society need not be democratic but it must be non-aggressive towards other communities, and internally, it must have a 'common good conception of justice'. It must also secure basic human rights. However, the ultimate view one gets is that though there may be justifiable non-liberal regimes, these should be regarded as second best to be tolerated and perhaps respected, not idealized or emulated.

Another fundamental difference between communitarianism and liberalism is about the nature of the self. Communitarians argue that traditional liberalism rests on an individualistic conception of the self. Communitarianism insists upon the interaction of the social context and individuals' self-conceptions, while liberalism works with an atomized individual artificially divorced from his or her social surroundings.

While liberals like John Rawls argue that we have a supreme interest in shaping, pursuing and revising our life plans, communitarians argue that such a view neglects the fact that our individual selves tend to be defined or constituted by various communal attachments (e.g., ties to the family or to a religious tradition) so close to us that they can only be set aside at great cost, if at all.

This insight led to the view that politics should not be concerned solely with securing the conditions for individuals to exercise their powers of autonomous choice, as we also need to sustain and promote the social attachments crucial to our sense of well-being and respect, many of which have been involuntarily picked up during the course of our upbringing.

Communitarians are critics of rights theory and claim that liberal individualism cannot provide an adequate theory of rights as universal entitlements. Communitarianism proposes to develop a new theory of rights which gives appropriate attention to community and the social structure. Communitarians argue that there are important collective rights, which apply to social groups such as ethnic communities, religious groups or trade unions.

Although there is no necessary connection between communitarianism and welfare rights, there is a relationship between communitarianism and the

benefit theory of rights. The communitarian view of welfare is that it is an expression of the common values that bind otherwise disparate individuals together. This is contrasted to the more individualistic conception of welfare derived from the theory of citizenship, which implies that claims to welfare resources are simply an extension of the legal and political rights that are characteristic of liberal democracies and, therefore, that collective welfare is quite consistent to the theory of liberal pluralism.

Welfare states are simply adjuncts to markets; that is, rational deprivation-alleviating mechanisms and policies resting on the individualistic principles of reciprocal obligations and exchange. Communitarianism by contrast embodies a vision of a social order that fosters intimate communal bonds. This view is expressed by British social researcher Richard Titmuss in *The Gift Relationship*, which argues that people should receive welfare as a gift from strangers, an expression of social solidarity, rather than as mere entitlement or right derived from a complex network of reciprocal relationships.

Well-known philosophers A. MacIntyre and M. Sandel argue that in liberal capitalism, there are disagreements about values, and that the values that underpin individualistic traditions of rights cannot be judged comparatively and, hence, the legitimization of rights doctrine is uncertain. There is no common morality that could provide a general endorsement of rights. Communitarianism involves a quest to reconstitute the values and moral codes which individualism has disrupted.

Although there are many versions of communitarianism, they share the notion that communities as much as individuals can be rights-bearers. Thus, in *The Spirit of Community*, eminent sociologist A. Etzioni argues that a communitarian moral system is required to rebuild American society, which has been undermined by individualism. He claims that individualistic interpretations of rights have encouraged the erosion of the family, which is an essential basis of social order.

Etzioni argues that advanced industrial societies of the capitalist West suffer from 'rampant moral confusion and social anarchy' because individuals have been given too much freedom and not enough responsibilities. Communitarians favour a social order in which 'the community' identifies the common good and persuades its members to act towards it.

Influence of communitarianism: Communitarians claim to have influenced the development of social policy in America and Britain, where communitarian ideas are said to have found favour with New Labour Party. Community policing is a policy consistent with communitarian ideas. Critics have, however, suggested that communitarian arguments are both vague and naïve. What happens if 'the community' endorses values such as racism and homophobia? What happens to dissenters who refuse to conform to community values and are not persuaded by mere exhortation alone? Communitarian social policies are also said to be authoritarian in effect, if not in intention.

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Community Power and Social Structure: Status and Role

Community power is a theory of power which promotes the view that the elites no longer enjoy a monopoly over decision-making. It claims that democracy has dispersed the control of resources to the 'community'. Decision-making occurs in a variety of voluntary associations and opinion formation is shaped by local interest groups. It claims that power is not exercised exclusively through centralized processes associated with the state and bureaucracy. In studying community power, we have to examine decision-making and who influences its outcome.

The question of who makes decisions within a community was a debate prominent in American political science in the 1950s and 1960s, and reflected in discussions in other countries like Britain. In 1953, respected social worker and communist activist Floyd Hunter's *Community Power Structure* suggested that power in the community he studied (not named in the book, but believed to be Atlanta, Georgia) was dominated by business elites to the exclusion of ordinary people, and the total exclusion of black people. The primarily economic elite ruled these people by 'persuasion, intimidation, coercion, and if necessary force'. Through its finance of local political parties, it directly influenced who was elected and largely controlled local politicians from the State governor. It also had considerable control over the media through its patronage power and had a major influence on the formation of local opinion. This control provided a powerful lever to influence decisions in its favour.

In 1961, political theorist Robert Dahl's work *Who Governs?*, in response to Hunter's work, suggested that in New Haven, Connecticut, no one group dominated decision-making as power was dispersed among interest communities. Dahl used the 'decision-making' method to argue that the only way to discover the distribution of power is to examine actual decisions. Dahl found no evidence of a ruling elite in New Haven. He claimed that power is dispersed among various interest groups and that this plurality of elites did not form a unified group with common interests.

Dahl concluded that the advent of representative democracy has shifted power from the elite to various organized interest groups, i.e., from oligarchy to pluralism. Differently constituted groups exercise control depending upon the issue in question. Dahl claims that local politics is a business of bargaining and compromise with no group dominating decision-making.

This view was echoed in a study on the national level by American sociologist Arnold Rose in *The Power Structure* (1967). Rose rejected the view that the USA is ruled by a unified power elite, arguing instead for a 'multi-influence hypothesis'. This approach conceives of society as consisting of many elites, each relatively small numerically and operating in different spheres of life.

Political theorists Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz in *Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice* (1970) deem the 'decision-making' approach as inadequate in studying community power. A second dimension to power — so called 'non-decision making' — involves the 'mobilization of bias' or the manipulation of the

political agenda by powerful groups, taking decisions that prevent issues from emerging and are subject to formal decision-making.

Political and social theorist Stephen Lukes in *Power: A Radical View* proposes that power can also be exercised by preventing people from having grievances in the first place, or as Lukes puts it ‘by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the order of things’. The fact that a variety of interest groups are then able to influence these safe decisions does not, therefore, provide evidence of a wide diffusion of power. In the last instance, the community power approach does not present a very true picture of the power distribution in communities.

Institutions

An institution is a structure of social order and cooperation, governing the behaviour of a set of individuals within a human community. Institutions are generally identified with a social purpose and permanence.

Social Interaction

Social interaction refers to a relationship between two, three or more individuals.

3.4 ASSOCIATION

An association is an assembly of people planned for a particular purpose or a limited number of purposes. To constitute an association, there must be, firstly, a group of people; secondly, these people must be organized, i.e., there must be certain rules for their conduct in the groups, and thirdly, they must have a common purpose of a specific nature to pursue. Thus, family, church, trade union and music club are the instances of association.

Associations may be formed on several bases, for example, on the basis of duration, i.e., temporary or permanent, such as Flood Relief Association which is temporary and State which is permanent; or on the basis of power, i.e., sovereign like state, semi-sovereign like university and non-sovereign like club, or on the basis of function, i.e., biological like family, vocational like Trade Union or Teachers’ Association, recreational like Tennis Club or Music Club, Philanthropic like charitable societies, and so on.

Some of the definitions of association by eminent sociologists are mentioned below:

According to Maclver, ‘An organization deliberately formed for the collective pursuit of some interest or set of interest, which the members of it share, is termed as association.’

Ginsberg writes, ‘An association is a group of social beings related to one another by the fact that they possess or have instituted in common an organization with a view to securing specific end or specific ends.’

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G. D. H. Cole says, 'By an association, I mean any group of persons pursuing a common purpose by a course of corporative action extending beyond a single act, and for this purpose, agreeing together upon certain methods of procedure, and laying down, in however, rudimentary a form, rule for common action.'

Check Your Progress

4. What are the integral elements of community sentiments?
5. State a key characteristic of community.
6. Define communitarianism.
7. What factors should be considered for constituting an association?

3.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. A society, or a human society, is a group of people related to each other through persistent relations, or a large social group sharing the same geographical or virtual territory, subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.
2. Human societies are characterized by patterns of relationships between individuals who share a distinctive institutions and culture.
3. Gerhard Lenski defined society as is a form of organization involving:
 - Relatively sustained ties of interaction among its members.
 - Relatively high degree of interdependence among its members.
 - A high degree of autonomy
4. The integral elements of community sentiments are as follows:
 - a. We-feeling: This is the feeling that leads men to identify themselves with others so that when they say 'we', there is no thought of distinction and, when they say 'ours', there is no thought of division.
 - b. Role-feeling: This involves the subordination to the whole on the part of the individual.
 - c. Dependence-feeling: This refers to the individual's sense of dependence upon the community as a necessary condition of his own life.
5. A key characteristic of a community is its social cohesion and its willingness to set and strive for common goals. This depends on various factors, such as historical, social, economic and cultural factors.
6. Communitarianism is the 'advocacy of a social order in which human beings are bound together by common values that foster close communal' (community) bonds.

7. To constitute an association, there must be, firstly, a group of people; secondly, these people must be organized, i.e., there must be certain rules for their conduct in the groups, and thirdly, they must have a common purpose of a specific nature to pursue. Thus, family, church, trade union and music club are the instances of association.

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3.6 SUMMARY

- Like an organism, a society is a system of relations between organisms themselves rather than between cells. Like the organism, a society has a determined structure and the parts of this structure, when in operation, contribute to the existence of the whole.
- A society, or a human society, is a group of people related to each other through persistent relations, or a large social group sharing the same geographical or virtual territory, subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.
- Human society is a group of people related to each other through persistent relations. Societies are characterized by patterns of relationships between individuals sharing a distinctive culture and institutions.
- Traditional or conservative thought emphasizes the idea that community is based upon commonality of origin—the blood, kinship, and historic ties—of a people living in a particular location.
- Communitarianism is the ‘advocacy of a social order in which human beings are bound together by common values that foster close communal’ (community) bonds.
- Community power is a theory of power that promotes the view that the elites no longer enjoy a monopoly over decision-making.
- An association is an assembly of people planned for a particular purpose or a limited number of purposes. To constitute an association, there must be, firstly, a group of people; secondly, these people must be organized, i.e., there must be certain rules for their conduct in the groups, and thirdly, they must have a common purpose of a specific nature to pursue. Thus, family, church, trade union and music club are the instances of association.
- Associations may be formed on several bases, for example, on the basis of duration, i.e., temporary or permanent, such as Flood Relief Association which is temporary and State which is permanent; or on the basis of power, i.e., sovereign like state, semi-sovereign like university and non-sovereign like club, or on the basis of function, i.e., biological like family, vocational like Trade Union or Teachers’ Association, recreational like Tennis Club or Music Club, Philanthropic like charitable societies, and so on.

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3.7 KEY WORDS

- **Society:** A society, or a human society, is a group of people related to each other through persistent relations, or a large social group sharing the same geographical or virtual territory, subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.
- **Community:** It is a local grouping within which people carry out a full round of life activities.
- **Association:** It is an assembly of people planned for a particular purpose or a limited number of purposes.

3.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Summarize MacIver's conception of society.
2. Outline the major differences between communitarianism and liberalism.
3. Mention some of the integral elements of community sentiments.
4. What is association?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe society as a true emergent with the analogy of organisms.
2. What are the characteristics of community?
3. Explain the concept of communitarianism and social order.
4. What is the concept of community power? How is it related to social structure?

3.9 FURTHER READINGS

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BLOCK - II
INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY, THEORIES ABOUT THE
ORIGIN OF HUMAN SOCIETY

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UNIT 4 INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Relationship Between Individual and Society
 - 4.2.1 An Individual's Dependence on Social Heritage
 - 4.2.2 Individual and Society
- 4.3 Theories about the Origin of Human Society
 - 4.3.1 Social Contract Theory
 - 4.3.2 Organismic Theory
- 4.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 4.5 Summary
- 4.6 Key Words
- 4.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 4.8 Further Readings

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Sociology is the study of human society or societies. But such a simple initial definition of the subject poses the question, 'What is human society?' There is a difference of emphasis between the singular form of a society and its plural form. Society, as a singular term, appears general and unlimited. The plural term, societies, sounds more like a set of container units distinct from each other, such that you can take them one by one to inspect their contents.

In fact, sociology has always studied societies, both, taken separately and together, as 'human societies'. The balance between the two aspects may vary, but at the end, the study of the one absolutely requires study of the other. Neither of them makes sense independently. For instance, considering India as a society, one can think of it in terms of cities, factories, schools, farms or prisons. One can also think of it in terms of politics, media or divinity. It is simple to connect all these factors. They can also be visualized as confined within the boundaries of the Indian states and referred under the general heading of Indian society.

Human society in general extends to all human beings, the total number of members of animal species, homo sapiens. But we should not equate all human species with the human society. As with other animals, the qualities of the species are distributed among individual members. In total they make up humankind. It is

through their social relations that they constitute societies. The total set of relations at any time makes up the world society.

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4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the relationship between individual and society
- Describe individual dependence on social heritage
- Derive the importance of society for individuals
- Explain the theories about the origin of human society

4.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

A society, especially human society, comprises a group of people who are related to each other through persistent relations and share the same geographical or virtual territory, subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.

Society has the capacity to encourage personal growth and development of individuals through the process of socialization. It provides an opportunity to individuals to develop their potential to the fullest extent. It is society that orients the individuals towards conformity to institutionalized norms and keeps them in limits. It makes a person worth calling a human being. Society is external to individuals and exerts a pressure on them to act according to norms also counteracts deviant behaviour in individuals.

The honour killings by Khap panchayats is a case in point. Individuals gain immensely from being a part of the society. Man becomes man by being in company with other men. A child picks up everything from its surroundings and from things he is taught by the family he is born in. As every family is part of some society, it has to adhere to certain acceptable social norms. The family, consciously or otherwise, passes these norms to the child in his impressionable years, gradually moulding him to become suitable for living in the society. An individual gains fulfilment and empowerment only by being a part of the society that recognizes his abilities and respects his individualism.

The following cases have been discussed here to highlight the importance of society for individuals.

Case I

The famous case of the German youth Kaspar Hauser is peculiarly significant because this ill-starred youth was in all probability bereft of human contacts through political machinations. Therefore, his condition could not be attributed to a defect

of innate mentality. When Hauser, at the age of seventeen, wandered into the city of Nuremberg in 1828, he could hardly walk, had the mind of an infant and could mutter only a meaningless phrase or two. Sociologically, it is noteworthy that Kaspar mistook inanimate objects for living beings. And when he was killed five years later, his post-mortem revealed that the development of his brain was subnormal. The denial of society to Kaspar Hauser was the denial of human nature itself.

Case II

One of the most interesting of the feral cases involved two Indian children in 1920. These children, who were eight and two years old respectively, were discovered in a wolf's den. The younger child died within few months of the discovery but the elder, Kamala, as she became named, survived until 1929. Her history has been carefully recorded in human society. Kamala brought with her almost none of the traits that we associate with human behaviour. She would walk on all four of her limbs and could not speak any language other than wolf-like growls. Like any other undomesticated animal, she too was shy of humans. However, as a result of the most careful and apparently sympathetic training, she was taught rudimentary social habits. Before her death, she had slowly learned some amount of simple speech, human eating and dressing habits, and so on. This wolf child utterly lacked human habits when she was first found, but her individuality emerged when she interacted with the human society.

Case III

Recently, sociologists and psychologists have studied the case of Anna and her illegitimate American child, who were isolated since the child was six months old, until her discovery five years later, in 1938. During her confinement, Anna was fed little else than milk, was not given any general training and had no contact with other human beings. This extreme and cruel social isolation provided scientists with a laboratory case and left the child with few attributes of a normal, five-year-old child. When Anna was discovered, she could not walk or speak, she was completely apathetic and indifferent to people around her. As in the case of Kamala, Anna responded to the careful treatment provided to her after she was released. However, because of her young age and limited contacts while she was a prisoner, she interacted with humans much more rapidly before she died in 1942. Anna's case illustrates once again that human nature develops in man only when he is a social being, only when he is a part of the society and shares a common life.

4.2.1 An Individual's Dependence on Social Heritage

Each individual is the offspring of social relationships, itself determined by pre-established mores. Further, man or woman are essential terms in relationships. The individual is neither a beginning nor an end, but a link in the succession of life. This is a sociological as well as a biological truth. But yet, it does not express the depth of our dependence as individuals on society, for society is more than a

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necessary environment and more than just the soil in which we are nurtured. Our relation to social heritage is more intimate than that of a seed to the earth in which it grows. We are born in a society, the processes of which determine our heredity and part of which becomes our internal mental equipment in time and not merely an external possession. Social heritage continuously changes because of our social experiences. It evokes and directs our personality. Society both liberates and limits our potentialities as individuals, not only by affording definite opportunities and stimulations or by placing definite and interferences restraints on us, but also subtly and imperceptibly, by molding our attitudes, beliefs, morals and ideals.

Comprehension of this fundamental and dynamic interdependence of individual and social heritage permits us to appreciate the truth of Greek philosopher Aristotle's famous phrase that man is a social animal. However, this does not mean that man is a sociable animal. Man is greater than that, in this respect. This also does not mean that man is altruistic in his impulse toward society, nor does it mean that he is social by virtue of some original constitution of human nature. This means that without society, without the support of social heritage, the individual personality does not and cannot come into existence.

4.2.2 Individual and Society

The Systems Approach of Talcott Parsons claims that the governance of individual relationships at the micro level is taken care of by the macro level. Moreover, the functional contribution of an individual to the society is so indispensable that the society cannot live without the individual and vice versa. The entire interactive approach in sociology and even social psychology revolves around this concept of relationships between individuals and society. This relationship paves the way for framing the most acceptable definition of society which is given by sociologist R. M. MacIver and Charles Page: 'Society is a system of usages and procedures of authority and mutual aid, of many groupings and divisions of controls of human behaviour and of liberties.'

We will discuss the relationship of individual and society through the following points:

- (i) **The nature of social unity:** The unique quality of social unity is revealed when it is contrasted with other types of unities. Various forms of unities may be distinguished by viewing the nature of the functional relations of the units or parts of the whole. A type of unity is the organism, to which the society itself is assigned, mistakenly. In this type, one can interpret the cells, organs and various systems that these compose, for instance, circulatory, glandular, nervous, and so on. These derive their significance solely from their utility to the life of the organism, as a whole. Mechanism is another type of unity, the specific form of which is a man-made machine. The machine is not autonomous or self sustaining or self reproducing, like the organism. However, its various parts like wheels, gears, transmission belts, and so on, can be understood in terms of their contribution to the functioning of the

whole machine. Like organic unity, mechanical unity has been attributed to the society or parts of it. However, the social system must be distinguished from these types. For a social system, social relationships grow and change in accordance with the changing attitudes and interests of its members of some or all of the units or individuals who compose it. Here, the system derives its significance from its support of and contribution to the final purpose of individuals themselves. Without this purpose, social unity cannot be envisaged. This principle makes the harmonization of society and individuality possible.

(ii) **Understanding individuality:** When we extend the meaning of individuality to man, we find it essential to use the term in its sociological reference. Here, one can argue that a social being has more individuality in the following circumstances:

- (a) His conduct is not imitative nor is it the result of suggestion.
- (b) He is not entirely the slave of custom or even of habit.
- (c) His responses to the social environment are not altogether automatic and subservient.
- (d) His personal purpose are factors in his real-life activities.
- (e) Individuality in sociological sense is that attribute which reveals the member of a group as more than merely a member.
- (f) He is a self, a centre of activity and response, expressive of a nature that is his own. This concept supports the admonition that we often give to others or to ourselves.
- (g) The factor of 'being yourself'. Being oneself need not mean just originality; it certainly does not mean eccentricity. A strong individuality may, in fact, express more fully the spirit or quality of his country or his time, but he does so, not because he is quickly imitative or easily suggestible, but because of his sensitivity to the age itself.

It is true that when members of a group are more individualized, they will exhibit greater differences and will express themselves in a greater variety of ways. However, the criterion of individuality is not the extent to which each individual differs from the rest. It is rather, how far each acts autonomously in his own consciousness and with his own interpretation of the claims of others. When the possessor of individuality does as others do, at least in those matters which he deems important, he does it simply. This is not because others do it, but because he himself approves that particular behaviour. When he follows authority, except as far as he compelled to, he follows it partly because of conviction and not because of authority. He does not specifically accept or reflect the opinions of others. He has certain independence of judgment, initiative, discrimination, strength of character, and so on. The extent to which he exhibits these qualities is directly proportional to his individuality.

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Check Your Progress

1. Why does social heritage continuously change?
2. What does Talcott Parson's system approach claim?
3. What can be called a specific form of mechanism?

4.3 THEORIES ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN SOCIETY

The origin or emergence of society may be viewed as one of the great steps in evolution. However, this step was taken only by a few species. Like other steps, it represents a new synthesis of old materials, possessing unique qualities that are not found in old materials that are considered separately. It is thus a true example of what is known as an emergent evolution. To realize that society is a true emergent, one needs to trace its independent origin in countless animal types. One needs merely grasp the difference between it and the organisms which it is composed of. Several decades ago, it was normal to compare society with an organism. The idea was to demonstrate that a social system after all, is a system. The analogy was helpful but never perfect. The cells of an organism are rigidly fixed in their mutual relations, completely subordinated to the organism and too specialized to be called members of the society. They are not spatially detached and independently mobile. So the organism is not, strictly speaking, a society of cells. The organism possesses a consciousness, which no society possesses.

Like an organism, a society is a system of relations, but relations between organisms themselves rather than between cells. Like the organism, a society has a determined structure and the parts of this structure, when in operation contribute to the existence of the whole. This gives it continuity, which is apart from that of the constituent individuals. It is this possession of continuity and structure of its own that makes it impossible to reduce the study of society, merely to a study of its individual members. It is like a house, which, though composed of bricks, nails, mortar and pieces of lumber, cannot be understood purely in terms of these materials, as it has a form and functions as a complete house.

4.3.1 Social Contract Theory

The Social Contract Theory is unique, giving importance to individuals as architects of society. This theory was propounded by three eminent philosophers: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and J.J. Rosseau. According to this theory, all men were born free and equal and individuals made a mutual agreement and created a society.

Thomas Hobbes, in his book, *The Leviathan*, discusses the state of nature. He gives a very gloomy picture of the state of nature. According to him, society is

a means of protection for men, against the consequence of their own untrammelled nature. In the state of nature, man was in perpetual conflict with his neighbours on account of his essentially selfish nature. Man's actions were motivated by selfish interests. According to Hobbes, the state of nature was solitary poor, nasty, brutish and short. There was liberty without license. The stronger enjoyed a privileged position. As a result, man's life become miserable and totally insecure. In order to come out of these evil consequences and to ensure peaceful coexistence, a civil society was needed. So men came out of the state of nature to set up a civil society. By such contract, man gave up their liberty to a single individual who would give them security. Thus, the individual became the 'great monster' i.e., repository of all power and he was known as *the leviathan*. Thus man, with his fellow men, organized society in order to be at love and peace with all.

John Locke, in his book, *Two Treaties on Civil Government*, gave an optimistic view about the state of nature. He tried to justify that the state of nature was not so perverted and it was a state of peace, goodwill, mutual existence and preservation. The only disadvantage of the state of nature was that there was no recognized system of law. To overcome this deficiency and to ensure the exercise of his liberty, man entered into a contract by which certain powers were conformed upon a community.

J.J. Rosseau, in his book, *Contract Social*, gave a classical opinion about the Social Contract Theory. He started with Hobbes and ended with Locke. He held that all men, in the state of nature, were equally self sufficient and contended. Man was a noble savage and was untouched by all negative vices of life. Man lived a life of idyllic happiness and primitive simplicity. But, with the growth of population, quarrels arise which necessitate the establishment of a civil society. Consequently, men entered into a contract and thus society was originated.

The criticisms of Social Contract Theory are as follows:

- MacIver argues that the theory is not historical because history has not supported the existence of the state of nature anywhere.
- This theory is considered illogical. The theory seems to assume that man existed before society, but such an assumption is erroneous.
- This theory suppresses the sociable character of individuals
- Society emerged gradually, thus, this theory does not offer a valid explanation of the origin of society.

4.3.2 Organismic Theory

This is another vital theory about the origin of human society. Plato, Aristotle, Herbert Spencer and Novicow were the exponents of this theory. However, Spencer occupies a unique place. This theory states that society is never man-made. It is a natural creation and has started through the process of evolution. Spencer conceives society as a biological system, a greater organism alike in its

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structure and functions, exhibiting the same kind of unity as the individual organism and subject to similar laws of development, maturation and decline. Thus the basic assumption is society is like a biological organism and the only difference is in the size. Spencer tries to draw analogy between the organism and the society on the basis of the following points:

• **Evolution**

Evolution or development is the basic characteristic of a biological organism. Society, like an organism, grows or develops gradually. As an organism passes through the laws of development, maturation and decline, so does society.

• **Systems**

The biological organism consists of different systems like the circulatory, nervous, respiratory, etc., which correspond to similar systems in society. For instance circulatory system corresponds to the system of transport and communication in the society, the nervous system corresponds to the government of the state, etc.

• **Structural differentiation and function integration**

In both, society and biological organisms, there exists close integration or interdependence of parts. The institutions are parts of the society. Just as different parts of an organism are mutually dependent so are the individuals mutually dependent upon each other. If any part of the structure is affected, the entire system is paralyzed.

• **Cellular formation of both society and individual**

The individual or organism is made up of cells, similarly the society is also composed of cells and people are the cells of society.

Thus, Spencer concluded that society is like an organism. Spencer observed the following differences between the organism and the society:

- In organic growth, nature plays a dominant role and the organism grows naturally, while social growth may be checked.
- An organism is composed of many cells, whereas a society is composed of a collection of individuals.
- Society is abstract whereas organism is concrete.
- The units of society are not fixed, like those of an individual organism.

Criticism

MacIver argues that the theory does not explain the relationship between society and individual in social life. He also argues that this theory is the unreal death of an individual organism, which does not correspond in a proper sense to the death of society.

Check Your Progress

4. What is sociology?
5. What does culture include?
6. What is the core feature of human condition?
7. What does one need to do to realize that society is a true emergent?
8. Who propounded the Social Contract Theory?
9. In which book does Thomas Hobbes discuss the state of nature?

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4.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Social heritage continuously changes because of our social experiences.
2. Talcott Parson's system approach claims that the governance of individual relationships at micro level is taken care of by the macro level and that the functional contribution of an individual to the society is so indispensable, that the society cannot live without the individual and vice versa.
3. A man-made machine can be called a specific form of mechanism.
4. Sociology is the study of human society or societies.
5. Culture includes language and technology, both of which involve the communication of ideas and the possibility of sophisticated coordination of action.
6. The regulation of an individual's behaviour is the core feature of human condition.
7. To realize that society is a true emergent, one needs to trace its independent origin in countless animal types.
8. The Social Contract Theory was propounded by three eminent philosophers: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and J.J. Rosseau.
9. Thomas Hobbes discussed the state of nature in his book titled, *The Leviathan*.

4.5 SUMMARY

- In general, human society extends to all human beings and all members of the animal species. But we should not equate the human species with human society. As with other animals, the qualities of the species are distributed among individual members. In totality, they make up humankind. It is through

NOTES

- their social relations that they constitute societies and the total set of relations at any time makes up what we call world society.
- The development of culture makes human society a special case, as compared to the societies of other species. The ways of acting, thinking and feeling are transmitted from one generation to the other and across societies, through learning and not through inheritance.
 - Culture includes language and technology, both of which involve the communication of ideas and the possibility of sophisticated coordination of action.
 - Like an organism, a society is a system of relations. These relations are between organisms themselves, rather than between cells. The organism a determined structure and parts of this structure, when in operation, contribute to the existence of the whole. This whole gives it continuity, which is apart from that of constituent individuals.
 - The Social Contract Theory is unique. It gives importance to an individual, as the architect of society. This theory was propounded by three eminent philosophers: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and J.J. Rosseau. According to this theory, all men were born free and equal and individuals make a mutual agreement and create society.
 - Organism theory states that society is never made by man. It is a natural creation and has begun through the process of evolution. Spencer conceives society as a biological system, a greater organism alike in its structure and functions, exhibiting the same kind of unity as the individual organism and subject to similar laws of development, maturation and decline. Thus, the basic assumption of society is similar to a biological organism; the only difference is in the size.
 - Each individual is the offspring of social relationships, itself determined by pre-established mores. Further, man or woman are essential terms in relationships. The individual is neither a beginning nor an end, but a link in the succession of life. This is a sociological as well as a biological truth. But yet, it does not express the depth of our dependence as individuals on society, for society is more than a necessary environment and more than just the soil in which we are nurtured. Our relation to social heritage is more intimate than that of a seed to the earth in which it grows.
 - Social heritage continuously changes because of our social experiences. It evokes and directs our personality. Society both liberates and limits our potentialities as individuals, not only by affording definite opportunities and stimulations or by placing definite and interferences restraints on us, but also subtly and imperceptibly, by molding our attitudes, beliefs, morals and ideals.

4.6 KEY WORDS

- **Society:** A group of people who live together in communities
- **Coevolution:** The evolution of two or more interdependent species, each adapting to changes in the other
- **Double-edged:** The property of having two possible meanings
- **Ambivalent:** The act of showing both, positive and negative feelings towards something
- **Genotype:** The combination of genes that a particular living thing carries
- **Analogy:** The process of comparing one thing with another, that has similar features in order to explain it.

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4.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Why is it not right to equate all human species with the human society?
2. How is society similar to an organism as a system of relations?
3. What did J.J. Rosseau opine in his book *Contract Social*?
4. List the points on the basis of which Spencer tries to draw analogy between the organism and the society.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the important theories of the origin of society.
2. Discuss the importance of society for individuals.
3. Describe the Social Contract Theory and the criticisms against it.

4.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5 HEREDITY, ENVIRONMENT AND INDIVIDUAL

Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Environment and Man
- 5.3 The Role of Heredity and Environment in the Development of the Individual
 - 5.3.1 Heredity and Environment
- 5.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 5.5 Summary
- 5.6 Key Words
- 5.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 5.8 Further Readings

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Environment is related to the natural world of land, air, water, and plants and the animals. It means the surroundings. External conditions are influencing development or growth of people, at large. Earlier environment for man consisted of the only physical aspects of the planet Earth—land, air, and water. But today, with the advancement of society, man has extended his environment for his social, economic and political purposes. The scope of environment can be defined differently from different perspectives. Environment is composed of both physical and biological concept. The interface between man and environment has always gained currency for the society at large. The development of human society was influenced by actual as well as practical implications and relationship between man and environment, without compromising on the future. The changing relationship of man with his environment from the stages of prehistoric to modern era can be categorized as hunting and food gathering, animal domestication and pastoralism, plant domestication and agriculture, science, technology. But society has its own structure, functions and compositions. Environment and society are closely interacting with each other. Both are not antithetical. Different social groups and plurality of cultures have been diversified and has resulted in development of different stages of history of human civilization. Environment can be changed due to some climatic conditions.

There is also another important factor which affects the development of individuals and this is heredity. Quite simply, it refers to the biological and psychological characteristics which a child gets from their parents. Sociologists consider this as a factor very crucial to the manner in which individuals adapt and

react to their social environment. In this unit, we will have a look at how heredity and environment affects the development of individuals.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the concept of environment
- Examine the relationship between man and environment
- Discuss the levels of adaptation to the environment
- Describe the relationship between heredity and environment

5.2 ENVIRONMENT AND MAN

The natural objects, the phenomena related to man and his surrounding constitute the **geographical environment**. Thus, the geographical environment includes the surface of the Earth, animals, climate, the sun, the moon, the storm, cyclones, oceans, waterfalls, forests, etc. It has been observed that contemporary forms of environmental degradation present one of the most complex and catastrophic dilemmas of modernity. A general agreement is that the economic expansion of a century and a half has had alarming consequences for the global environment. The ozone layer depletion, pollution of air, loss of forests and bio-diversity, extinction of animal species, marine life loss, pollution of soil and water have occurred at an alarming and increasing rate. Especially, since the post-war years, toxic matter release into the environment, expansion of nuclear energy worldwide, acid rain, new chemical pesticides, non-biodegradable plastics and harmful chemicals have posed a threat to human and animal life itself. In the recent decades, however, we have also witnessed the growth of environmental movements/conflicts, of environmental politics, which can otherwise play an important role in checking the deterioration of our environment at local and global levels.

In the words of MacIver and Page, 'the geographical environment consists of those conditions that Nature provides for man'. In this way, geographical environment includes all natural things which surrounds and influences man. It consists of conditions and phenomena not dependent on man's existence and activity. According to Sorokin, by geographical environment 'We mean all cosmic conditions and phenomena which exist independent of man's existence and activity, which are not created by man and which change and vary through their own opportunity independent of man's existence and activity.' Generally, it can be designated as the uncontrolled environment, as man can make use of it but he cannot control it. Oceans and high mountains cannot be displaced by man, but he can reap benefits from them. Man can dig tunnels through mountains and float ships on the oceans and seas, but he cannot transform the seasons. He can make arrangements for

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protecting himself from the extremes of climate. He can also extract minerals from the Earth, but at the same time he cannot create them. In this way, the geographical environment includes the Earth's relation to stellar bodies (sun and moon), Earth's area and its situation, location and quantity of minerals, oceans expansion, distribution of land in mountains and plains, big rivers, seas and lakes, seasons, ocean currents and waves, rain, wind, climate, the day and night cycle, etc. The **total environment** includes both the controlled and uncontrolled environment. Man has control over one environment, while a part of it is not amenable to his control and is hence it is called as the uncontrolled environment. The controlled environment can also be called as the social environment. In this way, the geographical environment can be expressed as follows:

$$\text{Total Environment} - \text{Social Environment} = \text{Geographical Environment}$$

Kinds of Environment

The mutual relation between man and the environment can be understood with the knowledge of various types of environment. Normally, one finds the following distinctions of environment:

- 1. Physical Environment:** The physical environment comprises three kinds of environments. These are the geographical, the climatic, and the controlled geographical environment. The **physical environment** consists of all those natural phenomena which influence man's life such as climate, rivers, mountains, plains, deserts, etc.
- 2. Biological Environment:** This classification contains the plants and animals found around man.
- 3. Social Environment:** This classification consists of all those phenomena which are the result of social relationships such as customs, traditions, etc. Social environment is further subdivided into three types of environments—economic, cultural and psychological environments.
 - (a) Economic environment: Institutions and associations connected with property, production, consumption and distribution are included in it.
 - (b) Cultural environment: This includes the various elements of culture and civilization such as social conduct, rituals, mores, customs, diet, way of life, etc.
 - (c) Psychological environment: It constitutes of those influences which affect man psychologically through the other people in society.
- 4. Psycho-social environment:** It includes conceptions and commonly accepted notions concerning God or a supernatural existence or power.

Man And Environment

All the various kinds of environment mentioned in the preceding section influence and affect man's living. His ideals, values and beliefs are determined by his social

environment. Cultural environment suggests the models of diet, clothing, living, conversation, address, etc. His residential modes, clothing, occupation, etc., are all influenced by the geographic environment. A comparative study of the life in the plains, deserts, and polar regions will clearly sketch the influences of the environment. The super-social environment of man is instrumental in forming and shaping his conceptions of God, religion and morality.

But man is a being who is influenced by his environment, and in turn influences the environment. The constantly increasing scientific inventions and advancements are giving man ever new triumphs over Nature and he is now in a position to control much of the geographical environment. The cultural environment is the creation of man. Great men have always had a hand in the formation of the social environment and they have been changing it from time to time. The psycho-social environment also has been subjected to the influence of revolutionary thoughts of these great leaders.

Thus, man and his environment are always influencing each other. Science has given man the power to control the environment to a large extent and this power is increasing but it is impossible to conceive of a time when man shall completely free himself from its influence. Man is the child of Nature.

However powerful he may become, it will still be beyond his power to control Nature absolutely and totally, learning its most intimate secrets, though he may progress towards this end gradually.

Influence Of Geographical Environment

The life of the people who inhabit a particular area is inevitably affected by the climate and topography of that area. Man is governed by Nature and spends his life according to it. Man depends on the Earth because he lives there. The effect of geographical conditions, climate and topography upon human life is apparent in the following factors: (1) Population and its density, (2) Physical necessities, (3) Fundamental occupation, (4) Human activities and behaviour, (5) Human power and skill, (6) Culture and religion, (7) Effect on economic organization, (8) Effect on political organization.

Population and its Density

The size and density of population of a country is influenced by the topography and climate of that country. The Southern Plateau and Peninsula is well populated because of the rivers Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, Narmada and Tapi. The Cauvery valley alone is inhabited by two and a half crore people.

It is clearly evident from the above mentioned data that the density of population is influenced by natural conditions or Nature, but the natural environment is not the only factor in determining the density of population of a particular area. For example, according to INDIA 1963, Delhi Pradesh has the densest population (4,614 per sq. mile) while in U.P. the same density is only 350 per square mile.

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This difference is caused by Delhi being the country's capital. Hence, its importance is derived. After the partition of the original Indian country, many refugees settled in Delhi and its surrounding areas. The causes of the large population in 104 cities in India which exceed 1 lakh are more social than geographical. Also, in different countries the population varies even in areas with similar topography.

Physical Necessities

Man's physical necessities include house, food and drink, dress, animal husbandry and plants and trees. The topography and the climate affect all these.

- 1. House:** According to Brunhes, 'If geography is far from explaining everything in the house, at least the human habitation cannot be completely understood without an appeal to geography.' In India houses built on the mountains are made of wood and stone while those in the plains are constructed from clay or bricks and cement. Stone is easily available in Rajasthan and hence, it constitutes the main building material there. But from this it cannot be easily concluded that geographical factors are the sole determinants of human habitation. Now a days one sees almost the same type of houses in all the big cities of the civilized world, irrespective of the fact that there are vast differences between the environment amidst which they are located. In India, almost the same type of houses are seen in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras, Nagpur, Lucknow and other larger cities. Again, the shape of houses is everywhere changing. In addition to the geographical environment, habitation is also influenced by custom, progress of science, economic situation, etc. All over the world there is a glaring difference between the houses of the rich and the slums of the poor. Architecture in the West is far advanced than construction in the East.
- 2. Food and Drink (Diet):** According to Blache, 'The food supply is one of the closest ties between man and his environment.' In the Indian states rice is grown in Bengal, wheat in Punjab and millet in Uttar Pradesh and these constitute the staple diet of the people of these respective areas. Eggs and meat are consumed more on the mountains and hills. But, at the same time, much difference in diet is due to class and caste distinctions. Ward has rightly said, 'Climate is but one of many controls, albeit a most important one, for it largely determines what many of the other factors, diet, customs, occupations shall be.'
- 3. Dress:** People inhabiting the upper reaches of the Himalayas wear thick woollen clothes because of the cold weather while those living in the plains show a liking for loose cotton clothing in keeping with their climatic condition. But people who have had Western type of education wear pants or jeans, shirts, coats and others typically Western clothes. Such people are in minority in most part of country.
- 4. Animal Husbandry:** Particular animals can be reared only in particular geographical environment. Consequently, in India, camels are found in

Rajasthan, goats and sheep in plateaus and hills, and cow or buffaloes on the plains and so they can be reared in these respective areas only.

- 5. Trees and Plant:** The growth of the trees and plants depends upon the soil and the climate and even though they can be scientifically grown in condition unsuited by Nature using fertilizers and other techniques, it has to be admitted that they cannot be grown in the absence of good soil and favourable climate. It is only because of the climate distinction that in India rice is grown in Bengal, wheat in Punjab and millet and sugar cane in Uttar Pradesh. Tea needs more rain and undulating land and so Assam in India, abounds in tea gardens.

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Fundamental Occupations

Geographical environment also influences man's fundamental occupations. Among basic occupations enumerated are hunting, fishing, animal husbandry, collecting wood, farming, mining, sculpture and commerce, etc. In all the coastal areas of India fishing is the main occupation. Gold is mined in Mysore, iron in Bengal and Bihar, manganese in Madras and Madhya Pradesh. Oil wells are found in Assam. The main occupation of the northern people in plains is agriculture. In all towns and cities trade is the main occupation. Wherever the important ores can be mined, factories for their refining and processing have also been constructed. There are more sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh than elsewhere because of the regional growth of sugarcane in abundance. Mills producing cotton cloth are established at Bombay and Kanpur because the climate is favourable and suitable there. Sheep are reared in the mountains. Collection of wood is an occupation carried on in vicinity of forest.

The geographical environment also effects the structure of the body, complexion of the skin, stature, shape and colour of hair, shape of nose, shape of head, width of the chest, height, etc. People from warmer climates have a darker skin than those who inhabit the colder climates. Different races develop in different environments. Semple writes, 'Stature is partly a matter of feeding and hence of geographic conditions.' Differences between the bodily characteristic of Bengalis, Punjabis, Maharashtrians, Rajputs, Pathans, mountain dwellers and tribal people of India are quite easily discernible. However, physiological characteristics are based more on heredity factors than on the geographical environment.

Human Activities and Behaviour

According to Huntington, 'Even where human conditions are directly responsible for the distribution of certain types of human activity, further study shows that indirectly the geographical environment has a great deal to do with the matter.' According to some geographers, there is a close relation between seasons and criminal activity. Durkheim has discussed geographical factors in analyzing the cause of suicide. Jenkins and some geographers have tried to establish some relation between the death rate and birth rate, and between seasons and planets, etc.

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But there is no scientific evidence to support the allegation that these elements in the geographical environment, in fact, have an influence upon human behaviour. Contrary to Durkheim, Green has written, 'Clearly, changes in the seasons cannot directly cause suicide.' Refuting the notion of the seasons influencing crime, MacIver and Page writes, 'Nor does hot weather breed crimes in the way that sun melts the snow.'

Human Power and Skill

Even human energy or power and skills are influenced to a large extent by the geographical environment. Huntington has written, 'The amount of moisture in the air is one of the important factors in regulating health and energy.' Huntington's view has been scathingly criticized by Sorokin and Zimmerman. Stecher has written, 'We find no evidence that average performances are adversely affected by dryness.' Huntington believes mental skills and astuteness, along with physical energy, are dependent upon the climate. He writes, 'When the temperature falls greatly, mental works seems to suffer more than physical, and declines as much as when there is no change.' The effect of the geographical environment upon human power or energy and efficiency cannot be denied. Man's efficiency and power is reduced in the cold areas and by disease in excessively hot and humid areas. In this way, the Mediterranean climate is best suited to human energy or power and efficiency. In the words of Ross, 'So it is in the intermediate climates that such traits flourish as energy, ambition, self-reliance, industry and thrift.'

But at the same time it is a noteworthy fact is that the climate or geographical environment which may suit and benefit one country and increase its efficiency, may in another country prove to be harmful and deleterious to efficiency. For example, the season suitable for work in Europe is too cold to allow work in India. Similarly, in some countries work comes to a standstill when the rivers stop flowing, but in Siberia work starts only when the rivers have frozen.

Culture and Religion

Geographical elements inevitably influence the development of civilization in any country, though it is not justified to conclude therefore that it is only they that determine the nature of civilization. The culture of India and Egypt is the creation of their fertile plains but man's enterprise and mental capacities have also had a major share in their development.

Besides culture, religion is also influenced by the geographical environment. The art, literature and modes of worship of every country invariably bear the indelible understood by glancing for a moment at similitude and other poetic contrivances, subject matter, etc., in English, Arabic and Hindi poetry. The customs, traditions, folklore, conceptions of hell and heaven, etc., are influenced by the natural conditions that flourish in a country. But this influence does not completely determine the form of religion and culture. People residing in geographically differentiated environment may be similar from the religious and cultural point of

view while people belonging to different cultural and religious sects may be seen residing in the same geographic conditions. Rose has rightly concluded ‘Climate and scene unite themselves clearly into the middle stages of religion.’

Effect on Economic Organization

The economic life, the economic wealth of the country, and the occupation of the people to a large extent are determined by geographic conditions. Minerals and good agricultural land, along with a suitable climate, are important for the economic prosperity of a country, and all these are the gifts of Nature. The products of a place are governed by the availability of raw material. Steel mills are constructed near iron and coal mines. Cloth industry is raised in the area producing cotton while furniture making is carried on near the forests. But from this it cannot be concluded that the geographical environment of a country is the sole determinant of that country’s economic organization. The fact of the matter is that no benefit can be derived from Nature’s gifts in the absence of man’s enterprise and social values. In the words of MacIver and Page, ‘In fact, what we name a “natural resource” is not simply a type of soil or mineral or river, it is the result of the civilizational development of how to earth fact is defined and utilized by the existent society.’

Effect on Political Organization

The geographical environment also affects the inception, stability and progress of the political organization. The geographers point out that the geographical environment can be the cause of war and international disturbances. To quote Huntington, ‘The geographical distribution of minerals is one of the greatest causes of international troubles and wars.’ There is an element of truth in this assertion but it cannot be denied that in addition to the geographical factors there are many other factors like economic, social, political, cultural and other factors among the causes which lead to the establishment of democracy, aristocracy, absolute monarchy, etc., and the occurrence of wars and international conflicts and revolutions, changes, etc.

Man’s Adaptation to Nature

Just as one part of a country is distinct from another, similarly the inhabitants of different parts are also distinct. A resident of Ozarks or Kentucky thinks and experiences in a different way or style from the New Yorker. In the same way a resident of New England differs in outlook from an inhabitant of the Prairies. The cause of this difference is Nature to which man has necessarily to adapt himself. Adaptation to Nature occurs whether we so desire or not. In this way, the differences between various and sundry societies within the human society and the differences in their diet, living, clothes, occupation, economic, political, social and cultural organization, etc., among men in human groups are due to that adaptation which they have to make to the local natural conditions or Nature

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Check Your Progress

1. Define environment.
2. What are the different kinds of environment?
3. How does the geographical environment effect human life?

5.3 THE ROLE OF HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Since ancient times, man has experienced irregular relations between broad physical conditions and modes of living. The inhabitants of tropical regions, for instance, exhibited characteristic differences from those of temperate or of arctic regions. However, recently, these observations have been gradually refined and turned more systematic.

French sociology has been especially prominent in the development of such studies since the time of Montesquieu, inspired by leaders like Le Play, Demolins and Brunhes. The relationship between physical environment and social phenomena has been of particular interest to two groups of American sociologists in recent times. The development of an ecological school has been stimulated by the investigations of American sociologists R. E. Park and E. W. Burgess at the University of Chicago. Human or social ecology that found suggestive analogies in plant and animal ecologies have been particularly interested in the social and cultural phenomena that is associated with various urban areas.

There are several levels of adaptation to the environment. It has been argued that 'man adapts himself to his environment'. The adaptation may be employed in physical, biological and a social reference.

- **Physical adaptation:** Purely physical adaptation is independent of our striving and our aims. The sun will tan our skin if we expose ourselves to it. This is a form of physical adaptation, irrespective of whether it helps us or not. Similarly, fresh air will stimulate our lungs and poisonous gases will destroy them. Strength or weakness, health or sickness is an equal expression of natural law. Everywhere, nature makes such demands; death itself being the final statement of physical adaptation. Irrespective of the conditions, whether wild or civilized, poor or prosperous, favourable or unfavorable, good or evil, this unconditional physical adaptation remains with all its compulsion.
- **Biological adaptation:** Biological adaptation means that a particular form of life is suited to survive or to prosper in environmental conditions. One

can argue that fish is adapted to marine environment or tigers to the conditions of life in a jungle. In this sense, we can also speak of the inability to adapt. For instance, when it is said that a tiger is unable to adapt to the conditions of the desert or those of the polar snows, it means that the conditions do not permit adequate functioning of the organism. This implies that inevitable physical adaptation is detrimental to biological demands. In order to attain certain equilibrium, which involves the survival or fulfilment of an organism, environment support is required.

- **Social adaptation:** Social adaptation reveals an extension of biological use. Social adaptation is conditional adaptation when it involves some standards of value. When various sociologists speak about the process of adjustment or of accommodation, they basically refer to the conditions that are associated with it. In social sense, adaptation definitely implies valuation. Social adaptation involves man's continuous adjustment to his changing life conditions, and his evaluation of both his own adjustments and social conditions.

To understand the overall environmental conditions of human beings, one needs to focus on two important components of total environment: external environment and internal or social environment. Outer environment specifically refers to material culture. Inner or social environment consists of organizations and regulations, traditions and institutions, repression and liberation of social life. This is collectively referred to as social heritage. Man adapted himself to this through conscious response and habituation.

5.3.1 Heredity and Environment

It is ancient observation which confirms that in almost all human groups, the traits or habits of parents are inherited by their children. The difference in heredity then might account for the difference in the traits or qualities of individuals or groups, even in different environments. Some biologists have been supported by a number of psychologists and a few sociologists, while the students of environment studies have generally stressed on other aspects. Therefore, a major dispute pertaining to the relative importance of the two arose and continues even today. In explaining the variations of human beings and their societies, some claim that heredity is the stronger determinant, while others belittle heredity in comparison to environment. Some argue that certain qualities, such as those of health and intelligence, depend mainly on heredity, while they admit that other qualities, particularly social qualities that extend in morals, customs and beliefs, depend more directly on environment.

The whole issue was raised in a definite form by well-known sociologist and polymath Francis Galton in his pioneer work *Hereditary Genius* (1869) in which he sought to show that the probability of the occurrence of greatly gifted

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children is vastly higher when the fathers are of a superior intelligence. Galton's work was carried on by English mathematician and biostatistician Karl Pearson, who applied his method of correlation to this theory. He concluded that in the determination of important human differences, the influence of environment is far less than that of heredity. Pearson claimed that it was even possible to measure the relative efficacy of the two and gave evidences purporting to show that for people of the same race, within a given community, heredity is seven times more important than environment. Many other researchers have followed the path of Pearson. Some have taken class or occupational categories and have shown that the groups with higher social or intellectual rating have produced more geniuses or persons of distinction. This positive correlation has been illustrated in studies showing that royal families produce more geniuses in comparison to others; families of the clergy in the US produce the largest number of notable men, followed by those of professionals, businessmen, farmers and labourers. American men of science emanate in largest numbers from professional classes and in smaller numbers from agricultural class, and so forth. Other psychologists have chosen racial or national categories and applications of psychological tests. Intelligence tests have typically brought about considerable differences between them, as in the well-known army tests of an immigrant group in the US and more generally of native-born, foreign-born and Negro section of the population.

MacIver argues that from such studies, conclusions are frequently drawn to indicate a superficial analysis of the problem of heredity and environment. A large number of earlier researchers have given us more precise evidence with reference to a common observation that those who are born in families or groups which possess distinction or prestige are more likely to develop intellectual or other attainments.

Heredity contains all potentialities of life, but all its actualities are evoked within and under the conditions of environment. A biologist is interested in tracing the inheritance of those unit characteristics, such as blue eyes, albinism, hemophilia, and so on, which suggest separable specific determinants in the mechanism of heredity. Biologists are also interested in the manner in which specific organic predispositions, such as the tendency to certain disease, reveal themselves under varying conditions of environment. On the other hand, sociologists are interested in the way in which a group deals with another group, which is brought up in a given environment and is affected by changes occurring within it or by their transference to a different environment. An immigrant group, irrespective of its hereditary characteristics, exhibits entirely different characteristics, when transported from Italy, Greece or Ireland to North America. One cannot but be impressed by the way in which customs, attitudes and modes of life change to new occupational activities and so forth, in response to changes in economic conditions.

Heredity is the potentiality which is made within the actual environment. All qualities of life are present in heredity. The evocation of qualities depends on environment.

It follows from this initial principle that the higher the potentiality, greater is the demand on environment. Instead of seeking to exalt the importance of one factor over the other, it is easier to analyse the importance of the fitness of the environment. Thus, though more subtle differences in environment may have little effect on beings with low potentialities, they are vastly significant for beings which are more responsive to them. A seemingly minor change in a situation, a stimulus to success, an encouragement, a rebuff, may prove decisive to a sensitive nature while scarcely affecting a less sensitive one. Hence, the imponderables of the social environment become more important for civilized individuals and groups.

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Check Your Progress

4. Define biological adaptation.
5. What does social adaptation involve?
6. What is required to understand the overall environmental conditions of human beings?
7. Which portion of heredity are sociologists interested in?

5.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Environment is related to natural world of land, air, water, and plants and animals. It means the surrounding.
2. The different kinds are physical, biological, social and psycho-social environments.
3. The effect of geographical conditions, climate and topography upon human life is apparent in the following factors: (a) Population and its density, (b) Physical necessities, (c) Fundamental occupation, (d) Human activities and behaviour, (e) Human power and skill, (f) Culture and religion, (g) Effect on economic organization, (h) Effect on political organization.
4. Biological adaptation means that a particular form of life is suited to survive or to prosper in environmental conditions.
5. Social adaptation involves man's continuous adjustment to his changing life conditions, and his evaluation of both his own adjustments and social conditions.

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6. To understand the overall environmental conditions of human beings, one needs to focus on two important components of total environment: external environment and internal or social environment.
7. On the other hand, sociologists are interested in the way in which a group deals with another group, which is brought up in a given environment and is affected by changes occurring within it or by their transference to a different environment.

5.5 SUMMARY

- Environment is related to natural world of land, air, water, and plants and animals. It means the surrounding. The scope of environment can be defined differently from different perspectives. Environment is composed of both physical and biological concept.
- The natural objects and the phenomena related to man and which surround him constitute the geographical environment. Thus, the surface of the Earth, animals, climate, the sun, the moon, the storm, cyclones, oceans, waterfalls, forests, etc., are all included in the geographical environment.
- The effect of geographical conditions, climate and topography upon human life is apparent in the following factors: (1) Population and its density, (2) Physical necessities, (3) Fundamental occupation, (4) Human activities and behaviour, (5) Human power and skill, (6) Culture and religion, (7) Effect on economic organization, (8) Effect on political organization.
- According to the geographers, all differences in the behaviour of human beings and the aspects of their life are the result of geographical differences. Geographism is known by various other names such as the geographical school, school of human geography, school of social geography, while its followers are called geographers, human geographers and social geographers.
- The interface between man and environment has always gained currency for the society at large. The actual as well as practical implications and relationship between man and environment influenced the development of human society without compromising the future.
- Since ancient times, man has experienced irregular relations between broad physical conditions and modes of living. The inhabitants of tropical regions, for instance, exhibited characteristic differences from those of temperate or of arctic regions. However, recently, these observations have been gradually refined and turned more systematic.
- The relationship between physical environment and social phenomena has been of particular interest to two groups of American sociologists in recent

times. The development of an ecological school has been stimulated by the investigations of American sociologists R. E. Park and E. W. Burgess at the University of Chicago.

- There are several levels of adaptation to the environment. It has been argued that ‘man adapts himself to his environment’. The adaptation may be employed in physical, biological and a social reference.
- Purely physical adaptation is independent of our striving and our aims. The sun will tan our skin if we expose ourselves to it. This is a form of physical adaptation, irrespective of whether it helps us or not.
- Biological adaptation means that a particular form of life is suited to survive or to prosper in environmental conditions. One can argue that fish is adapted to marine environment or tigers to the conditions of life in a jungle. In this sense, we can also speak of the inability to adapt.
- Social adaptation reveals an extension of biological use. Social adaptation is conditional adaptation when it involves some standards of value. When various sociologists speak about the process of adjustment or of accommodation, they basically refer to the conditions that are associated with it. In social sense, adaptation definitely implies valuation.
- To understand the overall environmental conditions of human beings, one needs to focus on two important components of total environment: external environment and internal or social environment. Outer environment specifically refers to material culture. Inner or social environment consists of organizations and regulations, traditions and institutions, repression and liberation of social life. This is collectively referred to as social heritage. Man adapted himself to this through conscious response and habituation.
- It is ancient observation which confirms that in almost all human groups, the traits or habits of parents are inherited by their children. The difference in heredity then might account for the difference in the traits or qualities of individuals or groups, even in different environments. Some biologists have been supported by a number of psychologists and a few sociologists, while the students of environment studies have generally stressed on other aspects.
- In explaining the variations of human beings and their societies, some claim that heredity is the stronger determinant, while others belittle heredity in comparison to environment. Some argue that certain qualities, such as those of health and intelligence, depend mainly on heredity, while they admit that other qualities, particularly social qualities that extend in morals, customs and beliefs, depend more directly on environment.

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- Heredity contains all potentialities of life, but all its actualities are evoked within and under the conditions of environment. A biologist is interested in tracing the inheritance of those unit characteristics, such as blue eyes, albinism, hemophilia, and so on, which suggest separable specific determinants in the mechanism of heredity. Biologists are also interested in the manner in which specific organic predispositions, such as the tendency to certain disease, reveal themselves under varying conditions of environment.
- Sociologists are interested in the way in which a group deals with another group, which is brought up in a given environment and is affected by changes occurring within it or by their transference to a different environment.

5.6 KEY WORDS

- **Environment:** Environment is related to the natural world of land, air, water, and plants and animals. It means the surrounding.
- **Total environment:** The total environment includes both the controlled and uncontrolled environment.
- **Physical environment:** The physical environment consists of all those natural phenomena which influence man's life such as climate, rivers, mountains, plains, deserts, etc.
- **Heredity:** The process by which mental and physical characteristics are passed by parents to their children.

5.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is controlled environment?
2. State the different kinds of environment.
3. What constitutes the external environment and the internal or social environment?
4. What is social heritage?

Long-Answer Questions

1. 'The total environment is inclusive of both the controlled and uncontrolled environment'. Discuss.
2. Knowledge of the various kinds of environment will help in the understanding of the mutual relation between man and the environment. Elucidate.

3. Discuss the several levels of adaptation to the environment.
4. Describe in detail the relationship between heredity and environment.
5. Analyse the life of individuals, on the basis of heredity and environment.

*Heredity, Environment
and Individual*

5.8 FURTHER READINGS

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BLOCK - III**CULTURE, SOCIALIZATION AND SOCIAL ACTION**

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UNIT 6 CULTURE

Structure

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 Meaning and Characteristics of Culture
 - 6.2.1 Functions of Culture
 - 6.2.2 Types of Culture and Acculturation
 - 6.2.3 Material and Non-Material Culture
 - 6.2.4 Cultural Lag
- 6.3 Relationship between Culture and Personality
- 6.4 Culture and Civilization
- 6.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 6.6 Summary
- 6.7 Key Words
- 6.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 6.9 Further Readings

6.0 INTRODUCTION

Culture is a term that encompasses a wide variety of meanings. It refers to our manners, customs, traditions, economic activities, and so on. Culture is also never constant and is always in a state of flux. As society advances, culture changes along with it. What was considered Indian culture three decades ago may not be considered Indian culture today. What kind of influence culture has on development activities and vice versa are extremely important questions in sociology. In this unit, we will discuss the important concepts related to culture in sociology. This will include a discussion on the meaning and characteristics of culture, function of culture, types of culture, concept of material and non-material culture, meaning of cultural lag and the relationship between culture and personality. We will also shed some light on the relationship between culture and civilization.

6.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the meaning and characteristics of culture
- List the functions of culture
- Describe the types of culture and the concept of acculturation

- Explain the concept of material and non-material culture
- Discuss the meaning of cultural lag
- Examine the relationship between culture and personality
- Interpret the concept of culture and civilization

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6.2 MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

With the evolution of homo sapiens, a number of biological characteristics emerged in species. These characteristics supported the growth of culture. A few of these characteristics were: upright posture, well developed constitution of the brain, the ability to see objects with length, width and depth, development of the hand, etc. Any one of these biological features, if considered in isolation, cannot contribute to the development of culture. Even in totality, the most they can assure is that human beings would be the most privileged species of the animal kingdom. The evolution of culture has been gradual.

In experiences during their life, people develop an array of regulations and processes. This is accompanied by a sustained collection of concepts and ethics known as culture. Sir Edward Tylor (1871) defined culture in a classical and sociological manner. According to him, 'Culture is that complex entirety which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities and habits, that are acquired by man, as a member of society'. One can define culture as that factor, which is absorbed by society. It is a trait that is adopted collectively and practiced by all members of a society. An individual inherits culture as part of social legacy. This inherited legacy is altered and restructured with slight changes and modifications, before it is again inherited by the future generations.

According to Bidney, culture is the product of agro facts (product of civilization), artifacts (product of industry), sociofacts (social organization) and mentifacts (language, religion, art, etc.). According to Marett, culture is communicable intelligence. Robert Redfield, an American anthropologist and ethnolinguist, has emphasized a symbolic view of culture. According to him, culture is an organized body of conventional understanding, which is manifested in art and artifacts and characterizes a human group. For Redfield, culture is the complete conventional meaning which is embodied in artifacts, social structure and symbols. Ruth Benedicts, an anthropologist of culture and personality, in her book, *Pattern of Culture* (1936), has defined culture from personality's point of view. According to her 'A culture, like an individual, is more or less consistent pattern of thought and action.' Thus, she has defined culture from a formal and aesthetic view point. Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown have proposed an instrumental and humanistic definition of culture. According to Malinowski, culture is an instrument for the satisfaction of the needs of man.

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Malinowski defines culture as the tool that facilitates mankind to protect and realize his bio-psychic survival. This consequently results in more developed rational and logical mode of survival. All economic, social, religious and linguistic needs of mankind originate from one general and basic need, i.e., human need, hence they are all related to each other. Since all factors within a culture are interrelated, there are no loose strings. Thus, it is evident that any single trait cannot exist all by itself. Its identity emerges when it is seen as part of the whole and not in isolation. Malinowski stressed that culture has a broad range and is self-reliant.

According to him, if a slight change occurs in any of the features of a culture, the whole of it will reflect a corresponding change. He was a staunch believer of cultural pluralism, in which the bio-physical requirements of individuals impact the growth of every culture. He recommended that culture can be studied on the basis of these requirements and not on the basis of any fixed standards. Sufficiency, based on basic requirements, is a quality of a culture in which many different parts are closely connected and work successfully together. This is a result of widespread knowledge.

On the other hand, Radcliffe Brown regards culture as a social heritage which perpetuates social life. Sociologists who belong to structural functional school have regarded the whole of culture as a unit of study. They assume a holistic view of the entire culture. R.H. Lowie said, 'culture is nothing but total or whole of social tradition.' Kluckhohn defined culture as all those designs which have been historically created for life. These designs may be, explicit, implicit, rational, irrational, or those which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behaviour of men.

Culture defines a typical way in which human beings live. This did not have a single point of origin. This means that no member of the human species emerged all of a sudden on this earth. The evolution of culture was as gradual, as was the conversion of primates to human beings.

Culture can be characterized in the following ways:

- Culture is man-made.
- Culture is learned.
- Culture is transmitted.
- Every society has its own culture.
- Culture is social, not individualistic.
- Culture is an ideal for a group.
- Culture satisfies human need.
- Culture has adaptability.
- Culture has integrative quality.
- Culture shapes human personality.
- Culture is both super-individual and super-organic.

Culture is not a simple accumulation of folkways and mores; it is an organized system of behaviour. Culture is always organized with cultural traits and complexes. Cultural traits are basically the smallest units of culture, for instance, shaking hands, offering prayer, saluting a flag, etc. Every culture includes thousands of traits. Culture complex is a combination of different elements like religious ceremonies, magical rites, a courtship activity and a festivity etc. The culture complex is intermediate between the trait and the institution.

Folkways

Willam Graham Sumner, in his book, *Folkways*(1906), defined folkways as the usual, established, routine and regular way in which a group performs its activities. These activities can range from shaking hands, eating with knives and forks, driving in the left side of streets, etc.

Folkways are established ways in which a social group behaves. This pattern of behaviour is exhibited to counter the problems faced by a group which lives in a society. Life in society has many problems and different problems give rise to different efforts made by man, to tackle them. Various societies come up with a variety of operational models for resolving their problems. Social groups may achieve a probable set of solutions through an experimental approach or some strange observation, etc. Irrespective of the means by which they come upon a solution, its success establishes its acceptance as a normal way of behaviour. It is inherited by successive generations and surfaces as a behavioural tendency of the group of the folk, thus it is known as a folkway. As stated by Sumner, psycho-physical traits have been transmitted genetically into men from their brutish ancestor's. These traits include skills, nature of character and temperament that provide a solution to the problem of food supply, sex, business and self-importance. The outcome of this is a collection of occurrences like, flows of likelihood, harmony and collective inputs, which result in folkways. Folkways are thus outcomes of continuous recurrences that are seemingly insignificant activities, generally in large numbers. These activities arise when similar needs are experienced by a group.

Lundberg agrees that folkways assign similarities in group behaviour to the way of life of individuals in that group. These are born out of recurring or occasional needs or happenings. In this manner, it is believed that the collection of instinctive behavioural patterns governs and protects the existence and development of a social group. This collection includes rituals and practices that have been transmitted from one generation to the other, along with alteration and addition of new features, corresponding to the fluctuating needs of time. These symbolize man's exclusive trait of changing himself to become accustomed to the environment. None of the individuals within the group is ever skeptical about a folkway nor is he required to introduce a folkway forcefully.

The concept of culture can be visualized as an ongoing repository, which keeps on adding material and nonmaterial elements that have been socially inherited by future generations, from past generations. Culture is incessant because its

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patterns have surpassed the boundaries of time to recur in succeeding generations. Culture keeps on getting updated since every generation adds a new feature or quality to it. Accordingly, an outstanding equivalence comes into focus, which connects the evolution of homo sapiens with the growth and prosperity of culture. This similarity cannot be elaborated upon, since most conclusions about the prehistoric period are based on material facts, which reveal only part of the way of life of the people of those times. In addition, the biological and cultural evolution should not be aligned next to each other. Cro-Magnon man's ability to think was great, but other characteristics related to the development played an active role in restricting a visible growth in learned behaviour.

Diffusion

Though invention contributed largely to cultural development, over a period of time, diffusion benefited it more. Diffusion means adopting the characteristics of culture from other societies, irrespective of their means of emergence in the source society.

For diffusion to prevail on a large scale, the societies should be segregated and their origin should be old enough so as to support the development of unique cultures. In addition to this, it is important for these societies to be in touch mutually. This would provide options for substantial borrowing. Such scenarios have gained momentum only in the later stages of evolution. Once the process of cultural borrowing began, it turned so persistent that a large number of elements of modern cultures were borrowed.

Both invention and diffusion have contributed to the development of culture. The initial start was slow, because it was mostly caused by invention. However, with the growth of the culture base, societies were further set apart. This caused an expanded increase in the diffusion of traits and a simultaneous increase in the growth factor. At present, the growth factor of culture has scaled spectacular heights, especially in the western countries.

Custom

A habit, once formed, becomes a normal way of life. Customs usually comprise mutual give and take, accompanied by compulsive responsibilities. Additionally, customs also abide by the law, in the absence of which they would be worthless. According to Maclver and Page, custom sets up its own kind of social order which curbs the disagreements that rise between custom and law. Thus, customs streamline the entire social life of an individual. Law is not equipped enough to cover all activities of social behaviour. Practices of rituals and customs add to the harmony within a social group. Often, the effect of customs crosses the boundaries of one's own community. In certain cases, custom is the measure of the relations between two enemy communities, for instance, it is the custom of the Bedouins of the Arabian desert not to damage any water-well, even if it belongs to the enemy.

However, a few of the customs have no impact on social control. These customs exist simply because they have been there since ancient times and people of all generations have been practicing them. A perfect example of this is the custom of people bathing in an unclean pond or lagoon simply because it has been an age-old religious practice. Although, in many traditional societies, religious rituals and customs are losing their significance. In other words, custom is viewed just like public opinion. It has a strong impact on life in social groups simply because it is the only factor which textually influences social behaviour.

The north-eastern part of India is a residence to innumerable tribes with their distinct cultures. The Nagas are a conglomeration of a number of tribes like Ao, Angami, Chang, Konyak, Mao, etc. They mostly inhabit the state of Nagaland. The Nagas are simple, hardworking and honest people with high integrity. The Nagas mostly live in villages with ornately decorated wooden houses. Each tribe has a distinct way of decorating their huts. The tribes make their own clothes, own medicines, cooking vessels, etc., which make them self-sufficient in all ways possible. Colourful woollen and cotton shawls are made by Naga women of almost all tribes. Folk songs and dance make up the Naga culture. The spread of Christianity in these tribes is bringing a slow death to the indigenous Naga culture.

The state of Assam is nestled beneath the sub Himalayan range of hills in the North and North East. Assam is encircled by the states of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal. Assam is a mixing pot where culture, heritage, tradition, lifestyle, faith and belief of numerous tribes and sub-tribes have lent an exotic recipe of delightful heritage. The Assamese population can be divided into two broad groups: the non-tribal people who constitute the majority of the population and the tribals. The tribals mainly live in the hills; most important among these tribes being the Boro-Kacharis, the Deori, the Misings, the Dimassas, the Karbis, the Lalungs, the Rabhas, etc. Ahkhomiya or Assamese is the language of Assam. Assam has a reputation for warm hospitality. People of Assam are warm, homely and openhearted. Most of the festivals celebrated in Assam have their roots in the varied faith and belief of its people. Besides the religious and national festivals observed throughout the country, Assam has a large number of colourful festivals of its own replete with fun, music and dances. Assam's fairs and festivals are as varied as its population which comes from different racial origins, both tribal and non-tribal.

Bihu, the agricultural festival of Assam is celebrated by all Assamese, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Bihu, Assam's very own festival come off at various stages of cultivation of paddy, the principal crop of Assam. There are three Bihus that come off at various stages of cultivation of paddy, the principal crop of Assam. These are Bahag (Baisakh) Bihu, Kati (Kartika) Bihu and Magh (Magha) Bihu.

From time immemorial, the people of Assam have traditionally been craftsmen. The magic of art of Assamese craftsmen is a common passion inspiring the deep senses with its age-old simplicity and sophistication. Assam is renowned

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for its exquisite silks, bamboo and cane products. However, the colourful Assamese *japi* (headgear), terracotta of Gauripur and various decorative items bear witness to the craftsmanship of this land. Assamese handloom is noteworthy offering a mosaic of colours and contours with pleasing motifs and designs. Dance, music, woodwork, pottery and the art of mat making have survived through centuries with fewer changes since it remained an integral part of the locals.

Mizoram, nestled into the southern part of the north-eastern part of India is land of rolling hills, rivers and lakes. The state's closeness to the numerous international borders has made Mizoram a blend of various tribes that migrated primarily from China and Myanmar. The Lushai, Hmars, Paithes, Raltes, Pang, Mara, Lakher, Kukis and Pawis of Mizoram are the tribes who were originally the believers of the Pathan (good spirit). With the immigration of the British and consequently the settling of the Christian missionaries in the region, most people got converted to Christianity. Thus, due to the influence of the British in this region, most of the population speaks in English besides Mizo. This is an impregnable society with no class difference and no discrimination on the grounds of sex. Majority of the society are into cultivation and the village seems like a big family. Birth of a child, marriage in the village, death of a person or a community feast organized by a member of the village, are prime events in which the whole village takes part. The traditional crafts of Mizoram are weaving, cane and bamboo work. The Mizo women weave intricate traditional designs and patterns on their looms. The shawls carrying tribal clan motifs woven into them and are passed down the generations.

The Khasi, Garo and Jaintia people residing in the different parts of Meghalaya portray the rich culture of the state. Meghalaya is, basically, a Christian dominated area. Many Christian missionaries had immigrated to Meghalaya during the 19th century. Yet, besides the Christians, other predominant people in Meghalaya are the Garo, Jaintia and Khasi tribes. Arts and craft, as well as dance and music also form an integral part of the culture in Meghalaya. Meghalaya is the home of music and dances. The dances are associated with their festivals or seasons and hence are to be enjoyed throughout the year. The dances are social, religious, agricultural and recreational in nature. The land echoes the sound of perfect tempo, beautiful songs and traditional instruments. The Garos usually sing folk songs relating to birth, festivals, marriage, love and heroic deeds along with the beats of various types of drums and flutes. The Khasis and Jaintias are generally fond of songs lauding the nature surrounding them and also expressing love for their land. At the time of singing, different types of musical instruments like drums, duitara and instruments similar to guitar, flutes, pipes and cymbals are also played

Arunachal Pradesh is a land to many tribes, the most important of whom are the Adi, Apatani, Bugun, Galo, Khamba, Koro, etc. It is a land of beautiful handicrafts comprising a wide range in variety. Majority of the population follows a tradition of artistic craftsmanship. A wide variety of crafts such as weaving, painting, pottery, basketry, woodcarving, etc., are found among the indigenous

people. From the point of view of art and culture the area may very conveniently be divided into three zones. The first zone includes the Buddhist tribes, i.e., the Sherdukpens and Monpas and also to some extent the Khowa, Aka and Miji group; the Membas, Khambas, the Khamtis and Singphos. The people of the first zone make beautiful masks. They also periodically stage pantomimes and mask dances. Making of beautiful carpets, painted wooden vessels and silver articles are, however, the specialty of the Monpas. The people of the second zone are expert workers in cane and bamboo. The Apantanis, Hill Miris and Adis make beautiful articles of these materials, which speak eloquently about their skill in handicrafts. The second cultural zone occupies the central part from East Kameng in the west to Lohit in the east. The third zone is formed by the southeastern part of the territory. They also weave articles that are in common use in their daily life. The shawls and Jackets of the Apantanis, the Adis Gale and shoulder bag and the Mishmi's coat and shawl are symbolic of the high weaving talents and artistic sense of the people. The people of the third zone are famous for their woodcarving. The Wanchos, however, weave beautiful bag and loin cloth also. Goat's hair, ivory, boar's tusks, beads of agats and other stones as well as of brass and glass are special fascinations of the people of this zone.

Among all the north-eastern states, there may be seen a unity in the manner of expressing their craftsmanship and culture. Most of the tribes, though influenced by Christianity and foreign influences have held on to their traditional beliefs and customs. Though a large part of the younger generation has moved to bigger towns and cities in search of better amenities, education and economic conditions, there remains a certain part of these tribes that would still continue with their folk songs and dances and mat and shawl weaving irrespective of the fact that these may or may not fetch them monetary assurances just because they love their culture. As long as these tribes prevail, we can rest assured that the north-eastern culture will thrive too.

6.2.1 Functions of Culture

When it comes to society and the impact of culture, there are a number of functions which come to the fore. Looking at the relationship between culture, society and individual one can observe that they are interrelated and interdependent:

- **Behaviour map:** Individuals overall have independent thoughts, but all their endeavors do not guarantee success. In fact, adopting a method of learning by mistake or trial and error is not feasible for humans in general. The function of culture in this scenario is to provide as the aggregator for the human society which provides which the general behaviour pattern or map which humans can follow with certain degree of reliability as to the results. Take for example, people know that studying in schools will make them become attractive candidates which might help them in employment. Without this, they would have to wonder how to secure a successful livelihood. Similarly, the culture also provides boundaries as to what behaviour is right or wrong. For example, that cheating or stealing will result in receiving punishment.

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- **Attitude, value and goals:** Culture has another function very important function in the society: that of influencing individual and societal goals, values and attitudes. This results in reflecting the manner in which the individuals are expected to act or behave. For example, respecting elders or courting for marriage. Culture also reflects in the ways certain things are valued over others. For example, owning a car or reliance on the government's welfare motives, etc. In fact, individual goals too are affected by culture in the sense of striving to become the president of a firm, or engaging in community service, etc.
- **Defining the situation:** Culture has a massive role in determining the sense in which a situation is comprehended by an individual. For example, in some regions, lowering your hat might reflect one giving respect to another, while in another culture it may represent shame or loss of respect.
- **Legends, myths and traditions:** Culture also affects group behaviour by representing the collective belief system of the community. In the sense, that certain traditions in terms of religion allow the individuals to follow a lifestyle. Further, the myths and legends also carry certain ideas and philosophies with them, which again reflect the significant ideals of the particular community.

6.2.2 Types of Culture and Acculturation

Cultural relativism

Cultural relativism is a concept of analysing various societies of cultures in an objective way without comparing them with each other. It is not possible to study the activities of another group if they are analysed on the basis of our motives and values. Their activities must be analysed on the basis of their motives and values, for an unbiased understanding. Cultural relativism can be defined as the function that measures trait on the basis of its cultural environment. In an isolated form, a trait is neither positive, nor negative. It can be regarded as positive or negative only on the basis of the culture in which it exists and thrives, for instance, fur clothes are important in the Polar region, but serve no purpose in deserts. In some societies, being fat is considered to be a sign of health and prosperity. However, in other societies, being fat is not only a waste but it also signifies bad health and ugliness. Thus, the idea of cultural relativism does not make all customs equally important or harmful. It believes that some customs may be extremely beneficial in some places, and may be very harmful elsewhere. It is a phenomenon that is related to the environment. The most prominent feature of cultural relativism is that in a certain type of environment, specific traits are just right because they are beneficial to that environment. However, if the same traits are shifted to an entirely different setting, they may result in a disaster by colliding with other traits of that culture.

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is interrelated with cultural relativity. The word *ethno* is derived from a Greek terminology which means, people, country, cultural bonding, *centric* is derived from a Latin word, which means centre. Thus, ethnocentrism means the inclination of every society to place its own culture patterns at the centre of things. Ethnocentrism is the act of evaluating other cultural practices, in terms of one's own and obviously rating them as inferior. It is the tendency of considering one's own culture superior. This converts one's own culture into a yardstick which can be used to gauge all other cultures and rate them as right or wrong.

Ethnocentrism is the way humans respond in every society, group and walk of life. It is a part of the growth of every individual. It is reflected in the possessive nature of a child, who learns the difference between the toys which belong to him and which do not belong to him. He exhibits a superiority complex when he feels that his toys are better than those of other children, unless corrected by his parents or elders. Though parents may not encourage such ideas in their children in public, but in the privacy of their homes, they may give him the feeling that his possessions are genuinely nice. The teaching of ethnocentrism may either be direct and intentional or indirect and unintentional. But at least a small part of it is purposeful. History has several evidences where it often teaches to place the accomplishments of one's own country higher than those of other countries. Religious, civic and other groups belittle their rivals in the most explicit ways. In the case of fully developed individuals, ethnocentrism simply translates as a reality of life.

As the awareness of ethnocentrism spreads, the urge to validate it in moral terms rises. By the way, this is also a variety of ethnocentrism. However, it is to be noted that ethnocentrism is one of the characteristics of culture. Thus, similar to the remaining part of culture, it can be appraised only on the basis of its involvement in the maintenance of social order and in the promotion of social change.

Ethnocentrism has largely contributed to the maintaining of social order than for promoting social changes. Similarly, the efforts of ethnocentrism for maintaining social order too are much obvious. It begins by consolidating the unity of the group. This is based on the level of faith between companions. Ethnocentrism has both, positive and negative influences. On the positive side, it brings about a steady status quo and on the negative side, it put off change.

Ethnocentrism also obstructs the importance of collaboration between different groups. It believes that if one group functions in the best way, it does not need to interact with other groups which have lower standards of functioning. In reality, this stimulates the mental outlook of skepticism, disregard and animosity. Generally disputes and clashes are caused by severe levels of ethnocentrism. This is evident by the historical details pertaining to wars and religious and racial conflicts.

Conflict brings about social changes through ethnocentrism, which in turn, promotes this change. There are cases when these changes are encouraged through

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peaceful evolution. In general, scientists advocate a peaceful evolution of social changes. They are against conflicts. As a result, they use diplomatic means to disregard ethnocentrism. They discourage their students to support and adopt ethnocentrism by defining it as a hindrance to the learning process. For this purpose, sociologists use a blend of the concepts of evolution and functionalism. On the other hand, ethnocentrism is used by radical groups (belonging to the downtrodden blacks, the poor, women and young people) to intensify their power and functioning. This is clearly visible in the form of slogans like 'black power', etc

Acculturation

Acculturation is an expression that explains the manner in which different cultures interact with each other. It also defines the customs of such interactions. These interactive processes between cultures may either be socially interactive in a direct way or through media, or other forms of communication. As a result of these interactions, the identity and culture of the interacting groups change. In some cases, hostility between both the cultures may result in the emergence of a new form of culture. This new culture may adopt the characteristics of both the cultures.

6.2.3 Material and Non-material Culture

Human culture, as viewed by sociologists comprises of two interrelated concepts: the physical objects which are a part of the culture and the ideological objects which exists in a culture. This classification is referred to as material and non-material culture.

- **Material culture:** It refers to the tangible, physical objects, spaces and resources which are considered important or representative of a culture. Bear in mind, these physical objects do not include natural resources like trees, rocks, etc., are not deemed material culture but the ideas or meaning attached to them are. The examples of material culture include objects like clothing, food, architectural structures like churches, schools, factories, clubs, etc. These material objects collectively reflect the perceptions or ideas of the region they are found in. For example, computers might hold a higher priority for an industrialized society in comparison to a fairly agriculture-based culture for whom let's say cattle is a higher priority.
- **Non-material culture:** It refers to the abstract ideas, values or beliefs people have that are not reflected in the physical objects in the society. Non-material culture in this respect includes attitudes, values, norms, acceptable behaviour patterns, ethics, language, symbols, and institutions. The four major process of non-material culture in sociology are considered to be symbols, language, values and norms.

6.2.4 Cultural Lag

According to William F. Ogburn, objective inventions (technology) have greatly influenced social changes. Ogburn played a key role in promoting the theory that

the number of inventions within a society is directly proportional to the magnitude of the existent culture. He also observed that the number of material inventions was growing with the passage of time. Ogburn held that both material and nonmaterial cultures experience different changes. Changes that are affected in material culture have a particular direction and are dynamic in nature. This is because they have specific values of effectiveness, which are used as a base for estimating them. An instance of this can be seen in the use of airplanes. The development of airplanes involves continuous efforts to produce planes that can fly, higher and faster and can carry heavier cargo at minimum cost. Since these standards can be applied to the development of airplanes, all related inventions are directed to achieve these goals. On the contrary, in the case of nonmaterial culture, such accepted standards are not a general occurrence. For instance, a person interested in paintings may prefer the work of either M.F. Hussain, or Picasso, or Gainsborough, etc. This choice is a result of his liking and preference. Additionally, it is not necessary for these choices to remain constant. Likewise, government or economic organizations comprise of contending forms of styles. These styles may be dictatorships, oligarchies, republics or democracies.

The economic system may have communist, socialist, feudal or capitalist style of functioning. Target-oriented changes, which are a feature of material culture, do not exist in most of the areas of nonmaterial culture. Thus, Ogburn and other sociologists were of the opinion that changes in material culture are more dynamic than those in nonmaterial culture. Surely, one of the most obvious highlights of modern life is the continuous growth of technology. Man's life has undergone tremendous changes with inventions like radio, TV, automobiles, airplanes, rockets, transistors, computers, etc. These changes are within material culture. On the other hand, transformations in governments, economic systems, family lives, education and religion have been very gradual. These changes are nonmaterial in nature. Ogburn introduced the concept of cultural lag after observing this disparity in the rates of cultural changes. According to him, material inventions promoted changes that required amendments to different domains of nonmaterial culture. An invention like the automobile led to two different types of changes. On the one hand, it made travelling easier and on the other, it provided an easy escape for criminals.

Culture lag is the duration or gap of time that exists between the emergence of a new material invention and the process of adapting it to the corresponding nonmaterial culture. This duration is usually long, for instance, the period between the invention of the typewriter and its practical use in offices was fifty years. Even today, most of the family systems are more suited to an agricultural economy rather than an industrial one. Thus, the theory of cultural lag is related to the type of social problems that are associated with it. Academics have visualized an equilibrium and tuning between material and nonmaterial cultures. This tuning is disturbed when raw material objects appear. This disturbance results in a disproportion which is known as a social problem. This social problem continues till the nonmaterial culture adapts itself to the new technology.

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Check Your Progress

1. How did Sir Edward Tylor define culture?
2. What is culture, according to Marett?
3. How is culture complex related to trait and the institution?
4. List four major processes of non-material culture.

6.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

Culture is the hallmark of every society. It is the distinguishing mark of human society. The term personality has been used in several terms, both popularly and psychologically. However, its comprehensive and satisfactory use is integrated. The dynamic organization of physical, mental and social qualities of an individual is apparent to others, in the exchange of social life.

One can define personality as the collection of habits, mindsets, behaviour and qualities of a person. These focus externally on specific and general roles and statuses. Internally, they are focused around self-consciousness and the concepts of self, ideas, values and purpose.

Following are the characteristics of personality:

- It is influenced by social interaction.
- It is acquired.
- It refers to persistent qualities of an individual.
- It is an individual unit.
- It is not related to bodily structure alone.

The type of personality is generally defined by the culture which prevails in a specific social group. Culture plays a vital role in influencing the personality of a group. This has attracted the attention of the scholars of culture and various schools of thought that are concerned with personality.

The relationship between culture and personality involves on one side, the total social heritage available to the individual and to which he consciously and unconsciously responds and on other, the integral character of the individual being. It can be argued that personality is everything that makes an individual. Personality comprises of the total 'organized aggregate of psychological processes and states pertaining to the individual'. The culture personality focus is one that reminds us that the pattern of any culture basically determines the broad contours of individual personalities. These individual personalities, in turn, provide evidence of the culture pattern and tend to strive for its perpetuation.

Studies in culture and personalities

Culture

Ruth Fulton Benedict, in her famous book, *Patterns of Culture*, developed the concept of culture pattern. She has also focused on the significance of culture. The culture which is described in her book illustrates Benedict's idea that culture can be viewed as consisting of cultural configurations. These configurations are integrated under the domination of one general matter pattern. Therefore, a culture is analogous to individual beings, such that it is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action. According to Benedict, integration of any culture is due to the arrangement of its content in a cotemporary or permanent style, or design. This arrangement is defined as pattern, by Benedict. There is a particular style or design in every part of a culture. These separate designs, together, present a grand design of culture as a whole. This is the configuration of culture. The emergence of this reunion in culture is due to a common tendency to see all aspects of culture. Benedict termed this main tendency as a 'special genius' of culture. It is this 'genius of culture', that brings about its integration. This alone, is the basis of integration of form. Benedict proposed that two kinds of 'geniuses' are found in human society. One is 'Appollonian' and the other is 'Dionysian'. The word 'Appollonian' has been derived from the word Apollo, which means peaceful sun god. Greek regarded sun as the god of peace, discipline, kindness and humanity. Therefore, in the Appollonian pattern of culture, one finds the existence of peace, discipline and kindness. Benedict has cited the example of Pueblo (a term used to describe modern and ancient communities of Native Americans). They are peace loving and disciplined. They extend help and cooperation to each other. Not only in Pueblo, but the Appollonian genius is found in all societies, which have peace and tranquility as their main qualities. These are the causes of their integration. The term 'Dionysian' has been derived from the Greek God Dionysius, who appeared to be connected to drinking and a luxurious way of life. In his way, the Dionysian genius is found in a culture, which experiences many storms and changes. Benedict cited the example of the Dobu and the Kwakitul cultures of the north-west coast of America as representatives of the Dionysian genius. Thus Benedict has accepted patterns or geniuses as an ideal or an induced theory, which determines the behaviour of human beings.

Benedict was also concerned with showing the influence of personality on culture. She argued that Appollonian and Dionysian geniuses are integrated personalities of two cultural groups. These groups are quite opposite in their behaviour pattern. She also held how these two geniuses molded the personality of members of their cultural groups. The Appollonian personality compels the members of the group to behave peacefully and in a disciplined way. This ultimately forms special cultural characteristics of the concerned group. In the same way, the Dionysian personality shows its influence on the characteristics of the culture of a particular group. In this way, personality influences culture.

Margaret Mead, through her studies, has attempted to show the impact of culture on the formation of personalities. An individual is born in a particular culture

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and he or she enters into a preformed cultural environment, which plays a significant role in the formation of his or her personality. An individual adopts not only the material aspects of a culture, i.e., house, tool, furniture, art, etc., but also its nonmaterial aspects. The nonmaterial aspects may include parts of culture, such as, religion, tradition, custom, rituals, beliefs, norms, values, ideals, etc. It is culture which teaches an individual to behave in society, in a systematic way. An individual adopts culture through the processes of enculturation and assimilation. Mead studied the impact of culture on the personality formation of three primitive groups of New Guinea. These groups were, Mundugumor, Arapesh and Tschambuli. Though these tribes lived in the same geographical region, they had different character and personalities. This was due to differences in their culture.

Ralph Linton, in his famous book, *Cultural Background of Personality* (1945), attempted to define and classify culture on the basis of behavior. He has also defined personality and attempted to show how it was formed in a given cultural situation. He also emphasized how personality influenced culture. According to Linton, 'culture may be defined as the sum total of knowledge, attitudes and natural behavior pattern, shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society.' He divided culture into three groups, based on the behaviour of their members. These groups are:

- (i) Real culture (Actual behaviour)
- (ii) Ideal culture (philosophical and traditional culture)
- (iii) Culture construct (what is written about culture)

Real culture is the aggregate of the behaviour of the members of a society, which are learned and shared in particular situations. It is the way of life of a community member. The ways of life differ from culture to culture. Ideal culture pattern is formed by philosophical traditions. In this, some traits of culture are regarded as ideals. When a culture is studied, it also reflects our understanding of that culture, which is to be written. This is known as culture-construct. Linton has also differentiated among cultural universals, cultural alternatives and cultural specialties. He argued that some cultural traits are necessary for all members of the society, while the other traits are shared only by some members. The traits, which are followed by all members, are called universals of culture. For instance, man must clothe certain parts of body. This is a universal culture. On the other hand, a person may choose among a number of religious beliefs, or even adopt none. Specialists are the elements of culture, which are shared by some, but not all groups, within a society. Linton used the term 'contra-culture pattern' to designate those groups, which not only differ from the prevailing pattern, but sharply challenge them. For instance, a group of thieves has its own norms and standards, which are compelling for all members of the group. However, these norms and standards sharply differ from the conventional prevailing patterns.

6.4 CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

According to McIver and Page, two great areas of human experience and of human activity are ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’. All that man does, all that he creates, all his artifacts, etc., fall permanently into one order or the other. It would include not only our systems of social organization but also our techniques and our material instruments. It would include the ballot box and the telephone alike, our laws as well as our schools and our banking systems as well as our banks. They argued that technology is a part of civilization. Within the order of civilization, they distinguished between basic technology and social technology. Basic technology is directed towards man’s control over natural phenomena. It is the area of the engineer and the mechanic. It applies the laws of physics, chemistry and biology to the service of human objectives. It rules the process of production in industry, agriculture and extractive industries. It constructs ships, planes, armaments, tractors and elevators and an endless variety of artifacts. It shapes and assembles the objects of every scale. It plans the modernized city and its parkways and also the newest design of women’s hats. Social technology, on the other hand, is a collection of techniques that are directed to the regulation of the behaviour of human beings. It has two essential divisions, economic technology and political technology. Economic technology is concerned with economic processes and the immediate relationships between men, for the pursuit of economic means. Political technology regulates a wide range of human relationships. While MacIver and Page describe culture, they believe that, just as the typewriter belongs to one great order, similarly the book that has been typed on it belongs to another great order. All material things that we bring into existence, give us something that we crave for or we need. All of them are expressions of us. They have been created to satisfy the need within us. This need is not an outer necessity. They belong to the realm of culture. This is the kingdom of principles, styles, emotional strings and intellectual ventures. They argue that culture is then the antithesis of civilization. It is the expression of our nature in our modes of living and thinking, in our everyday intercourse, in art, in literature, in religion, in recreation and in enjoyment.

MacIver and Page pointed the difference between culture and civilization in the following ways:

- **Civilization has precise standard of measurement, but not culture:** When we compare the product of civilization, we can prove which is superior and which is inferior. Since they are means to ends, their degree of efficiency can be readily estimated. This efficiency can be measured only if the end is clearly postulated. For instance, a lorry runs faster than a bullock cart, an aeroplane runs faster than a lorry, a power loom produces more than handloom, etc. On the other hand, cultural aspects that raise the ultimate problem of value cannot measure the culture.

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- **Civilization is always advancing, but not culture:** Civilization not only marches, it marches continuously, provided there is no catastrophic break of social continuity in the same direction. An achievement of civilization is generally exploited and improved, until it is superseded or rendered obsolete by some new invention. It is true that in the past, some achievements of civilization have again been lost. Men forgot the art which raised the pyramids of Egypt and constructed the roads and aqueducts of Rome. The reason for this was that these losses were a result of catastrophic changes which blotted out the records of civilization. With a wide area of civilization and superior methods of recording discoveries, any utilitarian or technical gain becomes a permanent possession within the social heritage. It then conditions further gains. It is otherwise a cultural achievement. Since man first invented the automobile, it has continuously improved. Our means of transportation develop constantly. They are much superior to those which the ancient Greeks employed. But the same cannot be opined about our dramas and sculptures, our conversation and our recreation, etc. Here certitude fails us. There are no automobiles which are today comparatively inefficient as the first vehicle of Henry Ford. His work and that of other inventors inevitably prepared the way for better cars. But our plays are not necessarily better today because of the achievements of Shakespeare. Culture is subject to retrogression as well as advancement. Its past does not assure its future.
- **Civilization is passed on without effort, but not culture:** Culture can only be assimilated by the like-minded. It can be had only by those who are worthy of it. No one can appreciate art without the quality of an artist. Civilization, in general, makes no such demand. We can enjoy its products without sharing the capacity which creates them. Civilization is the vehicle of culture; its improvement is no guarantee of finer quality in that which it conveys. Television can show movies, but there is no guarantee of their quality.
- **Civilization is external and mechanical, while culture is internal and organic:** Civilization is inclusive of external things. Culture is related to internal thoughts, feelings, ideals, values, etc. According to MacIver, 'Civilization is what we have, culture is what we are'.

Though culture and civilization have certain demarcation lines, they are interdependent. One can believe that they hardly exist apart from each other. Both are not only interdependent but also interactive. The articles of civilization called 'artifacts' are influenced by articles of culture known as 'mentifacts'. Similarly, culture is influenced by articles of civilization. The objects of civilization gradually acquire cultural aspects. The tools and artifacts of primitive communities are not tools, but they are symbols of culture.

Check Your Progress

5. What is the hallmark of every society?
6. Name the two kinds of geniuses proposed by Benedict.
7. What is social technology?

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6.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Edward Tylor's definition of culture says, 'Culture is that complex entirety which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities and habits that are acquired by man, as a member of society'.
2. According to Marett, culture is communicable intelligence.
3. Culture complex is intermediate between the trait and the institution.
4. The four major non-material culture in sociology are considered to be symbols, language, values and norms.
5. Culture is the hallmark of every society.
6. Benedict proposed two kinds of geniuses, Apollonian and Dionysian.
7. Social technology is a collection of techniques that are directed to the regulation of the behaviour of human beings.

6.6 SUMMARY

- The development of culture makes human society a special case, as compared to the societies of other species. The ways of acting, thinking and feeling are transmitted from one generation to the other and across societies, through learning and not through inheritance.
- Culture includes language and technology, both of which involve the communication of ideas and the possibility of sophisticated coordination of action.
- Like an organism, a society is a system of relations. These relations are between organisms themselves, rather than between cells. The organism a determined structure and parts of this structure, when in operation, contribute to the existence of the whole. This whole gives it continuity, which is apart from that of constituent individuals.
- Heredity contains all the potentialities of life, but all its actualities are evoked within and under the conditions of environment.

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- Culture is not simply an accumulation of folkways and mores; it is an organized system of behaviour. Culture is always organized with cultural traits and complexes.
- Cultural traits are basically the smallest units of culture. Traits are, for instance, the actions of shaking hand, offering prayer, saluting a flag and small material objects like pen, cloth, etc. Each culture includes thousands of traits.
- Cultural relativism implies that the operation and significance of a trait is affected by its cultural setting. If regarded independently, a trait is neither positive, nor negative. It can only be categorized as positive or negative, when it is considered relative to the culture in which it operates.
- Ethnocentrism is the inclination of every society to place its own cultural patterns at the centre of things. It is the act of regarding the cultural practices of others as inferior to one's own.
- Culture lag is defined as the duration between the emergence of a new material invention and its absorbance into its corresponding area of non-material culture.
- Culture is the hallmark of every society. It is the distinguishing mark of human society. The term personality has been used in several terms, both popularly and psychologically. However, its comprehensive and satisfactory use is integrated. The dynamic organization of physical, mental and social qualities of an individual is apparent to others, in the exchange of social life.
- One can define personality as the collection of habits, mindsets, behaviour and qualities of a person. These focus externally on specific and general roles and statuses. Internally, they are focused around self-consciousness and the concepts of self, ideas, values and purpose.
- The relationship between culture and personality involves on one side, the total social heritage available to the individual and to which he consciously and unconsciously responds and on other, the integral character of the individual being.
- According to McIver and Page, two great areas of human experience and of human activity are 'culture' and 'civilization'. All that man does, all that he creates, all his artifacts, etc., fall permanently into one order or the other. It would include not only our systems of social organization but also our techniques and our material instruments.
- Though culture and civilization have certain demarcation lines, they are interdependent. One can believe that they hardly exist apart from each other. Both are not only interdependent but also interactive. The articles of civilization called 'artifacts' are influenced by articles of culture known as 'mentifacts'. Similarly, culture is influenced by articles of civilization. The objects of civilization gradually acquire cultural aspects. The tools and artifacts of primitive communities are not tools, but they are symbols of culture.

6.7 KEY WORDS

- **Folkways:** Established ways in which a social group behaves.
- **Ethnocentrism:** The way humans respond in every society, group and walk of life.
- **Cultural relativism:** A concept of analysing various societies of cultures in an objective way without comparing them with each other.
- **Acculturation:** An expression that explains the manner in which different cultures interact with each other.
- **Real culture:** The aggregate of the behaviour of the members of a society, which are learned and shared in particular situations.

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6.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. How does conflict affect ethnocentrism?
2. What is material and non-material culture?
3. Briefly describe the functions of culture.
4. List the characteristics of personality.
5. How did Linton divide culture?

Long-Answer Questions

1. What is culture? Discuss the characteristic features of culture.
2. Define and explain the types of cultures.
3. What is acculturation? How is it different from cultural lag?
4. Analyse the relationship between culture and personality.
5. What is civilization? How is it different from culture?

6.9 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 7 SOCIALIZATION

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Structure

- 7.0 Introduction
- 7.1 Objectives
- 7.2 Socialization: Meaning and Importance
- 7.3 Process, Stages, Agencies, Theories and Types of Socialization
 - 7.3.1 Process
 - 7.3.2 Stages of Socialization
 - 7.3.3 Agencies
 - 7.3.4 Theories
 - 7.3.5 Types of Socialization
- 7.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 7.5 Summary
- 7.6 Key Words
- 7.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 7.8 Further Readings

7.0 INTRODUCTION

The process that teaches an individual his culture is called socialization. In this unit, you will learn about the importance of socialization. This process goes on throughout one's life, and it develops a sense of self and converts the individual into a member of the society. For the success of this process, the individual needs consistent and organized interaction with his culture and social surroundings. The growth of the self is influenced by contact with family, peers and the media.

Infants are born without any culture. It is through the process of socialization that individuals acquire culture and this is done with the help of parents, teachers, books, media, and so on. Socialization teaches us language, as well as the roles that we are expected to play or fit into, in society. It also teaches individuals about the norms of the society of which one is a member. Socialization also contributes to the formation of one's personality. Although personality type may depend on one's genes, it is the process of socialization that can shape it into particular directions.

7.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the importance and processes of socialization
- Discuss the theories and types of socialization
- Critically analyse the agencies of socialization

7.2 SOCIALIZATION: MEANING AND IMPORTANCE

The term ‘**socialization**’ refers to processes whereby individuals are taught the skills, behaviour patterns, values and motivations that are needed for competent functioning in the culture in which they are growing up. The most dominant among these are social skills, social understandings and emotional maturity. These are needed for interaction with other individuals to fit in with the functioning of social dyads and larger groups. Socialization includes all those processes in which culture is transmitted from one generation to the next, including training for specific roles in specific occupations.

According to Maclver, ‘Socialization is the process by which social beings establish wider and profounder relationships with one another, in which they come closer to each other and build a complex structure of association.

According to Kimball Young, ‘Socialization means the process of inducting the individual into the social and cultural world of making him a particular member of a society and its various groups and inducing him to accept the norms and values of that society. Socialization is definitely a matter of learning and not of biological inheritance.’

Importance of Socialization

A new born individual (human infant comes into the world as a biological organism with animal needs. He/she is gradually moulded into a social being and learns the social ways of acting and feeling. Without this process of moulding, neither the society nor the culture would exist, nor would the individual become a social person. The following points reflect the some of the other significance of socialization:

- It helps in transmission of culture from generation to generation
- It influences individual’s behaviour and personality
- It allows individuals to learn skills and discipline to participate in the society
- It reflects on the values, ambitions, and goals of individuals in the society
- It allows individuals to assume social roles in the society they become a member of

7.3 PROCESS, STAGES, AGENCIES, THEORIES AND TYPES OF SOCIALIZATION

In this section, you will learn about the process, stages, agencies and theories of socialization.

7.3.1 Process

Once we study socialization, we tend to question about to processes. As we know, every man tries to adjust himself to the conditions of his social environment.

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The process of adjustment itself is socialization. Socialization is the process of transforming a biological being to a social being. As we have discussed earlier in the stages of socialization, direct socialization begins only after birth.

Socialization is a continuous and unending process. It is a process of inducting an individual into the social world. It is consisting of learning cultural values and norms which he/she must learn and share. Socialization is social learning.

The fundamental process of socialization is the emergence and gradual development of 'self'. It is in terms of the self that a personality takes shape and mind begins to function. The notion of self begins to arise as a child learns about the feeling of sensation. According to Johnson, the 'self might be regarded as the internalized object representing ones own personality.' Self is an internalized object that includes ones own conception of ones abilities and characteristics and an evaluation of both.

7.3.2 Stages of Socialization

Socialization takes place within a 'simplified' social world. The social system in which the infant or the child is being trained is much less complex than the society as a whole. This simplification makes it possible for the child to attend to relatively few things at a time. There are four stages of socialization from infancy to adulthood. The names given to these stages have become fixed in usage and they are fairly appropriate, although far from being adequately descriptive. They are as follows:

- First stage—The oral stage
- Second stage—The anal stage
- Third stage—The oedipal stage and latency
- Fourth stage—Adolescence or adult socialization

In all these stages, especially in the first three, the family is the main socializing group. Therefore, one can consider the structure of the family as it bears on socialization. The family varies in composition from one society to another, but the nuclear family is universal. One can ignore the variation in particular families and concentrate on the institutional structure of the nuclear family. A nuclear family has four roles: husband-father, wife-mother, son-brother and daughter-sister. The details of these roles vary from one society to another. One obvious feature is the division according to generation. This division is also according to the relative power to control interaction; father and mother are able to control their son and daughter more than the son and daughter being able to control parents.

(i) First stage—the oral stage

In the womb, the foetus is presumably warm and comfortable. At birth, the infant faces its first crisis—it must breathe, exert itself to be fed, it is susceptible to cold, and other discomforts; it cries a lot. The essential goal of the first stage of socialization is to establish oral dependency. The infant builds up fairly definite

expectations about feeding time and it learns to signal its pressing needs for care. During this stage, the infant is not involved in the family as a whole. It is involved only in the sub-system consisting of itself and its mother. For other members of the family, as said by American sociologist Talcott Parsons, ‘the baby is little more than a possession’. If the father or anyone else shares the task of caring for the baby with the mother, no role differentiation is involved. The person will also be performing the role of a mother.

Freud called this stage as the ‘primary identification’. In the personality of the infant, by the time oral dependency has been established, its own role and that of the mother are probably not clearly distinguished. Mother and infant are merged and some control over the hunger drive has been established.

(ii) Second stage—the anal stage

The crisis with which this stage begins is caused by the imposition of new demands. These are the demands for the child to take over some degree of care for himself. Toilet training is the main focus of new concern. During this stage, the child recognizes two roles: its own and that of its mother. The child not only receives care but receives love and gives love in return.

In this stage, one can clearly see the importance of a general fact about socialization; the socializing agent always has a dual role. During this stage, the mother first participates in a limited social system. She is the instrumental leader relative to the child, for she is still chiefly responsible for meeting his specific needs. The child’s contribution to the system is mainly expressive. He helps to integrate the system by cooperating and giving love. He is still too young and dependent to contribute much to the accomplishment of tasks.

The dual role of the socializing agent is to train the child so that he will ultimately be able to participate in a more complex social system. Obviously, the socializing agent has to know the roles and common values of the larger system.

Secondly, socialization is an unpleasant task, to some extent for the socializing agent as well as for the child. The mother does not enjoy seeing her child suffer through the process of weaning and toilet training. Though she can console herself with thoughts of the final accomplishment, but probably she is forced to some extent, by pressure from the larger social system, of which she is a member.

At the same time, the mother as a socializing agent, mediates between the subsystem and the larger system. She is also supported by that larger system. Her husband will understand the strain she is undergoing and will relieve her off some other burdens, for instance, by spending more time with other children.

(iii) Third stage—the oedipal stage and latency

The third stage extends from the fourth year to puberty (the age of twelve or thirteen). The ‘Oedipal crisis’ occurs typically during the fourth and fifth years, followed by the latency period.

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In the course of the third stage, the child becomes a member of the family as a whole. He must accept all the four roles of the family and he must, above all, identify himself with the social role ascribed to him on the basis of his biological sex.

The ‘Oedipus complex’, as Freud named it, is the feeling of jealousy the boy is believed to have towards his father on account of their rivalry for the mother. For a girl, the ‘Electra complex’ is the corresponding set of feelings that she has for her father and is, therefore, jealous of her mother.

When the proper stage of socialization has been reached, many social pressures are brought to bear on the child, to identify with the appropriate sex. Boys begin to get rewarded for behaviour that is appropriate towards boys, and girls are rewarded for acting feminine. Moreover, the toys given to boys are different from those given to their sisters. Fairly striking anatomical differences make the correct identification easy, yet the correct identification is largely an achievement of socialization.

The term ‘identification’ has been used in different ways. Firstly, one is said to identify with a social role, if one not only recognizes the role but also adopts it as one’s own. One strives to attain the necessary skills and to conform to the role norms. Secondly, one is said to identify with a social group if one recognizes the role system of the group and considers oneself to be a member of it. Identification in its first sense links a boy with his father and brother, for example, but not with his mother. Identification in its second sense links a boy with his family, including both parents and all siblings.

(iv) Fourth stage—adolescence/adult socialization

The fourth stage is adolescence which is roughly at puberty. This is the stage during which young boys or girls are ordinarily more and more ‘emancipated’ from parental control. The crisis of this period is the strain that is produced by greater demands for independence. At the same time, in the middle class of a different society, the adolescent may still be controlled to some extent by his parents in many activities wherein he might like greater freedom. This is especially true when individuals become aware of their sexuality. The psychological changes that accompany adolescence would not produce problems till sexual maturity.

The goal of adulthood is considered to be attained when a person can support himself or herself, entirely independent of the parental family. Full adulthood also implies the ability to form a family.

7.3.3 Agencies

One can conceive of socialization, then, as a succession of processes occurring at various stages of development, with the child’s family of origin being the first.

There are various agencies of the socialization process. These are:

(i) Family

The family gets the baby first. Therefore the process of socialization begins in the family. The child is born with some basic abilities that are genetically transmitted from his parents. These abilities and capacities are shaped in a way that is determined by culture. The mother, with whom the relation of child is most intimate, plays a significant role in the process of moulding the child in the initial stages. Subsequently, the father and older siblings transmit other values to the child. Values like knowledge and skill are transmitted, that children are expected to acquire in a particular society.

(ii) Peer group

As the child grows older, his contemporaries begin to influence him. He spends most of his spare hours outside his work and study schedule, with his peers in the playground and places outside his/her home. The attraction of peers is virtually irresistible to him. He learns from them and they also learn from him. As time passes, the peer group influence surpasses that of his parents, significantly. Teenage is the stage when misunderstanding occurs between parents and children. In socialization of the child, the members of the family, particularly those who exercise authority over him and members of his peer group exercise two different types of influences on him. Both authoritarian and equalitarian relationships are equally significant to him. He acquires the virtues of respect, constraint and obedience from the first type of relationships and the virtues of cooperation that is based on trust and mutual understanding, from the second.

The importance of equalitarian element in the socialization process rests on altogether different grounds. There is free and spontaneous interaction instead of coercion among those who have equalitarian relationships. They view the world in the same way, share the same subjective attitude and consequently have perfect understanding of one another. They learn shades of meaning, fads and crazes, secret modes of gratification and forbidden knowledge from one another. Part of this knowledge is often socially useful and yet socially tabooed. Kingsley Davis has given the instance of knowledge of sex which is supposed to remain undisclosed until marriage. If this were followed, the problems of maladjustment and aberration of many kinds would not have been infrequent. Fortunately such knowledge is transmitted as a part of the lore that passes from child to child. However, the disadvantage of such imperfect knowledge is that the child gathers wrong information from his equally have friends

(iii) School

The school is the second agency of socialization. When a child comes to school, his formal indoctrination into the culture of the society begins. In school the child gets his education, which moulds his ideas and attitudes. He is formally introduced to the lore and the learning, the arts and the science, the values and beliefs, the

NOTES

customs and taboos of the society from a wider circle. His teachers play a very significant role. Education is of great importance in socialization. A well-planned system of education can produce a socialized person.

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(iv) Books

In literate societies, another important agency of socialization is the printed word in books and magazines. Experiences and knowledge of the cultural world, values and beliefs, superstitions and prejudices are expressed in words. According to Bierstedt, 'words rush at us in torrent and cascade; they leap into our vision as in newspaper, magazine and text book'. Text books are written by authors. They join the teachers, the peers and the parents in the socialization process of every young individual.

(v) Mass media

Apart from newspapers which carry printed words, the two other mass media, viz., radio and television, exercise tremendous influence in the socialization process.

7.3.4 Theories

Some important theories of socialization were developed by Charles Horton Cooley, George Herbert Mead and Sigmund Freud.

Charles Horton Cooley

Cooley, in his book *Social Organization*, writes that the construction of self and society are twin born and that we know one as immediately as we know the other. He further says that 'the notion of a separate and independent ego is an illusion'. He reiterates that self consciousness can arise only in a society and it is inseparable from social consciousness. According him, the self is social. The basic idea of the conception is, 'the way we imagine ourselves to appear to another person is an essential element in our conception of ourselves. He believes that there are three steps in the process of building 'looking-glass self'.

- (i) Our perception of how we look to others
- (ii) Our perception of their judgement of how we look
- (iii) Our feeling about these judgements

Thus, we are constantly revising our perception of how we look. Just like a mirror that gives an image of physical self, so the perception of the reaction of others gives an image of the social self. Another important point is that the perception of the judgement of others, is the active factor in the self-image forming process.

G.H. Mead, basically a psychologist, agreed completely with Cooley that it is absurd to look at the self or the mind from the viewpoint of an individual organism. Although it may have its focus on the organism, it is undoubtedly a social product and a social phenomenon. He believes that the self arises in

interaction with the social and nonsocial environment. The social environment is particularly important.

The basic argument which Mead developed was in support of this conclusion and also in support of his theory of 'Me' and 'I'. For Mead, 'Me' is that group of organized attitudes to which the individual responds. He called the acting self the 'I'. The 'Me' on the other hand, is part of the self which consists of the internal attitudes of others.

The process of personalizing the attitudes of others has been aptly described by Mead, who developed the concept of 'generalized other'. This generalized other is composite of the expectations that one believes, others hold towards one. Awareness of the generalized other is developed through the process of taking and plying roles. Taking role is an attempt to act out the behaviour that would be expected of a person, who actually holds the role. Playing a role is acting out the behaviour of a role that one actually holds, whereas in taking a role, one only pretends to hold the role.

Mead argues that a three stage process is through which one learns to play adult roles. These three stages are as follows:

- (i) **Preparatory stage (1–3 years):** In this stage a child imitates adult behaviour without any real understanding.
- (ii) **Play stage (3–4 years):** In this stage, children have some understanding of the behaviour but switch role erratically. At one moment, the boy is a builder who is piling blocks and a moment later, he knocks them apart. Similarly, at one moment, he is a policeman and a moment later he becomes an astronaut.
- (iii) **Game stage (4–5 years):** This stage is one where the role behaviour becomes consistent and purposeful and the child has the ability to sense the role of the other players. To play baseball, each player must understand his or her own role, as well as the role of all other players. Thus, one develops an ability to see one's own behaviour in its relation to others and senses the reaction of the people who are involved.

Mead's theory of role taking is an essential learning process in socialization. Both Cooley and Mead explain the process of interaction. They saw personality as shaped through our social interaction with others. Both assumed a basic harmony between self and society. To Cooley, the separate individual was an abstract idea that had no existence apart from society, just as society has no meaning apart from individuals. The socialized self is shaped by the society and the society is an organization of the persons it socializes. Thus self and society were two aspects of the same thing.

Sigmund Freud saw self and society in basic conflict, not harmony. He believed that self is the product of the ways in which basic human motives and impulses are denied and repressed by the society. Freud believed that the rational portion of human motivation was like the visible part of an iceberg. The larger part of human

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motivation that rests within the unseen forces has a powerful affect on human conduct. He divided the self into three parts:

- a. The Id
- b. The ego
- c. The super ego

The Id is the pool of instinctive and unsocial desires and impulses, which are selfish and antisocial.

Ego is the conscious and rational part of the self, which oversees the super ego's restraint of the Id.

Super ego is the complex of social ideals and values which one has internalized and which form of consciousness.

Ego is the control center, whereas *super ego* is the police officer and *Id* is a combination of selfish, destructive desire. Since society restricts the expressions of aggression, sexuality and other impulses, the Id is continually at war with the super ego. The Id is usually repressed, but at times it breaks through in open defiance of the super ego, creating burden of guilt that is difficult for the self to carry. At other times, the forces of the Id find expression in misguided forms which enables the ego to be unaware of the real and underlying reasons for its actions, as when a parent relieves hostility by beating the child, believing that this is for its own good. Thus, Freud finds that self and society are often opponents and not merely different aspects of the same thing. Freud sees self and society in eternal conflict.

7.3.5 Types of Socialization

According to Ian Robertson, the socialization that a person undergoes in the course of his lifetime may be divided into four types:

- (i) Primary socialization
- (ii) Anticipatory socialization
- (iii) Developmental socialization
- (iv) Re-socialization

(i) Primary socialization is the most fundamental and essential type of socialization. It takes place in early childhood. In this stage, a child internalizes norms and learns language and cognitive skills.

(ii) Anticipatory socialization is where human beings learn the culture of a group of which they are immediate members. They also learn the culture of a group with the anticipation of joining that group. This is referred to by R.K. Merton as 'anticipatory socialization'.

(iii) Developmental socialization is the kind of socialization that is based on the achievement of primary socialization. It builds on already acquired skills and knowledge as the adult progresses through new situations, such as

marriage or new jobs. These require new expectations, obligations and roles. New learning is added to and blended with old in a relatively smooth and continuous process of development.

- (iv) Re-socialization takes place mostly when a social role radically changes. An individual not only changes roles within a group, but also changes groups.

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Check Your Progress

1. Define the fundamental process of socialization.
2. Name the third stage of socialization.
3. What are the grounds on which the equalitarian element in the socialization process rests upon?
4. Mention the parts in which Freud divides the 'self'.
5. List four types of socialization.
6. What is anticipatory socialization?

7.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The fundamental process of socialization is the emergence and gradual development of 'self'. It is in terms of the self that a personality takes shape and mind begins to function.
2. The third stage of socialization is called the oedipal stage and latency.
3. The importance of equalitarian element in the socialization process rests on the grounds that there is free and spontaneous interaction instead of coercion among those who have equalitarian relationships.
4. Freud divides the 'self' into three parts:
 - The Id
 - The Ego and,
 - The Super Ego
5. The four types of socialization are:
 - Primary socialization
 - Anticipatory socialization
 - Developmental socialization
 - Re-socialization
6. Anticipatory socialization is where human beings learn the culture of a group of which they are immediate members.

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7.5 SUMMARY

- The term '**socialization**' refers to processes whereby individuals are taught the skills, behaviour patterns, values and motivations that are needed for competent functioning in the culture in which they are growing up. The most dominant among these are social skills, social understandings and emotional maturity.
- A new born individual (human infant comes into the world as a biological organism with animal needs. He/she is gradually moulded into a social being and learns the social ways of acting and feeling. Without this process of moulding, neither the society nor the culture would exist, nor would the individual become a social person.
- Socialization is a continuous and unending process. It is a process of inducting an individual into the social world. It is consisting of learning cultural values and norms which he/she must learn and share. Socialization is social learning.
- The fundamental process of socialization is the emergence and gradual development of 'self'. It is in terms of the self that a personality takes shape and mind begins to function.
- Socialization takes place within a 'simplified' social world. The social system in which the infant or the child is being trained is much less complex than the society as a whole. This simplification makes it possible for the child to attend to relatively few things at a time. There are four stages of socialization from infancy to adulthood. They are as follows:
 - First stage—The oral stage
 - Second stage—The anal stage

7.6 KEY WORDS

- **Socialization:** The process by which somebody, especially a child, learns to behave in a way that is acceptable to the society is called socialization.
- **The Id:** The Id is the pool of instinctive and unsocial desires and impulses, which are selfish and anti-social.
- **Ego:** Ego is the conscious and rational part of the self, which oversees the super ego's restraint of the Id.
- **Super ego:** Super ego is the complex of social ideals and values which one has internalized and which forms a part of consciousness.
- **Developmental socialization:** Developmental socialization is a kind of socialization that is based on the achievement of primary socialization. It builds on already acquired skills and knowledge as the adult progresses through new situations, such as marriage or new jobs.

7.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What according to Kimball Young is socialization?
2. Write a short note on the process of socialization.
3. What is George Herbert's theory of socialization?
4. What are the types of socialization?
5. Write a brief note on adult socialization.
6. What is re-socialization?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the theories and types of socialization.
2. Examine the four stages of socialization.
3. Critically analyse the agencies of socialization.

7.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 8 SOCIAL ACTION AND INTERACTION

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Structure

- 8.0 Introduction
 - 8.1 Objectives
 - 8.2 Social Action: An Overview
 - 8.2.1 Scope of Social Action
 - 8.3 Social Relationships, Interaction and Social Process
 - 8.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
 - 8.5 Summary
 - 8.6 Key Words
 - 8.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
 - 8.8 Further Readings
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8.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit provides the reader an insight into the concept of social action as an integral part of sociology. Max Weber, an important architect of social science, presents the notion of sociology as a scientific inquiry with its own repertoire of empirical reality. According to him, the “highly ambiguous” term ‘sociology’, can be defined as “the interpretative understanding of social action in order to arrive at a casual explanation of its causes and effects.” Action is social as long as it takes into account the behavior of others. In other words, the notion that social action cannot exist in isolation forms the central notion of Weber’s conceptualization. This co-dependence of individuals in society not only forms the fundamental understanding of sociology but also sheds light on the larger process of socialization. The core meaning of social action can be located in the collective and not in the singular.

Social action is different from social interaction which tries to study the manner in which the interactions take place. A sub-section of social interaction are social processes which again has many subdivisions as to the way in which the interactions take place. Social relationships are sometimes used in place of social interaction. The basic idea of such categorizations become important subject of study in sociology as it helps us to determine how individual generally reacts and might react. It helps us get an idea about the workings of a particular society and improve on our interactions.

8.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the concept and scope of social action
- Discuss the theories of social action
- Explain the concept of social relationships
- Examine the relationship between social interaction and social processes

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8.2 SOCIAL ACTION: AN OVERVIEW

The concept of **social action** is at the centre of Max Weber's social ideas. According to him all social concepts hinge on the central idea of social action. According to Weber's observation social action is that action of an individual which is influenced by the action and behaviour of other individuals which also modifies or determines its direction. Simply stated, social actions are those actions which are influenced, guided or determined by the actions of other individuals. Pointing out the importance of a sociologist's ability to grasp the subjective quality of human action, Weber wrote, 'a correct causal inter-pretation of a concrete course of action is arrived at when the overt action and the motives have both been correctly apprehended and at the same time their relation has become meaningfully comprehensible.' Weber makes a subtle analysis of the concept of social action, wherein it is regarded as quintessentially human once it is seen in the light of its motive.

Social Work and Social Action

Social action is a process of change which is brought about by the deliberate effort of a group or community. As early as 1922, Mary Richmond, one of the early pioneers of the profession, referred to social action as one of the four processes involved in social work. In fact, according to Richmond, social action was an integral part of the concept of social work which emerged out of liberal, rational and democratic traditions. Early efforts to promote the settlement movement in the US to change the system of charities into a programme of family welfare were motivated by a desire to ameliorate the conditions that prevailed at that time. The question that needs to be discussed, relates to the stage when curative and preventive services start using the process of action for bringing about desired changes. Here we will trace the process of social action and discuss its use in the practice of social work.

As a process of bringing about desired changes, social action includes the following elements:

- Although action might begin with the initiative of one or more individuals, group action is essential for its fulfillment.

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- Action has to be organized and given the shape of a movement.
- Belief in social progress should motivate participants.
- Action should be in accordance with established democratic practices, within the constitutional rights of a citizen.
- The authority of the group arises out of the consent of its members.

The force behind social action lies in group compulsion. A judicious blending of these elements under proper leadership, together with persistent striving and continuous education, helps achieve the desired change. There are, however, some differences between social work professionals and the nature of social action. The first question that arises is: is social action a separate process, or is it part of the three recognized methods of social case work, social group work and community organization? According to some, social action is subordinate to community organization. Others consider it to be complimentary to community organization. In addition to this, there are viewpoints that critique the involvement of compulsion and coercion in promoting social action. The involvement of education is being acknowledged and public opinion in favour of it is being mobilized to initiate social action. The overall objective has to be the greatest good of the greatest number for fulfilling the principles of democracy. Vested interests have to be opposed firmly. Social justice has to be at the very root of all social action.

By its very nature, the application of the process of social action has to be selective. Every effort should be made to bring about desired changes in the nature of social services and social welfare services through education, discussions and deliberations among concerned parties whether it is the government or private parties. Social action should be used only when social advances do not occur through voluntary action. Social action should arise out of the conviction that social justice calls for such action and the specific situation that requires change is a matter of urgency and cannot be left to the slow process of gradualism or voluntary acceptance. Having realized this, leaders in social action should ensure the following:

- Unity of philosophy, opinion and purpose
- Better professional preparation
- Integrated and continuing programmes of social study and research
- Freedom to work jointly with labour unions, professionals and business organizations and civic and other community groups, towards common objectives

The starting point of any social action is identifying the problem. This calls for a study of all factors which are both directly and indirectly related to the situation undertaking their detailed analysis. A study of the situation should also help in indicating a solution. The sources of the study may include records, case studies, unmet needs, recurrent complaints, newspaper reports, observations by people and community-wide surveys. The usual methods of research may include tests

for a working hypothesis, collecting factual statistics and logical inferences. In order to sustain public interest, it is necessary to suggest specific solutions or cures for a given situation against which social action is initiated. In addition to presenting facts to indicate the nature and extent of the problem, social research should also present data to demonstrate that the situation is remediable. Cooperating individuals and groups should be given an opportunity to help in identifying the problem, to review the facts in relation to it and to participate in planning a possible solution. Educating the public should be the objective of social action. Education should be directed not only at the need but also at the type of cure that is likely to be effective. A beginning should be made with a strong core of supporters, and efforts at education and involvement should gradually extend to areas where there is least evidence of vested interests. Even when overall community support is secured, efforts should be made continuously to locate cells of hidden resistance. These efforts should either be isolated or dissolved before the organizational process is given full momentum. Besides individual contacts, group discussions and group participation are effective sources of influence.

Importance of Effective Leadership

The selection of proper leadership is essential for the success of any social action movement. Discovering, training and disciplining leadership should be carefully planned. In selecting leaders, it is necessary to guard against sentimental and hysterical individuals. Worthy and well-meaning people are the first to respond to any urgent call. Social action attracts all types of personalities. While some may seem normal, there are others who may appear obsessed. These individuals could also be battle scarred. Moreno's *Who Shall Survive* gives a detailed account of how social drama, as a form of exhibition for social action, can prove to be useful as a treatment for emotionally disturbed individuals.

Significance of Indigenous Leadership

It is necessary to put the unquestionable zeal of all individuals to work, with judgment, care and understanding. If social action is to lead to the enactment of legislation, some of these individuals may be useful for lobbying by correspondence and contacts. Some of them may prove useful in influencing pressure groups. Efforts, however, should be made to involve indigenous leadership as these people can speak the language of the cause more effectively. Indigenous leaders should not only know each other but should also trust each other despite differences of opinion on extraneous issues. They should continue to promote participation of the people. The effectiveness of social action is dependent on the extent of mass support that the programme enjoys. People should feel that it is their cause and also their programme. This will mean comparative anonymity for organizing individuals, agencies and groups. The leadership should also be representative of all the affected people. Such a cross-section will undoubtedly accentuate difficulties in community organization, but it will help guarantee effective and lasting results.

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Social Legislation as a Form of Social Action

Social legislation is one form of social action which is attempted most frequently in a democracy. If legislation is contemplated, various agencies such as the concerned public administration, members of the legislature and members of the subject committee have to be contacted and provided with detailed information on the need for the legislation. Continuous education of the public and their elected representatives on a given legislation needs to be planned and sustained. Many legislative bills do not get enacted because of lack of skills in handling them at different stages of consideration. Therefore, it is necessary to plan a strategy for providing concerned individuals and groups with information. Propagating expert opinion on a given legislation helps in developing public opinion. A system of lobbying for social legislation needs to be developed by professional organizations as very little is being done in this direction at the moment. One should recognize that social action does not end with the enactment and signing of social legislations. The real test of social action is in the execution of policies. Therefore, social action requires perseverance and constant vigilance.

Extensive studies have been done in recent years on the various aspects of group dynamics—on communication and social change relating to group decisions, overcoming resistance, stationary and quasi-equilibria, social conformity, interaction, isolation, acceptance, rejection, cohesiveness, deviance, assimilation and help in understanding the development and implications of social action. Professor W. H. Sprott in his ‘Josiah Mason Lectures’ delivered at the University of Birmingham traces the influence of these studies in social sciences on social action. These studies clarify various aspects of social action which were hitherto unknown.

However, in spite of the clear conceptual acceptance of social action as a process of social work, and in spite of an advanced body of knowledge available, how is it that there is limited evidence of measures of social action taken either by individuals, professionals, social workers or by professional organizations? This is not an easy question to answer. Social action is universally limited to a few inspired individuals and groups. Although training in social work includes the subject of social action, it is one of the many topics that the subject covers. To a considerable extent, conviction among students depends on the conviction of the teachers in the schools of social work and that of fieldwork supervisors. Besides, the urgency for social action seems to have lessened since Independence. There are other ways, which are easier and more comfortable, for redressing grievances, and for getting change introduced through social legislation. In fact, in recent years social action measures in the country have been added to social legislation. Unfortunately, most of these legislations remain in statute books and much remains to be done for their implementation. Besides, the climate for social action does not exist even for such urgent issues like untouchability, civil liberties and exploitation of women and children in industrial

areas. Under the circumstances, it is difficult to promote social action for securing social services and social welfare services. The social awareness that was prevalent in the pre-Independence era needs to be revived. A professional social worker, in his/her capacity as a citizen and a worker in a social welfare agency or institution and as a member of the profession, is obliged to take social action to modify those conditions which lead to social problems. A social worker is in a unique position to know and be a witness to prevailing social problems that require change. His/her training equips him/her to promote social action. Social research and methods of group work and community organization provide him/her the wherewithal to take such action.

Typology of Social Action

Weber classifies social action according to its mode of orientation. Typically, any scientist should start with observable data and then proceed on to higher levels of abstraction. According to Weber in tune with other sciences, even sociology basically studies sociology social action. This is an observable phenomenon and rightly forms the crux of Weber's analysis as it is an interpretative understanding of the subjective meaning of social action.

For social action there must be a minimum of mutual orientation. That is, taking the simplest kind of interaction, the alter ego situation, the alter ego's behaviour must be influenced by and oriented to the ego and vice-versa. Such an action does not become social action because there is no mutual orientation. For instance, the fact that all people who are out open their umbrellas when it rains, does not imply social action because each person is reacting individually to an external stimulus which incidentally is common to all. On the mode of orientation, Weber classified social action into four types:

1. Zweckrational action
2. Westrational action
3. Affectual action
4. Traditional action

1. Zweckrational Action

This is a purely rational action. It means that an actor who is fully conscious of the end he wants to achieve selects the appropriate means towards the attainment of his goal. Economic behaviour is purely rational in the sense that a producer chooses the cheapest and most efficient means in the production of goods. Every entrepreneur aims at an optimum level of production using the best and most efficient means for achieving this end. Hence, he chooses from the alternatives available to him to achieve this goal and exercises the rationality principle. His decision is purely rational in economic terms. This is referred to as 'Zweckrational action' by Weber.

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2. Westrational Action

The second kind of action is Westrational action in which an actor is governed by values. Here logic refers more to the means than to the end because the end may or may not be true. Religious behaviour in which people engage in a number of activities to achieve certain things, is a typical example of this kind of social action. Whether a devotee achieves his ends through a particular religious mean cannot be known but the fact that he engages in prayers and other related activities denotes that he is influenced by religion as a value.

3. Affectual Action

The third kind of action is Affectual in which sentiments, emotions and certain other states of mind play an important part. For example, the affectual relationship among members of a family. A mother loves her children not because she finds it gainful to do so, but purely because she cannot help loving her children. Here the role of sentiments and affection is the base of actions and kinship bonds among the members of the group cannot be ignored under any conditions of study.

4. Traditional Action

Traditional behaviour is the fourth kind of action. This action is performed merely because it has always been performed. All customs, folkways and mores belong to this category. A particular way of dressing, for instance, is followed because that is what people before have been following. Observing some rites and performing ceremonies are matters more of custom than rationality.

Weber broadly classified these four kinds of action into rational and irrational typologies. This classification, however, is not mutually exclusive because a particular action may come under both these typologies. Marginal causes are not uncommon in sociological knowledge. However, the typologies of social action propounded by Weber have been the bane not of 'social action' as such but that of an 'ideal type' of analysis. Ideal types, referred to as standards for comparative methods are based on the Zweckrational classification of social action and these formulations are immense in modern sociological theory.

8.2.1 Scope of Social Action

Social action as a method of bringing about political and economic change although known to developing countries for liberation from foreign rule, did not find commitment among social work professionals as such. Those who believed in social action left the profession and joined the company of social activities.

Research Studies

Research studies on identification of social problems have emerged among social scientists, especially sociologists and social anthropologists; they have also been

found among a few students of social work. Studies on the methodology of social intervention as well as on strengthening social functions of individuals, groups, local communities and institutions, are few in number as Ramachandran has concluded. According to him growth in social work research in India has been uneven. Greater attention has been paid to writings on social policy, planning and social administration. The recent development of doctoral studies in some schools of social work gives hope that there will be advanced studies on adaptation and effectiveness of social work education in social conditions in Indian society.

Search for Specialization

In most developing countries the conflict between generic and specialized courses of social work in education has come to surface. With increasing employment opportunities demand for specialized training is also being felt. This began with separate emphasis on contents for courses in labour welfare and personnel management which was later extended to streams including medical, psychiatry and school social work. The detailed requirements for these fields, especially as these are reflected in case studies, offered opportunities for indigenization. At the same time, specialization divided professional loyalties and disturbed the unity of the profession.

Fieldwork Practices

Fieldwork practices offer the most effective opportunity of understanding people's requirements in the background of prevailing cultural traditions and values, and thus offer opportunities to indigenize practices. These also provide opportunities for innovation. Some schools have adopted 'floating fieldwork' while others have taken up the 'see-saw approach'. The most pronounced adaptation was carried out by the Department of Social Work, University of Philippines, when it shifted the faculty and the student body to rural areas for one term, thus adopting a rural base in learning theory, conducting surveys and research, gathering case studies and integrating fieldwork with rural requirements. However, this effective effort at indigenization did not last long in the urban culture of the profession.

A number of meetings and conferences were held by the UN Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and by the regional branches of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW) to relate social work with regional requirements. The most deliberative effort was made in Drucker's study of 'Exploration'. Unfortunately, the impact of these deliberations has been marginal. Studying the impact of UN efforts on social work education and practice in the region will be a valuable exercise.

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Check Your Progress

1. List three issues that leaders in social action should ensure for its success.
2. List two elements that social action must incorporate.
3. According to Weber what do all social concepts hinge on?
4. What is the most common problem to have emerged among social scientists?
5. How has fieldwork enhanced social research?

8.3 SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, INTERACTION AND SOCIAL PROCESS

In this section, we will discuss the concept of social interaction and social process. Let us first begin by studying the concept of social interaction.

Social Interaction

Social Interaction is nothing but the process or the interaction between the members of the society due to which there is a change or influencing of one set of attitudes, values or ideals.

Social interaction can occur in three forms:

- Person to person
- Person to group
- Group to group

Two conditions are essential for the occurrence of social interaction: social contact and communication. Social contact is nothing but the sense organ receiving and perceiving the communicated message. The means of communication is essential to social contact.

Another very important factor about social interaction is that it can occur in four forms: accidental, repeated, regular, and regulated.

- **Accidental social interaction:** It refers to social interaction which does not have any further consequences. It is unplanned and unrepeatable.
- **Repeated social interaction:** These are actions which have happened before, do not happen all the time and have the possibility of occurring from time to time.
- **Regular social interaction:** These are social interaction which happen regularly, not planned but very common.
- **Regulated social interaction:** It refers to actions which are regulated by rules, regulations and customs.

The empirical study of social interaction is a subject of microsociology which includes the subjects of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology.

Symbolic Interactionism is a study in which elements like words, gestures, sounds and actions form the basis of communication of ideas. This is based on the premise that humans use things to interact and these have ascribed meanings based on the culture and the individual's perception. Another study includes the study of symbols that are shared for communication, patterns of behaviour and the roles humans assume in specific situations.

The term **ethnomethodology** literally means the methods that people use on a daily basis to accomplish their everyday lives.

To put it slightly differently, the social world is seen as an ongoing practical accomplishment. People are viewed as rational, but they use practical reasoning in accomplishing their everyday lives. The emphasis in ethnomethodology is on what people do, whereas, in phenomenological sociology, it is on what people think.

However, while ethnomethodologists focus on action, it is action that implies and involves a thoughtful actor; ethnomethodology does not deny the existence of mental processes.

Social Relationships

The term social relationship is very commonly used interchangeably with the word social interaction. The primary relationships correspond to primary social groups which are generally characterized by three distinct features: direct, personal and intimate interactions. Secondary relationships similarly correspond to the formation of secondary groups which are characterized by impersonal and generally constituted to fulfill specific collective interests or goals. We will study about the primary and secondary social groups in Unit 10.

Generally, the study of social relationships focuses on the following factors:

- Structural changes in relations
- Variations over life course
- Individual relations within the society
- Diversity of relationships
- And factors like inequality and dynamic relations

Social Processes

There are different types of social interaction and these types of recurring interactions which form a social relationship are called social processes. It is crucial to remember that social processes are only a certain specific type of social interaction. It is essential that a social interaction is observable, consistent and has a specific direction to be deemed as a social process.

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Further social processes can be classified on different bases:

1. On the basis of formation including
 - (i) Universal or basic social processes
 - (ii) Derived social processes
2. On the basis of unity or opposition
 - (i) Conjunctive social processes
 - (ii) Disjunctive social processes

We will discuss in detail the conjunctive and disjunctive social processes in Unit 9.

Check Your Progress

6. State the two conditions essential for the occurrence of social interaction.
7. What are the repeated social interaction?

**8.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
QUESTIONS**

1. Three points that leaders in social action should ensure for its success are as follows:
 - unity of philosophy, opinion and purpose
 - better professional preparation
 - integrated and continuing programmes of social study and research
2. Two elements that social action must incorporate are:
 - Although action might begin with the initiative of one or more individuals, group action is essential for its fulfillment.
 - Action has to be organized and given the shape of a movement.
3. The concept of social action is at the centre of Max Weber's social ideas. According to him all social concepts hinge on the central idea of social action.
4. Identification of social problems and uneven growth are some of the problems to have emerged among social scientists.
5. Fieldwork practices offer the most effective opportunity of understanding people's requirements in the background of prevailing cultural traditions and values.
6. Two conditions essential for the occurrence of social interaction are: social contact and communication.

7. Repeated social interaction are actions which have happened before, do not happen all the time and have the possibility of occurring from time to time.

8.5 SUMMARY

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- The concept of social action is at the centre of Max Weber's social ideas. According to him all social concepts hinge on the central idea of social action. According to Weber's observation social action is that action of an individual which is influenced by the action and behaviour of other individuals which also modifies or determines its direction.
- Social action is a process of change which is brought about by the deliberate effort of a group or community.
- The force behind social action lies in group compulsion. A judicious blending of these elements under proper leadership, together with persistent striving and continuous education, helps achieve the desired change. There are, however, some differences between social work professionals and the nature of social action.
- By its very nature, the application of the process of social action has to be selective. Every effort should be made to bring about desired changes in the nature of social services and social welfare services through education, discussions and deliberations among concerned parties whether it is the government or private parties.
- The starting point of any social action is identifying the problem. This calls for a study of all factors which are both directly and indirectly related to the situation undertaking their detailed analysis.
- Social legislation is one form of social action which is attempted most frequently in a democracy. If legislation is contemplated, various agencies such as the concerned public administration, members of the legislature and members of the subject committee have to be contacted and provided with detailed information on the need for the legislation.
- Weber classifies social action according to its mode of orientation. Typically, any scientist should start with observable data and then proceed on to higher levels of abstraction. According to Weber in tune with other sciences, even sociology basically studies sociology social action. This is an observable phenomenon and rightly forms the crux of Weber's analysis as it is an interpretative understanding of the subjective meaning of social action.
- On the mode of orientation, Weber classified social action into four types:
 1. Zweckrational action
 2. Westrational action

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3. Affectual action

4. Traditional action

- Social action as a method of bringing about political and economic change although known to developing countries for liberation from foreign rule, did not find commitment among social work professionals as such. Those who believed in social action left the profession and joined the company of social activities.
- Social Interaction is nothing but the process or the interaction between the members of the society due to which there is a change or influencing of one set of attitudes, values or ideals.
- Two conditions are essential for the occurrence of social interaction: social contact and communication. Social contact is nothing but the sense organ receiving and perceiving the communicated message. The means of communication is essential to social contact. Another very important factor about social interaction is that it can occur in four forms: accidental, repeated, regular, and regulated.
- Symbolic Interactionism is a study in which elements like words, gestures, sounds and actions form the basis of communication of ideas. This is based on the premise that humans use things to interact and these have ascribed meanings based on the culture and the individual's perception.
- The term social relationship is very commonly used interchangeably with the word social interaction. The primary relationships correspond to primary social groups which are generally characterized by three distinct features: direct, personal and intimate interactions. Secondary relationships similarly correspond to the formation of secondary groups which are characterized by impersonal and generally constituted to fulfill specific collective interests or goals.
- There are different types of social interaction and these types of recurring interactions which form a social relationship are called social processes. It is crucial to remember that social processes are only a certain specific type of social interaction. It is essential that a social interaction is observable, consistent and has a specific direction to be deemed as a social process.

8.6 KEY WORDS

- **Social action:** It refers to that action of an individual which is influenced by the action and behaviour of other individuals which also modifies or determines its direction.
- **Fieldwork practices:** It refers to the practices which provide opportunities for innovation.

- **Social Interaction:** It refers to the process or the interaction between the members of the society due to which there is a change or influencing of one set of attitudes, values or ideals.
- **Ethnomethodology:** It refers to the methods that people use on daily basis to accomplish their everyday lives.
- **Social processes:** It refers to the types of recurring interactions which form a social relationship.

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8.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Give the difference between social work and social action.
2. List the various elements of social action.
3. List what all should an effective leadership ensure in social action.
4. What are the different types of social interactions?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write a descriptive note on social legislation as a form of social action.
2. Analyse the typology of social action.
3. What are the factors considered for studying social relationships?

8.8 FURTHER READINGS

- Bottmore, T.B. 2008. *Sociology — A Guide to Problems and Literature*. Delhi: S. Chand.
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BLOCK - IV
SOCIAL PROCESSES, SOCIAL GROUPS
AND SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS

**UNIT 9 SOCIAL INTERACTIONS:
ASSOCIATIVE AND
DISASSOCIATIVE**

Structure

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Objectives
- 9.2 Associative/Conjunctive
 - 9.2.1 Cooperation
 - 9.2.2 Accomodation
 - 9.2.3 Assimilation
 - 9.2.4 Diffusion
- 9.3 Diassociative/Disjunctive
 - 9.3.1 Competition
 - 9.3.2 Conflict
- 9.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 9.5 Summary
- 9.6 Key Words
- 9.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 9.8 Further Readings

9.0 INTRODUCTION

We have learnt in the previous unit that social interactions may be of many types and prominent among social interactions are social processes which show a repetitive pattern of interactions. Not all social interactions are of the same nature. Social interactions have a bearing on both parties and the social relationships alter due to these interactions. Some social interactions are positive for the both parties involved and help in their development whereas other social interactions negatively impact the characteristics of one party due to the other. This division of social interactions on the basis of their overall affect on the groups involved is our focus in this unit. We will study two broad types of social processes: associative and dissociative forms. These forms of social interaction are also designated as social processes.

9.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the meaning of cooperation
- Discuss the concept of accommodation
- Learn the importance of assimilation
- Interpret the idea of diffusion
- Examine the concept of competition
- Discuss the meaning of conflict

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9.2 ASSOCIATIVE/CONJUNCTIVE

Also known as integrative process of social interaction. These types of social interactions are positive in nature, in the sense that it brings about the unity among the members of the society. People, as a part of associative social interaction tend to help each other out in the society by balancing and aligning their interests with that of other members of the society.

Associative forms of social interaction can be divided into three categories:

- (i) Cooperation
- (ii) Accommodation
- (iii) Assimilation

9.2.1 Cooperation

Cooperation is the most pervasive and continuous form of social processes. It integrates one individual with the other, it also integrates one community with the other. The word 'cooperation' has been derived from two Latin words, *co* means together and *operari* means work. Cooperation generally means working together in pursuit of continuous and common endeavour of two or more persons to perform a task or to reach a goal that is commonly cherished. According to Merrill and Eldredge, 'Cooperation is a form of social interaction wherein two or more persons work together to gain a common end'. Cooperation always requires joint or organized efforts and a common end.

According to Cooley, 'Cooperation arises when men see that they have a common interest and have at the same time, sufficient intelligence and self control to seek this interest through united action. Perceived unity of interest and faculty of organization are the essential facts in intelligent combination'. Cooperation also requires mutual aid. Cooperation is possible when there are similarity of purpose, mutual awareness, mutual understanding and mutual helpfulness. Cooperation is brought about by several circumstances like, desire to active common goal, situational necessity, desire to achieve larger objective, etc.

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The modes of cooperation in social life may be divided into two principal types:

- (a) Direct cooperation
- (b) Indirect cooperation

Direct cooperation may include all activities which people perform together. The essential character of these activities is that people perform them in company, which they cannot do separately or in isolation. When two or three companies carry a load together which would be very annoying for one of them to carry alone, such a cooperation may be characterized as direct cooperation.

Indirect cooperation may include those activities which people perform, unlike tasks towards a common goal. The principle of division of labour, that is embedded in the nature of social life, exemplifies indirect cooperation. This mode of cooperation is revealed wherever people combine their differences for mutual satisfaction or for a common goal.

Cooperation is a universal phenomenon. Without cooperation, neither an individual nor a community will survive. Mutual aid starts with cooperation in rearing of progeny and in the provision of protection and food. Even among the lowest group of animals such as ants and termites, cooperation is evident for survival.

9.2.2 Accommodation

Accommodation is essentially a process of adjustment, a sort of working arrangement among persons or groups who are not favourably disposed towards each another. Just as adaptation is a biological process, so is accommodation a social process. The question of accommodation arises only in situations of conflict. Had there been no conflict, there would have been no necessity for adjustment and hence no need for accommodation. A compromise that is reached by conflicting parties is termed as accommodation.

Accommodation is the resolution of conflicts which generally means adjusting oneself to the new environment. Adjustment may be to the physical or social environment. Adjustment to physical environment takes place through organic or structural modification that is transmitted by heredity and is termed as adaptation, while adjustment to social environment is achieved by an individual through the acquisition of behaviour patterns. These behavioural patterns are transmitted socially and through adoption of new ways of behaving and are called accommodation. Therefore, animals that are lower than man adjust themselves most frequently through adaptation; man does this primarily through accommodation as he lives in a truly social environment. Accommodation is a social process, whereas adaptation is a biological process.

Modes of accommodation

Accommodation is social adaptation that involves the invention or borrowing of devices whereby one ethnic group develops modes of life, economic and otherwise. These modes complement or supplement those of others groups. It is primarily

concerned with the adjustment issuing from the conflict between individuals and groups. In a society, individuals have to resolve their conflicts sooner or later. This compromise that is reached by conflicting parties is accommodation. According to Park and Burgess, in accommodation the antagonism between conflicting elements is temporarily regulated. This is why Sumner referred to accommodation as antagonistic cooperation. Accommodation or resolution of conflicts may be brought about in many different ways and accordingly, may assume various forms. The most important of these forms are:

Compromise: When the combatants are equal in strength and neither may be able to prevail over the other, they attain accommodation by agreeing to a compromise. In compromise each party to the dispute makes some concessions, yields to some concessions and yields to some demand of the other. The 'all or nothing' attitude gives way to a willingness to yield up to a certain point in order to gain other. A compromise is a state in which everyone can find consolation for his disappointment by reflecting that everyone else is disappointed too. The settlement of disputes in the parliament involves accommodation of this kind.

Arbitration and conciliation: This is also achieved by means of arbitration and conciliation which involves attempts on the part of the third party to bring an end to the conflict between contending parties. The labour management conflict, political or famitial conflicts may be through the intervention of an arbitrator or a mediator in whom both the parties have complete confidence. In international law, mediation or arbitration is a recognized mode of settling international disputes.

Toleration: This is the form of accommodation in which there is no settlement of difference but there is only the avoidance of overt conflict. In toleration, no concession is made by any of the groups and there is no change in the basic policy. It involves accepting a group despite some state of affairs that are definitely objectionable to the other group. However, each group must bear with the other. Toleration is best exemplified, particularly in the field of religion, where the different religious groups exist side by side. Each has some rights over others which it can also claim for itself. The coexistence of states with radically different economic and social systems such as communist and capitalist systems is an example of toleration. The difference in such cases cannot be resolved as they involve irreconcilable ideologies.

Superordination and subordination: The most common accommodation is the establishment and recognition of the order of superordination and subordination. The organization of any society is essentially a result of this type of accommodation. In a family, relationships among parents and children are based in terms of superordination and subordination. In larger groups, whether social or economic, relationships are fixed on the same basis. Even under a democratic order, there are leaders and followers who give orders and others who follow them. When individuals ordinarily accept their relative positions as a matter-of-fact, accommodation is said to have reached a state of perfection.

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- Accommodation also checks conflicts and enables persons and groups to maintain cooperation, which is an essential condition of social life.
- It also enables individuals to adjust themselves to changed conditions. Therefore, it is not only controls but also maintains the necessary security of a social order, without which it may be difficult for the individuals to carry on their activities together.
- Society is the result of accommodation.

9.2.3 Assimilation

Assimilation refers to a process whereby a group of people that has lived among another group of people for a considerable period of time, adopts the ways of life of the latter. This way both groups are completely indistinguishable from each other. Assimilation is both psychological and social. According to Nimkoff, 'Assimilation is the process whereby individuals or groups, once dissimilar, become similar and identified in their interests and outlook'. According to Lundberg 'Assimilation is a word used to designate a process of mutual adjustment through which culturally different groups gradually obliterate their differences to the point where they are no longer regarded as socially significant or observable'.

According to Horton and Hunt, 'The process of mutual cultural diffusion through which persons and groups come to share a common culture is called assimilation'.

According to Park and Burgess, 'Assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, attitudes of other persons or groups and by sharing their experiences and history are incorporated with them in a cultural life'.

When different cultures come into contact, originally it is the sentiment of mutual conflict that is most prominent, but they gradually assimilate elements from each other. In the process of assimilation, the two distinct groups do not just compromise to get along with each other, they also become much like each other, such that they are no longer distinguishable as separate groups. Assimilation is a social and a psychological process.

Assimilation also takes place with foreigners or migrants, who are assimilated in the host culture. Assimilation takes place in the other way round. It is a very slow and gradual process, it takes quite some time for individuals or groups who were once dissimilar to become similar, that is become identified by their interests and outlook. Acculturation takes place before assimilation, when one cultural group which is in contact with another appropriates or borrows certain cultural elements from it and incorporates them into its own culture. Social contact and acquisition of new values and norm are also part of assimilation.

Hurdles in assimilation

Assimilation is not a simple but an essentially complex process. There are certain factors which facilitate assimilation and others, which create hurdles in the process of assimilation.

According to Gillin and Gillin, factors that favour assimilation are:

- (a) Tolerance
- (b) Equal economic opportunity
- (c) Sympathetic attitude on part of the dominant group, towards the minority group
- (d) Exposure to dominant culture
- (e) Similarity between cultures of the minority and dominant groups

Factors that go against assimilation are:

- (a) Isolated condition of life
- (b) Attitude of superiority on part of the dominant group
- (c) Excessive psychological pressure
- (d) Cultural and social difference between the groups
- (e) Persecution of the minority group by the majority group

According to McIver, cultural differences, particularly those of language and religion are usually considered to be the main constitutions of culture. Immigrants having the same religion and language as people of the country of their adoption can easily adjust themselves there. For example, in USA English speaking people are assimilated quickly and easily, whereas those who do not speak English face difficulty in being assimilated there. Customs and beliefs are other cultural characteristics which can aid or hinder assimilation.

Prejudice may also impede assimilation. As long as the dominant group prejudices against those who have been set apart, neither the other group nor their individual members can easily become assimilated to the general culture. Prejudice also impedes assimilation between constituent elements within a given society. Religious groups often allow the social distance that is created by prejudice to maintain there separateness. Prejudice may be the outcome of some unpleasant experiences such as, fear of losing superior status, dread of economic competition or some form of collective phobia.

The differences between assimilation and accommodation are shown in Table 9.1

Table 9.1 *Differences between Assimilation and Accommodation*

Assimilation	Accommodation
Assimilation is permanent.	Accommodation is non-permanent.
Assimilation is a slow process.	Accommodation may be a sudden process.
Assimilation is unconscious.	Accommodation is deliberate.

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9.2.4 Diffusion

As we have mentioned in earlier units. Diffusion is a type of social change. In essence, diffusion is a type of social change in which the elements of one society or culture makes it way to become part of another culture or society. It is considered to a be a positive element since it is not rigidly or forcefully imposed like colonization. Diffusion happens in the form of culture and in the form of innovation. Modern society as we know it today is considered to be a result of cultural diffusion. The elements which get transferred in cultural diffusion include knowledge, ideas, values, beliefs, symbols, practices and behaviours. One primary example can be the acceptance and practice of yoga in the western societies.

The idea of cultural diffusion started in the mid-nineteenth century through arguments made by anthropologists like Edward Taylor who sought to explain the theory of evolution but for cultural similarities. Following this, several sociologists have also discussed and developed the theory of cultural diffusion. The principle idea remains that the elements of cultural exchange takes place when different societies co-exist and interact with each other. The more the interaction, the more the level of cultural diffusion.

Basic ideas of cultural diffusion include:

- Elements of foreign culture which bear semblance to some of the elements of host culture are adapted.
- The adaptation of elements occurs to fit ideas of the foreign culture within the sensibilities of the host culture.
- The ideas that are too foreign for the host culture is weeded out by the members of the host culture.
- Only the elements of the foreign culture which develop or improve the host culture are adapted.
- Cultures which borrow or adapt foreign culture are likely to more openly accept further more elements from the foreign culture.

Check Your Progress

1. What is indirect cooperation?
2. Is accommodation a social or a biological process?
3. When is accommodation considered to reach its perfection?
4. What is the form of accommodation in which there is no settlement of difference but there is only the avoidance of overt conflict?

9.3 DIASSOCIATIVE/DISJUNCTIVE

*Social Interactions:
Associative and
Disassociative*

Dissociative forms of social processes can be divided into two categories:

- (i) Competition
- (ii) Conflict

9.3.1 Competition

According to Kingsley Davis, 'Competition simply aims to outdo the competitor in achieving a mutually desired goal. The urge to outdo arises only when the desired goal is in scarce supply. Competition is actually the most fundamental form of social struggle. It is also considered to be a very healthy and a necessary social process. Competitive spirit is deliberately inculcated in order to produce a result which is considered to be socially desirable.

Here are a few definitions of competition.

According to Anderson and Parker, 'Competition is that form of social action in which we strive against each other for the possession of or use of limited material or non-material good'. According to Bogardus 'Competition is a contest to obtain something which does not exist in a quantity that is sufficient to meet the demand.

Sutherland, Woodward and Maxwell defined competition as, 'Competition is an impersonal, unconscious, continuous struggle between individuals or groups for satisfaction which, because of their limited supply, all may not have'.

- (a) Competition is impersonal struggle: According to Park and Burgess, 'Competition is an 'interaction without social contact'. It means that it is an inter-individual struggle that is impersonal. It is usually not directed against any individual or group in particular. The competitors are not in contact and do not know each other.
- (b) Competition is an unconscious activity. It takes place on an unconscious level
- (c) Competition is universal. It is found in every society and in every age group.
- (d) Competition is not an inborn tendency; it is a social phenomenon. It takes place only when the desired thing is in short supply.
- (e) Competition can be seen at different levels like social, cultural, political and economic.

9.3.2 Conflict

According to Gillin and Gillin, 'Conflict is the process in which individuals or groups seek their ends by directly challenging the antagonist either by violence or by threat of violence.' As a social process it is the anti-thesis of cooperation. Conflict is conscious action. It is a deliberate intent to oppose. Conflict is also universal.

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Conflict expresses itself in numerous ways and in various degrees and over every range of human conduct. Its modes are always changing with changes in social and cultural conditions. Some types disappear and new types emerge.

According to Maclver, conflict can be divided into two types. These are:

a. Direct conflict and b. Indirect conflict

(a) **Direct conflict:** When individual or groups thwart, impede, restrain, injure or destroy one another in an effort to attain a common goal, direct conflict occurs.

(b) **Indirect conflict:** When individuals or groups do not actually impede the efforts of one another but nevertheless, seek to attain their ends in ways that obstruct the attainment of the same ends by the other, indirect conflict occurs.

Kingsley Davis has argued, 'Conflict is a part of human society because of the kind of society. He further observed, 'As a matter of fact, society itself engenders conflict situations and cannot avoid doing so. By allotting different statuses to different people, it lays the base for envy and resentment. By giving authority to one person over another, it sets the stage for the abuse of authority and for retaliation by force. By instilling ends that are competitive, it makes it possible for competition to convert into violence.,

As we have discussed, conflict is universal. It occurs at all times and in every place. There has never been a time or a society in which some individuals or groups did not come into conflict. According to Malthus, scarce means of subsistence is the cause of conflict. According to Darwin, the principle of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest are the main causes of conflict. According to Freud, 'the innate instinct for aggression in man is the main cause of conflict'. It arises primarily due to a clash of interests within groups and societies and between groups and societies. Conflict also arises as a result of the difference between the rate of change in moral norms of a society and men's desire, hopes, dissatisfactions and demands.

Cultural differences among groups sometimes cause tension and lead to conflict. Religious differences have occasionally led to wars and persecution in history. Clash of interests also cause conflict. The interest of worker, clash with those of the reading employers to conflict among them. When a part of society does not change along with changes in other parts, then conflict occurs. Social change causes a cultural lag which leads to a conflict.

Check Your Progress

5. What are the different levels at which competition can be seen?
6. When does an indirect conflict occur?

9.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

*Social Interactions:
Associative and
Disassociative*

1. Indirect cooperation may include those activities which people perform, unlike tasks towards a common goal. The principle of division of labour, that is embedded in the nature of social life, exemplifies indirect cooperation. This mode of cooperation is revealed wherever people combine their differences for mutual satisfaction or for a common goal.
2. Accommodation is a social process, whereas adaptation is a biological process.
3. Tolerance is the form of accommodation in which there is no settlement of difference but there is only the avoidance of overt conflict.
4. When individuals ordinarily accept their relative positions as a matter-of-fact, accommodation is said to have reached a state of perfection.
5. Competition can be seen at different levels like social, cultural, political and economic.
6. When individuals or groups do not actually impede the efforts of one another but nevertheless, seek to attain their ends in ways that obstruct the attainment of the same ends by the other, indirect conflict occurs.

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9.5 SUMMARY

- Social interaction is the most important aspect of social life. Social interaction is also essential for survival of any community and culture.
- Also known as integrative process of social interaction. These types of social interactions are positive in nature, in the sense that it brings about the unity among the members of the society. People, as a part of associative social interaction tend to help each other out in the society by balancing and aligning their interests with that of other members of the society.
- Associative forms of social interaction can be divided into three categories:
 - (i) Cooperation
 - (ii) Accommodation
 - (iii) Assimilation
- Cooperation is the most pervasive and continuous of the social processes. It integrates one individual with other individual; it also integrates one community with other community.
- Accommodation is essentially a process of adjustment, a sort of working arrangement among persons or groups who are not favourably disposed towards one another.

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- The most important of these forms are: Compromise, Arbitration and conciliation, Toleration, Superordination and subordination.
- Assimilation refers to a process whereby a group of people, having lived among another group of people for a considerable period of time, adopts the way of life of the latter in such a way as to be completely indistinguishable from the later.
- Diffusion is a type of social change. In essence, diffusion is a type of social change in which the elements of one society or culture makes it way to become part of another culture or society. It is considered to a be a positive element since it is not rigidly or forcefully imposed like colonization. Diffusion happens in the form of culture and in the form of innovation.
- Dissociative forms of social processes can be divided into two categories:
 - (i) Competition
 - (ii) Conflict
- According to Kingsley Davis, 'Competition simply aims to outdo the competitor in achieving a mutually desired goal. The urge to outdo arises only when the desired goal is in scarce supply. Competition is actually the most fundamental form of social struggle. It is also considered to be a very healthy and a necessary social process. Competitive spirit is deliberately inculcated in order to produce a result which is considered to be socially desirable.
- According to Gillin and Gillin, 'Conflict is the process in which individuals or groups seek their ends by directly challenging the antagonist either by violence or by threat of violence.' As a social process it is the anti-thesis of cooperation. Conflict is conscious action. It is a deliberate intent to oppose. Conflict is also universal. Conflict expresses itself in numerous ways and in various degrees and over every range of human conduct. Its modes are always changing with changes in social and cultural conditions. Some types disappear and new types emerge.

9.6 KEY WORDS

- **Cooperation:** It generally means working together in pursuit of continuous and common endeavour of two or more persons to perform a task or to reach a goal that is commonly cherished.
- **Accommodation:** It is essentially a process of adjustment, a sort of working arrangement among persons or groups who are not favourably disposed towards each another.
- **Assimilation:** It refers to a process whereby a group of people that has lived among another group of people for a considerable period of time, adopts the ways of life of the latter.

- **Competition:** It refers to that form of social action in which we strive against each other for the possession of or use of limited material or non-material good.
- **Conflict:** It is a deliberate intent to oppose.

*Social Interactions:
Associative and
Disassociative*

NOTES

9.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Define associative social interactions.
2. Mention the ways in which adjustment to physical environment takes place.
3. Briefly state the hurdles in assimilation.
4. Differentiate assimilation and accommodation.
5. What is diffusion?
6. What are the types of conflict as per MacIver?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the disassociative type of social interactions.
2. What are the modes of cooperation in social life? Discuss.
3. Explain the conjunctive social interactions.

9.8 FURTHER READINGS

- Bottmore, T.B. 2008. *Sociology — A Guide to Problems and Literature*. Delhi: S. Chand.
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UNIT 10 SOCIAL GROUPS

NOTES

Structure

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Objectives
- 10.2 Social Groups: An Overview
- 10.3 Types of Social Groups: Characteristics and Functions
 - 10.3.1 Primary Groups
 - 10.3.2 Secondary Groups
 - 10.3.3 Differences between Primary and Secondary Groups
 - 10.3.4 Reference Groups
- 10.4 Peer Groups in Modern Society
- 10.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 10.6 Summary
- 10.7 Key Words
- 10.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 10.9 Further Readings

10.0 INTRODUCTION

A major area of study of sociology includes the social groups. A social group comprises of two or more people who share similar characteristics and, hence, a sense of identity. We all typically belong to a social group such as workplace, sports team, clubs, and so forth. There are basically two types of social groups namely, primary and secondary groups. Also, one should consider the fact that peer groups influence an individual by providing emotional support and providing opportunities to develop friendship. In this unit, you will study about the meaning and types of social groups and the influence of peer groups in modern society.

10.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Interpret the meaning of social groups
- Discuss the types of social groups
- Analyse the position of peer groups in modern society

10.2 SOCIAL GROUPS: AN OVERVIEW

The famous sociologist H.M. Johnson had remarked, ‘Sociology is the science that deals with social groups.’ This shows the importance of social groups in sociology.

When two or more people having common outlooks and identities, interact, they tend to form what is called a social group. It is human nature to seek the company of other human beings to live forming groups and seldom do we find someone living all alone in solidarity. Every human begins life as a member of a group called family, in which he grows and eventually passes away as part of the group. In the course of his lifetime, the individual forms associations to meet and attain shared aspirations of the group (family), which in turn play a key role in shaping one's personality throughout one's life.

Two words, 'social' and 'group' make up the term social group, by which, we essentially mean a collection or group of men and women or a mix of both. But, the term social refers to social relationships or shared behaviours. Likewise, in the words of E.S. Bogardus, well-known figure in the history of American sociology, the term, 'Group refers to a number of units of anything in close proximity with one another'. In case of human beings as Maclver and Page say, a group is 'Any collection of human beings who are brought into social relationships with one another'. In the same tone, a social group is an assemblage of people who interact and participate to carry out similar activities and have a realization of joint interaction. Some degree of reciprocity and mutual awareness among the individuals exists in this case.

Being organized is one of the key characteristics of a social group. The members of a social group have a definite relationship with each other and as such share reciprocal and a recognized pattern of interactions with each other. Sociologically, a group is a collection of individuals who have come together into a socially accepted relationship and establish and consolidate themselves so as to fulfil mutually shared aims.

In order to completely understand the term 'social group', a distinction must be made with similar sounding terms such as, 'Social Aggregates', 'Social Category' and 'Potential Group' or 'Quasi Group'.

Simply put, a social aggregate is a group of individuals who are in a specific place at a specific time but share no certain relationship with one another. For example; the passengers in a train or any form of public transportation. However, a social category refers to a collection of people who have some unique common characteristics. For example; members of a certain caste, sex, age and occupational groups constitute a social category.

A potential or quasi group involves a group of individuals who have some common characteristics, but, do not possess any recognizable structure. However, a **potential or quasi group** becomes a social group if/when it becomes organized. Firstly, a social group has an organisational aspect. This essentially means that it has rules, regulations, rivals and structure. Secondly, a social group has a psychological aspect. This means that there exists an awareness or consciousness among the members. The members of a social group are linked together in a system of varied social relationships with one another and they interact and

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co-operate with one other as per norms of the group. Furthermore, a social group is also very dynamic in nature.

Let us study some of the prominent definitions of a social group—as defined by renowned sociologists.

- As per Ogburn and Nimkoff, ‘Whenever two or more individuals come together and influence one another, they may be said to constitute a social group’.
- As per A.W. Green, ‘A group is an aggregate of individuals which persists in time, which has one or more interests and activities in common which is organized.’
- As per Horton and Hunt, ‘Groups are aggregates or categories of people who have a consciousness of membership and of interaction.’
- As per Maclver and Page, a social group is ‘Any collection of human beings who are brought into human relationships with one another’.
- As per Williams, ‘A social group is a given aggregate people playing inter-related roles and recognized by themselves or others as a unit of interaction.’
- As per E.S. Bogardus, ‘A social group may be thought of as a number of persons two or more, who have some common objects of attention who are stimulating to each other, who have common loyalty and participate in similar activities.’

The important characteristics of a social group are as follows:

- **Social groups have a certain given number of individuals:** A social group comprises of a given number of persons. It is not possible to form a social group without a given number of persons. A minimum of two individuals constitute a group. This number may vary depending on how large the group may be. These individuals are considered to be a unit of the group as they belong to the group as group members.
- **Reciprocal relations within social groups:** All group members have a reciprocal relationship with one another and this relationship is the very foundation or basis of a social group without which a social group will cease to exist. It is also important that group members must interact with one another.
- **Social groups have common goals:** Having common goals is another vital feature of a social group. The group members have common set of aims, objectives and principles and it is for the accomplishment of these common goals that social groups are formed. It is important to note here that an individual’s interests are always superseded by the group’s interests.
- **Social groups provide sense of solidarity and unity:** A sense of unity and a bond of unanimity, common goals amongst members of a group always characterize a social group. Moreover, mutual relationships further reinforce

this bond of solidarity which generates a feeling of loyalty and consideration amid fellow members of group.

- **Social groups have a strong sense of a ‘we-feeling’:** ‘We-feeling’ is strongly imbibed amongst the members of a social group. It is actually the ‘we-feeling’ which cultivates sense of cooperation and a feeling togetherness between its members. Owing to we-feeling members feels associated with other group members and also consider other people who are not its member as an outsider.
- **Social groups have group norms:** Every social group has clearly defined its own set of guiding principles which need to be adhered to, by its members. Furthermore, these set of standards and rules help group in controlling its members. These rules might be in verbal or non-verbal forms but violation of rules results in punishment. The group norms also aid to nurture sense of unity and integrity among the members of social group.
- **Social group members have similar behaviour:** Members of a social group always exhibit similar behaviour since the interests, ideals and values of a group are common its members behave similarly. Similar behaviour aids in achieving of common goals.
- **Social group members have awareness:** The members of a social group are well aware of their membership which distinguishes them from other non-members. This is possibly due to ‘the consciousness of kind’ as opined by Giddings.

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Check Your Progress

1. Mention one of the key characteristics of a social group.
2. When is a potential group termed as a social group?

10.3 TYPES OF SOCIAL GROUPS: CHARACTERISTICS AND FUNCTIONS

Social groups may broadly be classified into two, namely, Primary Groups and Secondary Groups.

Small social groups whose members share personal and long-lasting or enduring relationships are called **primary groups**. The members of such groups share a relationship with each other that is primarily personal, intimate, informal and total in nature. These are the commonest kind of groups that human beings come across. For example, family, friends and play group. Primary groups provide a sense of security to its members. Primary group members are often emotionally attached and loyal in their relationships as that is the sole end for members of a primary group.

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Quite the opposite of primary groups, a secondary group is one that is constituted by a large number of generally unrelated individuals who aggregate solely to pursue a specific activity or common interest. Such relationships involve little personal knowledge and weak emotional ties with one another. Impersonal, formal, utilitarian and segmental are some adjectives that typically characterize a secondary group. However, these groups are often created to attain certain goals and interactions are pleasant, although impersonal in nature. For example: co-workers at one's workplace or members of a political party.

In-Groups and Out-Groups

An **in-group** is that type of group to which members have a feeling of belongingness and loyalty for the group. On the other hand, an **out-group** is such a group whose members neither have a feeling of belonging nor feel loyalty for the group.

People are often judged to be members of a group based on factors which include caste, religion, race, nationality, job category, and level of education. When we meet a person for the first time, we often scrutinize them to see whether they are 'one of us.' One person's observation of another to be a member of the same group can foster feelings of loyalty or shared identity. People, who meet by chance and who happen to share something in common, for example, their alma mater or hometown, often feel an immediate kinship.

10.3.1 Primary Groups

A primary group, comprising of a small number of directly communicating individuals who interact 'face-to-face' for companionship and to help each other mutually, maybe said to be at the core of all social organizations. Members of such groups may be said to be living in the presence and thoughts of other members of the group.

Charles H. Cooley was the first sociologist to bring our attention to primary groups, adds further to what has been said above. He states that the primary groups are greatly responsible for shaping the personality, nature and ideals of an individual.

Psychologically speaking, the result of a close relationship is a certain amalgamation of personalities in a shared unit; so that the existence of the self is the common life and purpose of the group. Perhaps the easiest way of describing the wholeness is by saying that it is a 'we'; it includes the sort of compassion and mutual identification for which 'we' is the natural manifestation. The unity in a primary group is distinguished in that it is primarily competitive, admittance of self-proclamation and various appropriative desires. These desires or passions are mixed by sympathy, and come, or tend to come, under the discipline of the common spirit. The individual of a primary group will have ambition, but the main object this ambition will be to bear allegiance to common standards of service and fair play within the group. For example, in a school's cricket team—a boy may dispute

with his teammates for a place in the team, but he will keep aside such disputes when the glory of his class or school is in question.

The most significant areas of the close association and co-operation are undoubtedly the play group of kids, the family and group of neighbourhood elders such as, the laughter club, amongst many others. These are universal for all times and for all development stages and forms the basis of what is common in human nature and in human ideals.

Colley, while defining primary groups, lays emphasis on ‘face-to-face association’ and on the association of ‘consideration and shared identification,’ i.e., the feeling of togetherness in form of ‘we’. Cooley differentiates the two groups on basis of the ownership of the ‘we’ feeling and the value of ‘sympathy and shared recognition’. However, it is also believed that all groups tend to possess varying degree of this ‘we feeling’ so his distinction might not be very relevant.

Additionally, this is evident that without existence of ‘we’ feeling no group can maintain its cohesiveness. Therefore, one cannot differentiate between secondary and primary groups on the basis of ‘we’ feeling. Also, it is important to note that one cannot limit ‘we-feeling’ to ‘face-to-face’ relationships because there are many relationships, which do not involve face-to-face interaction but still remains pleasant and intimate, and on the contrary there are relationships which involves ‘face-to-face’ interaction but are still formal and neutral.

Thus, a closer analysis of Cooley’s definition reveals certain ambiguities; yet, his differentiation of groups into primary and secondary ones is nonetheless, an important one.

Characteristics of a Primary Group

Feelings of intimacy, co-operation and close relationships are the main characteristics of a primary group. These are found aplenty in some concrete groups than many others.

Intimacy of relationship depends upon the following factors:

- **Physical proximity:** It is necessary for people’s relationships to be close, it is imperative that their contacts should also be close. Being able to see and talk with one another makes exchanging ideas and opinions easy. It makes possible the ‘conversation of gestures’.

Being physically close is not a requirement for the existence of a primary group. Being physically close only provides a congenial environment for fostering the growth of a primary group. The culture of the group defines whether or not physical proximity will foster the development of intimate relations within the group.

Development of intimacy owing to physical proximity may be hindered by factors like sex, language, occupation, status and even age. Hence, intimate relations may not flourish among people living at close quarters. It may,

NOTES

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however, flourish even at great distances owing to regular communication through various channels.

- **Small size:** Only a small group can ensure intimate and personal relationships as there is always a point beyond which further expansion of membership would mean 'dispersion instead of concentration, dilution instead of reinforcement of the common interest.' As a group becomes larger it becomes increasingly difficult to be in sensory contact with many people at the same time as each person begins to count more as a sheer cipher or a unit, rather than as a unique personality.
- **Stability:** The primary group should be stable in order to promote intimacy of relationship.
- **Similarity of background:** It is imperative that members of a primary group should not only be close and near to each other, but also, be of approximately equal experience and intelligence. According to MacIver, 'There is a level on which every group must dwell, and the person who is too far above or below it, disturbs the process of group participation.' Every member must have a reciprocal relationship and must have something to give as well as to take. An example of this could be a group discussion scenario, where each member presents his/her views on the given subject and takes the views of others.
- **Limited self-interest:** The group's common interest comes first over and above personal interests of individual members who undermine them in the spirit of togetherness. The real nature of primary group will not be established if members meet only to satisfy their personal ends. Rather they come together to address and do away with common grievances. This commonality of interest fosters mental peace, contentment and amity among members.
- **Intensity of shared interests:** Common or shared interests lies at the crux of a primary group. This infuses every member with the drive to share a devotion to realize the group's ends. This synergy, thus, created by the interest of a larger number of people is far greater than that of members in seclusion. It may further be added that a member, by himself, should not be construed as just a legal entity or an economic cipher or for that matter a technological cog, in fact, he is all these rolled up in one.

Camaraderie helps a person tide over hardships, as group members empathize with one another in unison. Such situations would otherwise be insufferable to deal with all alone.

A primary group not only endures the common interest of the group but also sustains the altruistic nature of the group itself. The common interest of group members is not a means to an end; rather it is intrinsically enjoyable as it is informal and personal, spontaneous, emotional, inclusive and non-transferable.

Face-to-face characteristic of a primary group does not mean that it exerts a compelling influence over group members. For example, the members of a family

who may not necessarily influence one another's habits and may develop different and even divergent viewpoints and habits.

A family may be termed as a primary group because it exerts influence in the early life of a child i.e., it influenced the child before other groups could do so.

In primary group setting, members do similar things together and may often have similar desires and attitudes as they are striving for similar things. In other words, close identification results in direct co-operation. Group members look at the world through the same eyes in which each member views the welfare of the other as one of his ends. Thus, members achieve their common interest through direct and face-to-face co-operation with each other.

Group members of a primary group do not act independently; rather, they do so interdependently by participating in the same process to achieve common objectives. Although there may be segregation and distinction of labour in a primary group, yet it must act together. A good example may be a football team, in which there are center-forwards, midfielders, strikers and goal keepers—they all play together with the common objective of winning the match.

Similarly, for example, research associates working on a subject may begin working independently, however, they do come together when group activities commence. In this light it may be added that the members of a primary group are involved not just in the group but also in the process of creation of the group. The need for a society is satiated only in a face-to-face scenario.

10.3.2 Secondary Groups

Secondary groups are quite contrary to primary groups. The functions and activities of a secondary group are rather utilitarian and time and task oriented as it is structured around secondary relationships only. These interactions are relatively more formal, segmental, detached and functional than that of interactions in primary group.

In a secondary kind of group, the members of the group are not concerned with the other individual as a person per say, but as a representative who is taking on a part to do. For example from our daily life one can see secondary groups in the form of formal organizations and in the form of larger active associations such as clubs, political parties, labour unions, corporations, international cartels, clubs, and people travelling by means of public transport or in a modern concept of car-poolers.

It may be said that in the case of a secondary group one's segmental (partial) personality, and not one's total personality, is involved. These groups entirely lack intimacy of association as we generally find in primary groups. Sociologists Ogburn and Nimkoff (1950) define secondary groups as: 'The groups which provide experience lacking in intimacy are called secondary groups.' Kimball Young (1942) has termed these groups as 'special interest groups' as they are formed to fulfil certain specific end or ends.

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Following are the main functions of secondary groups:

- Secondary groups help in fulfilling various kinds of collective human needs.
- Secondary groups aid in bringing about social responsiveness and social change.
- Secondary groups aid in eradicating traditionalism and misconception through means of education and balanced thinking.
- Secondary groups increase social mobility.
- Secondary groups help in satiating various special interests such as sports, dance, music and touring.

The main characteristics of secondary groups are as follows:

- **Large size:** Secondary groups are usually large in size and constitute a large number of members who may be spread the world over. Example could be the ISCKON society or The Art of Living or OSHO, whose members are spread globally. Due to of this large size indirect relations are found among the members.
- **Defined aims:** Secondary groups are formed to fulfil certain defined aims. One key parameter of judging the success of a secondary group is the extent by which it fulfilled its aims. For example, a school or a college opened to provide education. Or an IIT/Medical coaching institute whose students successfully cleared various exams.
- **Voluntary membership:** The memberships to secondary group are voluntary. One has the free will to become a member of a secondary group. No one can compel an individual to be a member of a secondary group. Example, it is not at all necessary that one should be a member of the Indian National Congress (INC) or any political party for that matter.
- **Formal, indirect and impersonal relation:** Group members of a secondary group share a formal, impersonal and an indirect relationship with one another where they do not develop personal bonds among themselves as such relations are not face-to-face and are rather casual. Interaction of members is in accordance with formal rules and regulations as individuals in large numbers cannot establish direct relations with one another. A member is not directly concerned with the other member's life as contact and relation are primarily indirect.
- **Active and inactive members:** Secondary group consists of both active as well as sedentary members owing to the lack of close and personal associations amid other members of a group. This can be better explained with an example of an online community where some members may actively participate in the interactions while some may prefer to remain inactive participants

- **Formal rules:** Formal and written rules which regulate and organize characterize a secondary group. These rules are meant to exercise control over members. A secondary group ensures a formal authority set-up and a well-defined division of labour. Those not obeying these rules and regulations lose their membership.
- **Status of an individual depends on their role:** In a secondary group, a member's status and position depends on the roles that they play in the group. One's birth or personal qualities have no bearing on one's status in a secondary group.
- **Individuality in person:** Secondary groups are also called 'special interest groups' because people became member in order to fulfil their personal interests. Hence, they always give stress on the fulfillment of their self-interests. As a result, the individuality of a person is reflected in the group. Furthermore, upon fulfilment of one's interests members may no longer be interested in the group.
- **Self-dependence among members:** Since secondary groups are large in size the members share an indirect and impersonal relationship with one another. Interestingly, members also selfishly safeguard and fulfil their own interests.
- **Dissimilar ends:** Secondary group members have different and diverse ends and people join such groups only to fulfil their diverse ends.
- **Relationship is a means to an end:** Secondary relations are a means to an end and not an end unto itself. One's personal interests are above group interests and people become friends for specific purposes only.
- **Formal social control:** A secondary group establishes control over its members through formal ways or implements such as the judiciary, the executive and so forth. Formal means of social control play a significant role in secondary groups.
- **Division of labour:** In secondary groups, each member has his share of duties, tasks and accountabilities and he is expected to accomplish the functions assigned to him.

Classification of Secondary Groups on the basis of culture:

I. Culturally organized groups

- (i) Status groups – for e.g., castes, social classes and so forth.
- (ii) Nationality groups – for e.g., states, nations and so on.
- (iii) Residence groups – for e.g., communities, cities and regional groups.
- (iv) Attention, interest and purpose groups – for e.g., religious bodies, publics, trade unions, institutional groups and corporations.

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II. Groups not fundamentally organized by culture

- (i) Biological groups – for e.g., age, sexes and racial groups.
- (ii) Casual groups – for e.g., gatherings, crowd, audiences and mobs.

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Importance of secondary groups

Secondary groups play a pivotal role in the functioning of societies in an effective manner as they facilitate people who are not intimately familiar to accomplish various tasks to move ahead in their respective job roles, to achieve specific goals.

School institutions, universities, hospitals, labour unions, political parties are formed by quite a few secondary groups.

The impersonality and decorum of the secondary group enables its members to focus on skills and interests rather than on their personalities. Most job roles have visibly defined set of roles and goal expectations. Hence, the personal traits of the individuals satisfying the role and the needs of the people for emotional engagement with them takes a back seat.

Due to an irrelevant and narrow focus on issues and small emotional attachment invoked by secondary groups, they occupy a rather insignificant position in an individual's life. However, secondary groups are critical in efficiently running a society.

10.3.3 Differences between Primary and Secondary Groups

Both primary and secondary groups can be distinguished from each other in the following ways:

- **Difference in meaning:** Face-to-face interactions and co-operation are the main elements of a primary group and lie at the core of all social organizations. An individual's social nature and ideals are shaped by primary groups. On the other hand, secondary groups are large-scale groups where relationships are comparatively casual, impersonal and competitive. Such groups are consciously formed to fulfill common goals or objectives.
- **Difference in structure:** Primary groups are very simple and are based on an informal structure. All group members participate in the same processes and are governed by informal rules and regulations. Secondary groups on the other hand, have very formal structures and are governed by a set of formal rules and regulations.
- **Difference in size:** Smallness of size and number characterize a primary group, whereas, largeness of size and global spread of members characterize a secondary group.
- **Difference in co-operation:** There exists direct co-operation among members of a primary group as they sit, play and discuss together and also due to face-to-face contact and personal relationships. The members of a secondary group co-operate only indirectly with each other since relations among the members is indirect.

- **Difference in stability:** Primary groups are pretty stable or durable. However, secondary groups may be temporary or permanent.
- **Difference in relationships:** Primary group members have a direct, intimate and personal relationship with one another. These relations are all inclusive as such groups are relationship directed. On the flip side, secondary groups are formal as there is an indirect and an impersonal relationship among the members.
- **Difference in goal:** In a primary group, members share the same or common set of objectives and goals. The goal of a particular group member transcends into goal of the entire group. While, members share different set of goals in a secondary group and each member has to play his/her part to achieve their respective goals. Fulfilling their respective agendas motivate an individual to be part of a secondary group.
- **Difference in the method of social control:** Customs and folkways are some of the means of exerting control over primary group members. However, the degree of social control is restricted in case of secondary groups and is controlled by state mechanisms such as police, jail, court and law.
- **Difference in effect on personality:** Primary groups have a greater influence on the development of its members' personalities. However, secondary groups have little bearing on the development of a member's personality. The secondary group may only be concerned with a particular aspect of an individual's personality.
- **Differences in physical closeness:** Members of primary groups live in close physical proximity to each other and face-to-face relations are a norm, whereas, members of a secondary group may live far and wide and may rarely communicate face-to-face.
- **Relationship:** Primary group members exhibit camaraderie, contact face-to-face and share a direct, intimate and personal relationship with one another. As such, the primary group is concerned more with the total personality of an individual as the relations are particularly inclusive. On the other hand, a secondary group is regulated by official rules which imply a substitution of impersonal for otherwise personal relationships. The relations, thus, become secondary and formal. A secondary group does not exercise any primary influence over its members as members do not live in any physical or emotional proximity to one another. Secondary group members may do their jobs, follow orders, pay their dues and/or contribute to the group interest, and yet may never see each other.

In addition to the classification of groups as expressed above, there are some sociologists who are of the opinion that classification of groups as primary and secondary is not very convincing. No group, they stress, can be classified as

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wholly exhibiting primary characteristics or wholly exhibiting secondary characteristics. They add further, that, even a large scale group cannot work without a certain identification of its members with the organization as a whole. In the place of classifying groups into primary and secondary, it is more convenient to classify contacts.

Furthermore, the main distinction between primary and secondary groups is not one of size or structure, but of relationship among members. For example, if a country may be called a secondary group, it is, thus, called since its members (citizen) do not have a close, personal and warm relationship with one another.

10.3.4 Reference Groups

There is yet another important type of social group in sociology. Reference group refers to that social group to which the members may or may not belong but certain aspire to become a part of. The individual takes this group, as the name suggest, to basically refer to and correct or improve his/her own actions and behaviour pattern. These groups act like a yardstick with which to measure their own status and activities in the society. Some examples include: our co-worker, celebrities, neighbourhood, teachers, etc. It was Herbert Hyman, who coined the term reference group for the first time in Archives of Psychology (1942). The following points clarify the concept of reference groups in a better fashion:

- It is not necessary that an individual aspires or refers to only one reference group at a time.
- The reference groups might change over the period of a lifetime in tune with the changes in the lives of the individuals themselves.
- There are many factors apart from money and social status which affects the choice of reference group for the individual. This might include moral dictates, etc.
- Reference groups may be positive (ones whose acceptance is sought) or negative (one which is avoided).
- Reference groups have three functions: enforcing behaviour pattern or belief, yardstick for comparison and act as goal posts for what is to be achieved.

Check Your Progress

3. Name the types of social groups.
4. What do you understand by the term in-group?
5. Name the sociologist who introduced the idea of primary groups.
6. Why has Kimball Young termed secondary groups as special interest groups?

10.4 PEER GROUPS IN MODERN SOCIETY

A peer group is a type of social group constituted by people who are equal in such aspects as age, education or social class. These individuals generally share a similar interest, social status and background. They can also be very different, with people from varied social and economic backgrounds, culture and race. Peer relationships in general provide a unique background for social and emotional development of a person while enhancing the persons' reasoning abilities, cooperating with people and concern for others. Modern research resonates such sentiments, depicting social and emotional gains as indeed being provided by peer interaction.

During an individual's adolescent years, his peer groups undergo intense changes as adolescents tend to spend more time away from their primary group, i.e., family and home, away from supervision of governing adults. During this time, adolescents develop new interest areas and are keen to explore what the future hold for them. The way they had been communicating prior to adolescence, changes, as they grow up and prefer to talk to their parents about things like their school, friends and career choices, while they enjoy talking and discussing about things such as sex and other interpersonal relationships with their friends or their peer group. Children seek acceptance in the peer groups that they join or aspire to join, even if such groups may be involved in undesirable activities. It is less likely for a child to get accepted in a peer group if his temperament does not match with that of the group.

Some common examples of peer groups may include: Sports teams, school organizations and clubs, classmates, neighbours who are close in age. At any given time, an individual may belong to several peer groups at the same time.

Peer groups provide several things for a teen, including:

- Opportunities to develop friendships
- Support for figuring out abilities and interests
- A way to learn how to deal with problems
- The chance to learn how to interact with others
- Independence from adults
- Emotional support

The adolescent peer groups may be divided into:

- Cliques
- Crowds

- (i) **Clique:** It may be defined as a small group of two-twelve individuals formed by friendship or by common interest, among people of the same sex, age, race and class. These groups often serve the purpose

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of social control and agents of socialization for its members who are often quite similar in terms of their risk behaviour and academic backgrounds. For these individuals, being members of the clique can be advantageous as members feel a sense of security, belongingness along with a sense of well-being and also some levels of autonomy to function and behave.

Generally, a young adolescent would go to a clique to seek support or answers to his/her questions. For example, they may want answers to such simple questions as what should he/she say or do during particular situations, who should he/she be friends with and/or hang out with, or even what should he/she wear...latest fashion tips.

A clique may also comprise peers whom other members choose or may include individuals who have come together due to circumstances. For example, an afterschool club whose members come together because the circumstances are such. Cliques can have both positive and negative influences on adolescents.

- (ii) **Crowd:** It may be defined as a large but ambiguous gathering of unrelated people. For adolescents, such gatherings may also be said to serve as peer groups. Quite importantly, these are prevalent during early adolescence and their importance decreases as individuals advance towards the latter phase of adolescence.

One of the crowds usually identified in most schools is the 'popular' crowd. Concern over being popular can take up a lot of energy for some teens. There are different ways to look at or define popularity. One perspective that comes to mind immediately is the view of popularity often portrayed in the media. The 'popular' crowd usually consists of the pretty or most handsome people with the best clothing and cars. The media also usually depicts 'popular' teens as unkind or cruel people who frequently make life miserable for peers. Some of the 'popular' teens also form cliques that wield a lot of power in the school social scene. The power exists in part because other teens do not challenge that power; they may be envious of the clique members' status and/or intimidated. Another view of 'popular' crowds comes from parenting expert Dr. Laurence Steinberg. He says truly popular teens are friendly, helpful, enthusiastic, good-natured, humorous and intelligent.

Popular teens also:

- Perceive and respond to others' needs
- Are confident and assertive without being cocky
- Like to have fun in positive ways
- Behave in ways peers consider appropriate for their age

Table 10.1 Distinction between Cliques and Crowds

Cliques	Crowds
Small group (2-12 members)	Much larger (may include several cliques)
Members are good friends	Members may or may not be friends.
Identified by interest, social status (popular or unpopular)	Often membership is based on reputation and or stereotypes

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Belonging to a clique or a crowd can actually modify adolescents' beliefs and behaviour but family experiences affect the extent to which adolescents become like peers. In one study comprising 8000 students from class IX to class XII gave the following results:

- Adolescents who described their parents as authoritative were members of 'Brain', 'Jack' and 'Popular' groups that accepted both adult and peer reward systems.
- Adolescent boys, with permissive parents aligned themselves with the 'Parties' and 'Burnouts', suggesting a lack of identification with adult reward system.

Theories on Peer Groups

Social Learning Theorists and Developmental Psychologists such as the likes of Harry Stack Sullivan, Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson are of the belief that peer groups give adolescents a setting for social, cognitive and emotional development. Modern day studies have also corroborated the fact that peer groups undoubtedly provide numerous emotional and social benefits to individuals' interaction with the groups. Let us briefly discuss the various theories on peer groups:

- (i) **Sociocultural Theory:** This theory was propounded by the renowned social scientist Lev Vygotsky which primarily emphasizes the significance of a child's culture and how the child consistently acts within the given circumstances during social interactions. He also studies the child's language and learning skills within the identified zones of proximal development. This zone essentially is the gap between what a student can do alone and what he can do or achieve with the help of a teacher.

A child will be positively affected if he/she is part of a positive peer group. For example, a child is very likely to imbibe the characteristics of a studies focused peer group and do better at studies if he/she is made part of such a peer group. An average performer begins to perform better if he/she is put in the company of top performing students.

- (ii) **Theory of Cognitive Development:** As per the theory propounded by Piaget on cognitive development, there are primarily four stages of cognitive development. Piaget considers that based on his/her own experiences, a

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child actively builds his understanding of the outer world. Besides, Piaget recognized facets of development which occur from pre-adolescent stage onwards, for which peer groups plays a significant role. He recommended that communication of children with peers is relatively less egocentric than that compared to adults. Egocentric speech talks about the dialogue that is not amended to what the listener just said.

(iii) **Theory of Stages of Psychological Development:** Erikson has categorized psychosocial development of an individual into eight stages which ranges from birth of child to his old age. He has laid emphasis on the idea that not only family but also a society in which an individual lives, has a significant influence on an individual's identity and ego through the stages of development. He also advocated the key role of peer pressure during the stage of adolescence of psychosocial development of an individual. Children between the age group of six-twelve years or the Latency stage, is when individuals begin developing relationships within their peer groups.

(iv) **Theory of Interpersonal Relations:** This theory was propounded by Harry Stack Sullivan, American Neo-Freudian psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, according to whom friendship performs several functions such as the following:

- Offering voluntary validation
- Strengthening feelings of self-worth
- To provide warmth and a situation for intimate disclosure
- Fostering relational sensitivity
- Laying the groundwork for future romantic and parental relationships

Sullivan was of the belief that the above functions took prominence during childhood and that real deep friendships were formed around the age of nine or ten.

Social groups foster positivity when it comes to a child's learning and development. Social learning theorists, the likes of John B. Watson, B.F. Skinner, and Albert Bandura, all speak for the influences of the social group in learning and development of a child. The theories of **Behaviourism**, the **Theory of Operant Learning**, and the **Theory of Cognitive Social Learning**, all positively dwell on the part which the social world plays in the development of children.

The fact that peer groups expressively influence the intellectual and personal development of an individual is well encapsulated by J.R. Harris in *The Nurture Assumption*. Furthermore, many studies support the assumption that peer groups significantly affect overall achievement of an individual. However, there are only a few studies examining the influence peer groups have on tests of cognitive ability.

Effects of Peer Groups

Peer groups affect both positively and negatively. These are discussed as follows:

I. Positive effects of Peer Groups

- (a) **Peer groups serve as a source of information:** Peer groups are instrumental in an individual's life to provide a perspective outside one's own viewpoint. Being a member of peer groups, one learns the art of developing and nurturing the relationships with others in the social structure. Peers, predominantly group members, become vital social referents to teach other members customs, prevalent societal norms, and different ideologies.
- (b) **Teach gender roles:** Peer groups can also function as a setting where one learns gender roles. Group members learn about cultural and social expectations, and sex differences through gender role socialization. However, girls and boys vary greatly; there is no one-to-one connection between sex and gender roles with females always exhibiting feminine characteristics and males always exhibiting masculine characteristics. In fact, both the gender types can have different intensities of femininity and masculinity. Peer groups can comprise of either all males or all females or mix of males and females. It has been shown in the different studies that majority of peer groups are unisex. Peer groups can have great impact or pressure of peers on each other's gender role behaviour depends on the intensity of peer pressure.
- (c) **Serve as a practicing venue to adulthood:** As adolescents' progress towards adulthood with a feeling self-sufficiency and their dependence on parents begins decreasing as they start connecting with a much larger social network. It is now that they find support and help in peer groups. To them, their peers become a sort of social referents as they emulate and learn the art of negotiating relationships beyond those of their families. Often peer groups influence and shape an individual's attitude and behaviour on various social and cultural issues such as violence, drugs, achievements, academics and so on.
- (d) **Teach unity and collective behaviour in life:** Peer groups have a number of positive influences on adolescents and one of them is the fact that they inculcate a sense of unity and collective behaviour in life. They are quite influential in the socialization process promoting in-group similarity. Factors like group will and consensus and conformity with certain attitudes and behaviours all foster a group's cohesion. Group members decide amongst themselves as to what is 'normal' for them. For example, the group may together decide what kind of clothes they must all wear. That is normal for them. Such normative codes can often be very rigid in nature.
- (e) **Identity formation:** Peer groups help individuals find out as to who they are. Obviously, then, if it is the peer group who helps a person to identify his/her identity. This identification helps a person acquire a sense of self.

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Studies have shown that peer groups provide individuals with a platform to experiment with roles and discover themselves, as they are guided by the normative regulations of the group.

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II. Negative effects of peer groups

Besides having positive effects on individuals, peer groups also affect them adversely. These are discussed as follows:

- (a) **Peer pressure:** The term peer pressure may be defined as the unwanted indirect pressure that one feels to change his/her behaviour so as to conform to their peers' behaviour. For example, a teetotaler may feel pressured to drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes so that he/she does not stand the odd one out at a party. However, in the spirit of the negative meaning of the term, peer pressure can also be used positively. For example, when a weak student is introduced into a group of studious kids, he feels pressured to perform better to be able to conform to the group's norms.

Peer pressure is not restricted to adolescents only. Even grown-ups are often faced with peer pressure though it is most commonly seen in adolescents, especially boys. Studies suggest that girls are less likely to experience peer pressure compared to boys. Boys especially tend to spend more time with their peers in social contexts. Teens often force one another to conform to certain beliefs and behaviours. Thus, a lot of research has been done to understand how peer pressure affects teenagers negatively, and it is really helpful for parents to study and learn how peer groups can affect teens negatively; and how they can at best try to negate the ill effects.

- (b) **Future problems:** An individual's psychological developments and academic achievements often are affected by the peer relationships one has had while growing up. Being in bad company earlier on in age can lead an individual to turn out unsuccessful with a poor academic track record. Such people may even have marital and employment related issues in the future.
- (c) **Risk behaviours:** Many studies have been carried out till date which suggest that peer groups often adversely affect teenagers which leads to them displaying risk behaviours. In 2012, a study done on teenagers' involvement in risk behaviours occurring in the context of peer groups conclude that both peer pressure and control were responsible for risky behaviour. It was further established that adolescents more dedicated to having their own personal identity within the group, were less prone to displaying risk behaviour. The conclusion was that those individuals who had developed their own identities were less affected adversely by peer pressure.
- (d) **Aggression and prosocial behaviour:** Adolescent behaviour is largely affected by the type of peer group they are part of. There was a study conducted in 2011 which focused on aggression and pro-sociality which suggested that teenagers who joined an aggressive group tended to show

an increase in aggression in their own behaviour over a period of time. Furthermore, they also displayed prosocial behaviour that was akin to the standard behaviour of the group they were in. Thus, we see how peer groups affect the behaviour of adolescents.

- (e) **Sexual promiscuity:** Teen sexual activity leading to teenage pregnancy and transmission of sexual diseases and sexual violence, are major issues that adolescents grapple with in today's times. Adolescence is a time when a teen's body and mind goes through a lot of changes. Their emotions and hormone levels are surging and their desire to experiment and delve into previously uncharted territories is high and, thus, they indulge in sexual activity. A longitudinal study spanning over a period of thirteen years was carried out in 2012 which presented that there was a strong relationship between deviant peer groups and teen sexual promiscuity. Individuals who were part of the study stated that they indulged in having sex early in life due to pressure from peers or even partners.

Adolescents and their peer groups

The behaviour of boys and girls changes with growing age. They behave quite differently in pre-adolescence, adolescence, mid-adolescent and late adolescence years. In a cross-sectional, correlational study conducted by Gavin, it was found that mid-adolescents gave more importance to being in a popular group and felt more group conformity and leadership within the group than in pre or late adolescence. Furthermore, it was found that early and middle adolescents reported few positive interactions with group members and more negative interactions with those who were not their group members. Girls were more bothered by negativity and, hence, reported having more positive group interactions, opposed to boys. Gavin further concluded that the decreased importance of leadership in late adolescence resulted in lesser conformity with a peer group. Also, being in a popular group and conforming to group norms became less important in late adolescence.

Further studies conducted by Tarrant on the effects on in-groups and out-groups is also noteworthy for the findings that in-group was always associated with a higher number of positive characteristics compared to the out-group, and the more an individual identified with the in-group, the higher their evaluations were for it.

Adolescents living in multi-cultural countries often form peer groups based on racial preferences. For example, Caucasians would be more comfortable being with Caucasians, Blacks with Blacks and Latinos with Latinos. This often leads to race related prejudices. Preference of being with one's own racial group can lead to the rejection of the racial out-group. It has been observed that females are most prone to such discrimination. Cross Race Peer Groups in this case are beneficial in fostering racial harmony within groups as they lower racial prejudices and increase prosocial behaviour. Having cross-racial friends is often shown to give

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youngsters a sense of higher social satisfaction. A racially diverse peer group often helps in decreasing the feeling of victimization by members of a racial minority.

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Check Your Progress

7. Name the factor which helps to determine the development of an individual personality.
8. Define the term peer group.
9. Mention the types of adolescent peer groups.

10.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Being organized is one of the key characteristics of a social group.
2. A potential group becomes a social group when it becomes organized.
3. There are two main types of social groups, namely primary groups and secondary groups.
4. An in-group is that type of group to which members have a feeling of belongingness and loyalty for the group.
5. Charles Cooley was the first sociologist who introduced the idea of primary groups.
6. Kimball Young termed secondary groups as special interests group as they are formed to fulfil certain specific end or ends.
7. An environmental stimulus helps to determine the development of an individual personality.
8. Peer group is a type of social group constituted by people who are equal in such aspects as age, education or social class.
9. The types of adolescent peer groups are as follows:
 - Cliques
 - Crowds

10.6 SUMMARY

- A potential or quasi group involves a group of individuals who have some common characteristics, but do not possess any recognizable structure.
- The important characteristics of a social group are as follows:
 - o Social groups have a certain given number of individuals
 - o Reciprocal relations within social groups

- o Social groups have common goals
- o Social groups provide sense of solidarity and unit
- o Social groups have a strong sense of ‘we-feeling’
- Social groups may broadly be classified into two, namely, primary groups and secondary groups.
- Feelings of intimacy, co-operation and close relationships are the main characteristics of a primary group. These are found aplenty in some concrete groups than many others.
- Secondary groups are quite contrary to primary groups. The functions and activities of a secondary group are rather utilitarian and time and task oriented as it is structured around secondary relationships only.
- Both primary and secondary groups can be distinguished from each other by the following points:
 - o Difference in Meaning
 - o Difference in Structure
 - o Difference in Size
 - o Difference in Co-operation
 - o Difference in Stability
- A peer group is a type of social group constituted by people who are equal in such aspects as age, education or social class.
- Theories on peer groups include the following:
 - o Sociocultural theory
 - o Theory of cognitive development
 - o Theory of stages of psychological development
 - o Theory of interpersonal relations
 - o Peer groups affect both positively and negatively.

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10.7 KEY WORDS

- **Social group:** It has been defined as two or more people who interact with one another, share similar characteristics, and collectively have a sense of unity.
- **Primary group:** Small social groups whose members share personal and long-lasting or enduring relationships are called primary groups.
- **Secondary group:** It is group that is constituted by a large number of generally unrelated individuals who aggregate solely to pursue a specific activity or common interest. Such relationships involve little personal knowledge and weak emotional ties with one another.

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- **Reference group:** It refers to that social group to which the members may or may not belong but certain aspire to become a part of.
- **Peer group:** It is a type of social group constituted by people who are equal in such aspects as age, education or social class. These individuals generally share a similar interest, social status and background.

10.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Differentiate between 'Social Aggregates', 'Social Category and 'Potential Group' or 'Quasi Group'.
2. Write a short note on In-Groups and Out-Groups.
3. What are the main functions of secondary group?
4. State the types of culturally organized groups.
5. What are reference groups?
6. Briefly state the various theories on peer groups.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the important characteristics of a social group.
2. Distinguish between primary and secondary groups.
3. Explain the primary groups.
4. Describe secondary groups.
5. Discuss the peer groups existing in modern society.
6. What are the effects of peer groups? Discuss.

10.9 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 11 SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Structure

- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Objectives
- 11.2 Social Organizations: An Overview
 - 11.2.1 Formal Organizations: Characteristics and Functions
 - 11.2.2 Informal Organizations: Characteristics and Functions
- 11.3 Bureaucracy
- 11.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 11.5 Summary
- 11.6 Key Words
- 11.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 11.8 Further Readings

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11.0 INTRODUCTION

Humans function within a society and they attain a social identity which is crucial to the individual development. Social organizations are the organization of social interactions or relationships of members or groups within a society. Social organizations by existing give a boost to the sense of community. Additionally, cooperation and functioning together allows the groups or individuals to satisfy not only their own but their groups' goals. Since interactions differ as per the social relationships, the social organizations are also affected by the manner in which and the purpose for which these interactions take place. Sociological studies of organizations are important because organizations work in the domain of demography, legal, economy, politics and more. These then have direct and indirect consequences on the individual's life and actions. In this unit, our focus is on the social organization and its types. We will discuss the concept of formal and informal organization. Weber was one of the first sociologists to sociologically study the concept of organization. This is why, we will also discuss Weber's theory of Bureaucracy, which is an administrative type of formal organization.

11.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the concept of social organization
- Explain the characteristics and functions of formal organizations
- Describe the advantages and disadvantages of informal organizations
- Interpret the meaning and nature of bureaucracy
- Discuss the types of bureaucracy

11.2 SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

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The interdependence and correlation between different groups in a society is what is known as social organization. It can be said that social organizations are essential for the existence and efficient working of social groups in the society. Some sociologists refer to the concept of social organization as social system. This study of social organization is considered very important to understand the working of and the manner in which the individual groups in the society are related to each other.

According to H.M Johnson, organization refers to an aspect of interaction systems.

Characteristics of Social Organizations

- The organizations are formed for the fulfillment of a specific purpose. The interactions and the pattern will only remain consistent if the goals are consistent.
- Three factors are essential to the social organization: consensus, mutual understanding and cooperation.
- The organization assigns its members roles and status for undertaking different functions.
- The organization uses methods of social control to ensure that functions assigned are carried out by the members in the organization.

Keeping in consideration the diverse interests of humans and societal needs. The social organizations are divided in modern complex societies as: informal and formal organizations.

The important elements of formal organizations are rationality, hierarchy of power, division of labour, specific functions and very specific manner of allocating and assigning of tasks and organizational roles. Another very important factor differentiating formal organizations are that they mostly follow centralized and systematic authority. One of the first and most significant contribution to the study of formal organizations was done by Max Weber at the outset of 20th century. He proposed the theory of bureaucracy. Additionally, sociologists like Talcott Parsons and Blau have also studied bureaucracy in different capacities.

Informal organizations are those social organizations that do not have such a rigid and strict structure. They are mostly referred to as human relationships made for the fulfillment of certain causes. It has also been found that informal organizations are also found to exist within the structure of formal organizations.

11.2.1 Formal Organizations: Characteristics and Functions

Let us discuss some of the characteristics and functions of formal organizations:

- **Functions:** The foremost characteristic of formal organizations are that they are constituted to fulfill very specific functions. It is also important to

remember that the functions of a formal organization may not necessarily be singular. There can be sub-divisions within the wider scope of the primary functions. For example, a temple acts like a formal organization, and in this sense, its main function is religion and its practice. But this is only the manifest function of the temple. The temple also engages in activities like charities, educational donations, promotion of ethical values, sponsoring of different philanthropic ventures, community service, canteen service, etc. These functions then can be referred to as latent functions of the formal organizations.

- **Norms and behaviour:** Formal organizations also have very specific norms and behaviours which are expected to be followed by its members and groups. The activities which happen inside the formal organizations too are governed mostly by these general norms of behaviour.
- **Code of conduct:** Following the norms and behaviour, the code of conduct within a formal organization are mostly very clearly recognized and followed. The procedures are laid down for all the members, so that there is absolute clarity over which actions are considered permissible and acceptable.
- **Hierarchical structure, authority, and status:** In a formal organization, the labour is divided into specific positions and roles. This ensures that efficiency is maintained. These roles and positions then specify the scope of power and authority each position has. This is to say that it is because of the formal organization and its division of power that authority is created. Further, the status explains to the members themselves the rank they hold in the organization and the responsibilities they are accountable for. The hierarchical structure or the administrative structure in a formal organization is what is known as bureaucracy. We will discuss more about this in the next section of this unit.
- **Rationality:** Another very important characteristic of formal organizations are that they are based on rationality or logical actions. There can be two sources of this rationality: rules that have existed from before which are known to have specific positive results or systematic knowledge.
- **Permanence:** Formal organizations, when compared with informal organizations are considered to be quite permanent as to their existence. But it is also possible that some might last longer than others.

Advantages of Formal Organization

- Focused achievement of organizational objectives
- Systematic working
- Clear chain of command
- No duplication of work
- Coordination of different and large number of functions in a better manner

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Disadvantages of Formal Organization

- Single focus on achievement of results and completion of work
- Very little consideration of member's social well being
- The rigid chain of command makes it difficult to get work done faster

11.2.2 Informal Organizations: Characteristics and Functions

Informal organizations refer to the smaller groups of people united together for a common cause.

- Informal organizations can be referred to as human relations which are formed due to associations of people working within a formal organizational structure.
- The members interact with one another in a very non-official manner, sharing their interests and fears.
- The norms and behaviours within a formal organization are not codified. Certain behaviours are followed but that is more so in the unofficial capacity.
- There is no formal authority in an informal organization only leadership which binds the groups together to ensure the association has a purpose or direction.
- There are no rigid hierarchies or statuses present in informal organization.

The informal organizations though small in size are very important for an individual in a society. These small informal organizations also keep in check and add to the strengths of the formal organizational structures.

Advantages of Informal Organization

- Fulfillment of social needs of the members
- Realistic feedback is achieved amongst the members through their interaction
- Faster speed of communication

Disadvantages of Informal Organization

- Greater focus on individual interests
- No systematic working
- Chances of spread of negative and informal information
- Unspecified chain of implementation of actions may result in goals not being fulfilled

Check Your Progress

1. State the factors that are essential to a social organization.
2. Which type of social organization has relatively more permanence?
3. Name the type of social organization which has leadership in place of authority.

11.3 BUREAUCRACY

Bureaucracy is a pyramidal hierarchy, which functions under impersonal, uniform rules and procedures, and is defined as a formal organization which has formal rules and departments to coordinate hierarchical areas of activities. Thus, in such a formal organization to look for an informal structure is to recognize how the relations within the bureaucracy are guided. Bureaucracy, as described by German sociologist Max Weber, has a division of labour, authority structure, roles defined for members and rules to guide activity. Robert K Merton emphasized that formal relationships and formal structure of bureaucracy redefine informality, which to an extent result in inefficiency. While formal rules and close control mean reliability of bureaucracy, the very same stricture leads to lack of flexibility and an informal tendency to turn means into ends. The pyramidal structure, in fact, induces individual internalization, resulting in a goal displacement.

The formal structure becomes more important than achieving goals. Thus, the structure might mean, the lower rung completely disowning responsibility while the upper crust of the pyramid ascribing decisions to policies of the organization, thus, hindering all efficiency.

Informal structure within bureaucracy refers to the cliques, as recognized by American sociologist Melville Dalton, and the struggles of such cliques for gaining power and ensuring a greater share of organizational rewards. This clearly testifies to what extent the members of bureaucracy can come together on an informal level to consolidate and improve their position. Thus, cliques, lobbies and opinion-groups exist along with the formal hierarchy in bureaucracies, which account for the informal structure.

Main Characteristics of Bureaucracy

The main characteristics of bureaucracy are as follows:

- **Indispensable for large organizations:** In small organizations, work may be done smoothly and efficiently through face-to-face communication. But this is not possible in large organizations with large number of employees and a large-size clientele. Such large organizations are bound to take the help of bureaucracy.
- **Attainment of a specific goal:** American sociologists Talcott Parsons argues that one of the main features of bureaucracy is the primary orientation to the attainment of a specific goal. Each department is assigned a specific goal, and all its members try to attain it.
- **Monopoly over output:** Bureaucracies have monopoly over outputs. They enforce laws, policies or decisions. Though civil servants are expected to enforce government's policies and decisions under the control and supervision of their political masters, in practice such control and supervision are almost

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absent. The political executive has little skill, time and motivation to closely watch what the bureaucracy is doing.

- **Hierarchy:** The officials in a bureaucratic organization are arranged hierarchically. In order of seniority, officials are placed in the organization—senior officials at the top and junior officials lower down the ladder. The file will move upward to the top for decision and once the decision is taken there, the file is returned to the bottom where the file has been initiated with order and instruction for implementation.
- **Duties defined:** The duty of each official is well-defined. He is conscious of his jurisdiction, and he will not go beyond it. He will be committing a mistake and inviting punishment if he crosses the area of his jurisdiction.
- **Specialization:** Although bureaucratic training produces generalists, they develop some amount of specialization in the course of their work. When an official works in a particular organization or department for some period, he gains expertise on it.
- **Discipline and harmony:** Each official in an organization has his specified duty and defined jurisdiction. He is not expected to cross into the jurisdiction of any other official. If all officials are bound by these norms and expectations, there will be discipline and harmony in the organization.
- **Documents and files:** Rules and regulations governing an organization are in a written form. Its decisions are recorded and can be precedents for future decisions of similar kind. There are piles of files and documents in any bureaucratic organization. Quick disposal of file indicates the efficiency of the organization. Unnecessary delay in handling files is known as ‘red-tapism’.
- **Promotion:** The two factors influencing promotion are seniority and ability, or merit. Seniority should be rewarded in respect of promotion. But exclusive reliance on seniority for promotion would undermine efficiency. Like seniority, efficiency should also be rewarded. Promotion is an incentive to meritorious officials.
- **Training:** Civil servants are selected on the basis of merit, normally through competition. They are given intensive training both before service and during service.
- **Impersonalization:** Bureaucracy is characterized by impersonalization. Civil servants are rigid in their interpretation of rules and regulations. They are objective. The face of the client is immaterial. Decisions are taken in accordance with rules, and not on the basis of the face value of the client. Rules are applied ‘without regard for persons’.
- **Inhuman:** Civil servants are obsessed with rules and regulations. Bureaucracy lacks a human touch. It is not inclined to take any special measures for the poor and oppressed if existing rules do not permit them.

According to German-American political and administrative scientist F.M. Marx, bureaucracy is 'literal and inhuman to the point of indifference towards the effects achieved'.

- **Secrecy:** Bureaucrats are adept at maintaining secrecy. They would not easily divulge official secrets. Weber has said, 'The monarch imagines it is he who is ruling, when in fact what he is doing is providing a screen, behind which the apparatus can enjoy the privilege of power without control of responsibility'.

Types of Bureaucracy

There are, according to author A.K. Mukhopadhyay, five types of bureaucracy, namely, representative bureaucracy, party-state bureaucracy, military-dominated bureaucracy, ruler-dominated bureaucracy and ruling bureaucracy.

- **Representative bureaucracy:** The members of representative bureaucracy are not representative in the sense that they represent a particular segment of the population. They have, however, a representative character in the sense that the policies they help to formulate and implement are influenced by competitive party politics and reflect the ideology of the ruling party, and demands and desires of people in general. They are responsible to their political masters and largely responsive to what the latter stand for.
- **Party-state bureaucracy:** This type of bureaucracy is found in the one-party system. In the absence of competitive politics, the members of the sole political party ruling the country not only dominate the government, but also dominate the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy is totally loyal to the party. It has little freedom, and is bound by the party ideology and programmes. One has to keep in mind the needs and interests of the political party. The party is dominant while the bureaucracy is subordinate to it. The civil servants play only a secondary role in the governance of the country.
- **Military-dominated bureaucracy:** In a number of developing countries, there are military governments which come to power through military coup. It is an illegal way of capturing power, and the military rulers are aware of this. They, therefore, try to do two things: to maintain law and order so that dissatisfied elements do not rise in rebellion; and to do some developmental works quickly so that people accept the military regime, though it is not democratically elected. In these respects, the military rulers employ the civil servants to do the needful. The civil servants, themselves afraid of the military government, obey its order and direction even if that may violate the law of the land. For bureaucracy, goal -attainment becomes the primary goal and the propriety of means becomes secondary. The bureaucracy becomes quick to enforce military virtues of hierarchy and discipline.
- **Ruler-dominated bureaucracy:** In this system, the bureaucracy works as the personal agent of a dictator or an autocratic ruler who is primarily

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interested in improving his image and increasing his power. Civil servants themselves become powerful and autocratic, if they are able to win the confidence of the ruler. They neglect their original function and lay excessive emphasis on satisfying the ruler- his whims and caprices.

- **Ruling bureaucracy:** In some situations, bureaucracy becomes very powerful and emerges too dominant to be controlled by the political executive. In European colonies, the civil servants were very powerful. For all practical purposes, they constituted the ruling class. In the eyes of the people of colonies, the civil servants were the real rulers. As the mother country was far away, the civil servants in a colony were allowed a lot of powers, latitude and discretion. Even in independent countries, the bureaucracy behaves like a ruling class if the elected representatives and ministers, being highly corrupt and inefficient, become too dependent upon it for governance and administration.

Sociologist Robert K. Merton and Harry M. Johnson have pointed to certain sources of the dysfunctionality of bureaucracy. First, civil servants are inclined to lay excessive stress on rules and standard procedures. Rules are a means; they are meant to help the administration do justice and work smoothly. But obsession with rules makes them end in themselves. To quote Johnson, 'Undue attention to the rules may result in their being treated as ends in themselves, and the bureaucrat may at times lose sight of the practical purposes for which they are intended.' He further says, 'To the bureaucrat, a client is a routine case; but to the client himself his problem is unique, and to him the routine treatment may seem procrustean.' Merton says that 'As adherence to the rules originally conceived as a means becomes transformed into an end in itself, there occurs the familiar process of displacement of goals whereby an instrumental value becomes a terminal value'.

Second, some bureaucracies suffer from over centralization. If top officials monopolize decision-making, lower officials, instead of making any comments, just record relevant facts and pass on them to higher officials for decision. Decisions can be taken by lower officials if they are authorized to do that. As decisions are taken on all matters at the highest level, decision-making becomes unusually time-taking. Delayed decision is no decision, one may argue, and by the time a decision in this process reaches the client, he might have died. Over centralization would discourage lower officials from taking any initiative. They would develop a tendency to 'pass the buck' or to do nothing, even when they have the technical authority to act.

Third, many civil servants are 'over-bearing' or 'arrogant' in their dealings with clients. Sometimes, a civil servant may not have been arrogant in his dealing with the public, but his impersonal attitude is perceived as 'arrogance'. Further, there is the loss of morale in lower officials who feel that they are ill-treated by their superiors. This is particularly true of the military where ill-treatment of subordinate officials by their superiors is excessive.

Fourth, civil servants develop a defence mechanism of an informal order. They tend to stand united against any threat to their entrenched interests. They develop a sense of common destiny and an esprit-de-corps.

In an article entitled, **Bureaucratic Structure and Personality**, Merton observes that ‘the very elements which conduce toward efficiency, in general produce inefficiency in specific instance, and that bureaucratic procedure may inhibit the realization of organizational goals’. Against the backdrop of these general observations, we may refer to specific weaknesses of bureaucracy as seen by Merton. First: the bureaucrat’s are taught to conform and to obey, not to improvise and explore alternative ways. This way of thinking is further strengthened by the tendency of bureaucrats to play safe because disciplined action and conformity to official regulations are rewarded by promotions. This kind of self-interest prompts them not to deviate and make slight adjustments even when such actions are called for in terms of realization of organizational goals. Second, the bureaucrats tend to follow scrupulously the formal procedure, however, time-consuming it might be. In a hierarchical organization, files and papers move from one official to another at a snail’s pace because observance of formal procedure involves delay. This is called bureaucratic ‘red-tape’, which stands in the way of providing efficient service to the clients of the organization. Third, the emphasis on impersonal approach may lead to misunderstanding, and even friction, between the bureaucrats on the one hand and the clients on the other. It is so particularly in an organization, whether public or private, which is primarily concerned with rendering some form of service to its clients. The business-like and impersonal manner of carrying out their duties might give a wrong impression about the bureaucrats. They will be seen by their clients as cold, unsympathetic and even arrogant. The organizational goal of establishing rapport with their clientele is thwarted thereby.

Organization And Bureaucracy: A Weberian Perspective

All contemporary societies are essentially organizational societies in the sense that almost all our needs are met in organizational settings. If we look at any urban-area in India, either large or small, we can see how true the above statement is. Our children in cities and towns born in hospitals, educated in schools, subsequently employed in governmental or private organizations, enrolled as members of professional or recreational organizations and myriad other associations. In course of time, rural areas in India will also fall in like, as is the case in all advanced societies. It is to be noted that: organizations differ from ‘social units’. Such as the family, friendship or kin groups or the community, in that these are designed to realize clearly defined goals.

As there is more specialized division of labour in society, organizations also increase in number and variety, each organization performing one or a few specialized function. In the interest of efficiency, these: organizations must develop a hierarchy or authority and devise a system of rules designed toward the pursuit of a specific goal. Thus, a particular form of organization, known as bureaucracy,

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emerges. Bureaucratic organization is increasingly becoming defining characteristic of modern industrial society. Max Weber's analysis of bureaucracy is a pioneering study in this particular field in sociology.

Weber's views on bureaucracy should be seen in the context of his general theory of social action. It is Weber's thesis that every man gives some meaning to his conduct. Human action can, therefore, be understood and appreciated in terms of the meanings and motives which lie behind it. Weber identified four types of social action. These include the following:

- Rational action in relation to a goal
- Rational action in relation to a value
- Affective or emotional action
- Traditional action

The classification of types of action governs, to a certain extent, the Weberian interpretation of the contemporary era. According to him, the characteristic of the world we live in is rationalization. For example, economic enterprise is rational, because it entails precise calculation of costs and careful weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of the various factors involved in the enterprise. Bureaucratization is the prime example of this process. A bureaucratic organization has a clearly defined goal. It involves precise calculation of the means to attain this goal and systematically eliminates those factors which stand in the way of the achievement of its objectives. Bureaucracy is, therefore, rational action in an institutional form.

Bureaucracy is also a form of control. It implies a hierarchical organization in which there are superiors and subordinates with clearly defined responsibilities and powers. Some are required to issue orders and some others to carry those orders. In a large-sized organization, there is also the need for coordination of activities of the organization. All these imply control of those in the lower ranks of the hierarchy by those in the higher. Such controls become effective as well as smooth, if there is a minimum of voluntary submission to higher authority. People voluntarily submit to authority when it is regarded as legitimate. Max Weber identified three forms of legitimacy, which is derived from three kinds of social action. Thus, it can derive from traditional meanings. Legitimacy of this kind, which we may call traditional legitimacy, depends on belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the right of those established of the strength of tradition in positions of authority to exercise it. Similarly, legitimacy can be derived from rational meanings. Such legitimacy may be called rational legitimacy, which reflects belief in the legality of patterns of formative rules and the right of those people designated by the rules to exercise authority command. There is another type of legitimacy called charismatic legitimacy (so termed after the Greek word for grace), which depends on the devotion of followers to an individual who according to their perception, is endowed by exceptional sanctity, heroism or other personal qualities. Charismatic legitimacy, therefore, derives from affective or emotional action.

The organizational structure derives its form from the type of legitimacy on which it is based. While emphasizing this aspect, Max Weber observes as follows: 'According to the kind of legitimacy which is claimed, the type of obedience, the type of administrative staff developed to guarantee it and the mode of exercising authority will all differ fundamentally. In order to understand bureaucracy, it is, therefore, necessary to take into account the type of legitimacy on which bureaucratic control is based.

The corresponding type of authority which emerges from his typology is as follows: traditional authority, rational legal authority and charismatic authority. Weber, however, points out that none of these ideal types were to be found in a pure form in any historical instance. While analysing types of administrative organization, Max Weber selects the ideal-type of bureaucracy. It is based on rational-legal authority, which is the source of its legitimacy.

Weber brings out the following characteristics of a bureaucratic organization:

- As an organization, bureaucracy implies a continuous performance of official functions according to rules.
- Complex tasks of an organization are broken down into manageable parts with each official specializing in a particular area. For example, governmental functions are divided into various departments, such as health, education, agriculture and defence. Within each department, every official has a clearly defined sphere of competence and responsibility. They are given the necessary authority to enable them to fulfil their duties.
- This authority is differentially distributed so that a hierarchy of official positions is formed, some officials having controlling and supervisory duties with respect to others.
- 'Bureaucratic administration', says Weber, 'means fundamentally the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge. This is the feature of it which makes it specially rational'. Certain specified qualifications are required of those who are to exercise authority. They are appointed according to their possession of formal qualifications, usually based on examinations.
- The bureaucrats do not own the means of production of administration. They are also not allowed to make use of their official position for private purposes. Official quarters or other perquisites which are occupied or enjoyed by the persons while in service cannot be appropriated by them after superannuation or termination of service.
- Acts of administrative kind are recorded in writing, thereby ensuring continuity and consistency of the administrative process.
- The officials are personally free agents. But they are required to act impersonally according to rules which define their specific spheres of competence. The activities of the bureaucrat are governed by the rules, not by personal considerations, such as his feelings towards colleagues or clients. His actions are, therefore, rational rather than affective.

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- The bureaucrats are paid a salary, although this may be on a scale of pay, increments being given according to age and experience, and they are paid a pension after a fixed number of years of employment and at a given age.
- Normally, bureaucrats have no other employment, and at all times during their service career, the officials are subject to rules governing their conduct in so far as it is related to their official duties.

According to Max Weber, bureaucracy is a defining feature of an industrial society, irrespective of whether it is capitalistic or socialistic. The question as to who owns the means of production is not relevant. Marx, however, looks upon bureaucracy as an essential feature of a capitalist society. In such a society, a small minority owns the forces of production. Bureaucracy is a tool in the hands of this small minority to serve the interests of the ruling group. A socialist society, in which the forces of production are communally owned, can, therefore, dispense with bureaucracy in the form in which it prevails in a capitalist society. Lenin believed that after the dictatorship of the proletariat was established in the USSR in 1917, there would be a steady decline in state bureaucracy. He was conscious of the fact that some form of bureaucracy was essential. But he wanted it to be remodelled on the lines suggested by Marx and Engels. One such proposal was that administrators would be directly appointed and subject to recall at any time. The second proposal was that the salary of the administrators would be at par with that of an ordinary worker. The third proposal was to simplify the work to a point where basic literacy and numeracy were sufficient for their performance. Lenin visualized a state of affairs in which there might be a mass participation in administration, since all would possess the necessary skills to participate in the administrative process. Since every one could be a bureaucrat for a time, none would develop the bureaucratic style of functioning or the bureaucratic attitude.

Social Composition of Bureaucracy

Civil servants, in general, belong to the upper or middle class. Except those who are recruited to civil service through reservations, most others are drawn from the dominant and privileged section of the society. Because of their family background and related socialization, they have upper class/middle class values. As a result, they fail to understand the real problems of the poor, exploited and oppressed. They tend to defend and protect the vested interests of the rich and powerful and they are opposed to fundamental changes in the society. If in a poor country like India, social inequality and injustice have been perpetuated fifty years after independence, the fault lies, to a great extent, with the civil servants who tend to oppose social change and the empowerment of the poor and weak. The political executive, which is supposed to control the bureaucrats, is itself corrupt and inefficient. It has little capacity and motivation to watch and control the bureaucracy. Ministers and civil servants, in tandem, have exploited the poor and weak, and this would continue unless and until an effective countervailing force has grown. Civil servants are more arrogant and exploitative in developing countries than in

developed ones. This is due to the fact that the system of check and balance works well in developed countries while it is largely absent in developing countries.

A Critical Analysis

- Bureaucracy, primarily of upper class or middle class origin, is not generally in favour of any radical social change. Being conservative in orientation, it is pro-status quo.
- There may be differences among civil servants themselves. But they stand united, whenever, there is any threat to their entrenched interests. They constitute a powerful pressure group.
- They should be administratively neutral, and should not be politically aligned. But many of them enter into clandestine relations with political parties or political leaders. To further their personal interests, they do not hesitate to indulge in unethical activities. If necessary, they divulge official secrets to their allies in politics. Bureaucracy has become increasingly 'politicized'.
- Civil servants are generally arrogant. They suffer from a superiority complex. They think that they are the cream of the society and they are all-knowing. No wonder, they have little respect for the views of others.
- Civil servants lack human touch. Due to their upper class/middle class origin, they do not have genuine sympathy for the poor and deprived. They mistreat them and neglect their interests.
- The lag between the rapid expansion of bureaucratic machinery and the development of the political system would inhibit the development of effective politics. The existence of career bureaucracy without corresponding strength in the political institutions does not necessarily lead to administrative effectiveness.
- Bureaucracy is a danger to democracy. The control of executive, legislature and judiciary over it has become superficial. It is an irony that in many democracies, the powers and dominance of civil servants have increased.
- It is the duty of public servants to be responsive to public opinion. They should try to understand the difficulties, concerns and problems of people. Instead of being good students of public opinion, many of them behave like party politicians.

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Check Your Progress

4. State two main characteristics of bureaucracy.
5. What do you understand by the term 'representative bureaucracy'?
6. State one essential source of dysfunctionality of bureaucracy.
7. How is bureaucracy an essential feature of the capitalist society according to Max Weber?
8. How is bureaucracy considered to be 'pro-status quo'?

11.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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1. Three factors that are essential to the social organization are consensus, mutual understanding and cooperation.
2. Formal organizations are the social organization which have relatively more permanence.
3. Informal organizations have leadership in place of authority.
4. Two main characteristics of bureaucracy are as follows:
 - Indispensable for large organizations
 - Discipline and harmony
5. In representative bureaucracy, members are not representative in the sense that they represent a particular segment of the population. They have, however, a representative character in the sense that the policies they help to formulate and implement are influenced by competitive party politics and reflect the ideology of the ruling party, and demands and desires of people in general.
6. One essential source of dysfunctionality of bureaucracy is that civil servants develop a defence mechanism of an informal order. They tend to stand united against any threat to their entrenched interests. They develop a sense of common destiny and an esprit-de-corps.
7. According to Max Weber, bureaucracy an essential feature of the capitalist society. In such a society, a small minority owns the forces of production. Bureaucracy is a tool in the hands of this small minority to serve the interests of the ruling group.
8. Bureaucracy, primarily of upper class or middle-class origin, is not generally in favour of any radical social change. Being conservative in orientation, it is pro-status quo.

11.5 SUMMARY

- The interdependence and correlation between different groups in a society is what is known as social organization. It can be said that social organizations are essential for the existence and efficient working of social groups in the society. Some sociologists refer to the concept of social organization as social system. This study of social organization is considered very important to understand the working of and the manner in which the individual groups in the society are related to each other.
- Characteristics of Social Organizations: The organizations are formed for the fulfillment of a specific purpose. The interactions and the pattern will

only remain consistent if the goals are consistent, three factors are essential to the social organization: consensus, mutual understanding and cooperation, the organization assigns its members roles and status for undertaking different functions, and the organization uses methods of social control to ensure that functions assigned are carried out by the members in the organization.

- Keeping in consideration the diverse interests of humans and societal needs. The social organizations are divided in modern complex societies as: informal and formal organizations.
- The important elements of formal organizations are rationality, hierarchy of power, division of labour, specific functions and very specific manner of allocating and assigning of tasks and organizational roles. Another very important factor differentiating formal organizations are that they mostly follow centralized and systematic authority.
- Informal organizations are those social organizations that do not have such a rigid and strict structure. They are mostly referred to as human relationships made for the fulfillment of certain causes. It has also been found that informal organizations are also found to exist within the structure of formal organizations.
- Advantages of Formal Organization: Focused achievement of organizational objectives, systematic working, clear chain of command, no duplication of work, and coordination of different and large number of functions in a better manner.
- Disadvantages of Formal Organization: Single focus on achievement of results and completion of work, very little consideration of member's social well-being and the rigid chain of command makes it difficult to get work done faster.
- Advantages of Informal Organization: Fulfillment of social needs of the members, realistic feedback is achieved amongst the members through their interaction, and faster speed of communication.
- Disadvantages of Informal Organization: Greater focus on individual interests, no systematic working, chances of spread of negative and informal information, and unspecified chain of implementation of actions may result in goals not being fulfilled.
- Bureaucracy is a pyramidal hierarchy, which functions under impersonal, uniform rules and procedures, and is defined as a formal organization which has formal rules and departments to coordinate hierarchical areas of activities.
- Informal structure within bureaucracy refers to the cliques, as recognized by American sociologist, Elvile Dalton, and the struggles of such cliques for gaining power and ensuring a greater share of organizational rewards.

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- The main characteristics of bureaucracy are as follows:
 - o Indispensable for large organizations
 - o Attainment of a specific goal
 - o Monopoly over output
 - o Hierarchy
 - o Promotion
 - o Training
- There are, according to A.K. Mukhopadhyay, five types of bureaucracy, namely, representative bureaucracy, party-state bureaucracy, military-dominated bureaucracy, ruler-dominated bureaucracy and ruling bureaucracy.
- Robert K. Merton and Harry M. Johnson have pointed to certain sources of the dysfunctionality of bureaucracy.
- All contemporary societies are essentially organizational societies in the sense that almost all our needs are met in organizational settings.
- Civil servants, in general, belong to the upper or middle class. Except those who are recruited to civil service through reservations, most others are drawn from the dominant and privileged section of the society.

11.6 KEY WORDS

- **Bureaucracy:** It is a system of government in which most of the important decisions are taken by state officials rather than by elected representatives.
- **Democracy:** It is a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives.
- **Ruler-dominated bureaucracy:** In this system, the bureaucracy works as the personal agent of a dictator or an autocratic ruler who is primarily interested in improving his image and increasing his power.

11.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. List the characteristics of social organizations
2. State the meaning and nature of bureaucracy.
3. Mention the main characteristic of bureaucracy.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the concept of formal organization.
2. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of informal organization.
3. What are the types of bureaucracy? Discuss.
4. Identify the characteristics of a bureaucratic organization as stated by Weber.
5. Describe the social composition of bureaucracy.

11.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 12 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

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Structure

- 12.0 Introduction
- 12.1 Objectives
- 12.2 Social Institutions: An Overview
 - 12.2.1 Characteristics
 - 12.2.2 Functions
- 12.3 Forms of Social Institutions
 - 12.3.1 Family
 - 12.3.2 Marriage
 - 12.3.3 Political
 - 12.3.4 Education
 - 12.3.5 Economic
 - 12.3.6 Religious Institutions
- 12.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 12.5 Summary
- 12.6 Key Words
- 12.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 12.8 Further Readings

12.0 INTRODUCTION

One can find social institutions all over the world. A social institution is an organized collection of statuses, roles, values and norms that are designed to fulfil one or many basic needs of the society. Social institutions vary from region to region. Social institutions find a place in the society because the members of the society feel a need to uphold certain social values. However, in the field of sociology, where the origin of social institutions is clear, what motivates the formation of such societies is debatable. Much like social groups, social institutions too, have varied sub-divisions on the basis of the formation, and role in the society. While there can be various social institutions, sociologists agree that there are certain primary areas of life for which social institutions are generally formed. These are kinship, legitimate use of power, distribution of goods and services, transmitting knowledge to generations and regulating our relation to the supernatural. In this unit, we will study the basic social institutions: characteristics, family and marriage, political, education, economic and religious institutions.

12.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of social institutions
- Give a detailed account of the features and functions of social institutions
- Discuss the various forms of social institutions

12.2 SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS: AN OVERVIEW

Generally, the term **institution** refers to a group of people who have some specific purpose. But, the sociological understanding is quite different from common usage. Every society is characterized by certain social norms. These norms are very important in interactive social systems. These norms are in fact, institutionalized, i.e., they are widely accepted among members of the society. In this context, it can be said that an institution is neither a building, nor people, nor an organization. An institution is a system of norms aimed at achieving some goal or activity that people feel is important. It focuses on major human activities. Institutions are structured processes through which people carry on their activities.

Institutions have been defined by MacIver, as 'established forms or conditions of procedure characteristic of group activity'. So, it can be said that social institutions are the social structures and machinery, through which the society organizes, directs and executes multiple activities that are required to fulfil human needs. An institution is an organized system of social relationships which embodies certain common values and procedures and meets certain basic needs of the society (Horton and Hunt, 1984).

Every organization is dependent on certain established norms that are accepted and recognized by the society. These norms govern socio-cultural and interpersonal relationships. These norms are institutions that are in different forms like marriage, family, economy, polity, religion, etc. These institutions govern social life.

12.2.1 Characteristics

A social norm is said to be institutionalized in a particular social system when three conditions are fulfilled:

- (i) Many members of the social system accept the norm.
- (ii) Many of those who accept the norm take it seriously. In psychological terms, they internalize it.
- (iii) The norm is sanctioned. This means that certain members of the system are expected to be guided by the norm in appropriate circumstances.

However, the process of institutionalization involves the following characteristics:

- Institutions emerge as largely unplanned products of social living. People struggle to search for practical ways of meeting their needs; they find some patterns that work and become regular by repeated practice. These patterns are converted into standardized customs. As time passes, these patterns become part of customs and rituals which justify and sanction them. For example, the system of lending has paved the way for banks to emerge as institutions for borrowing, lending and transferring money in a standardized manner.
- Institutions are means of controlling individuals.

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- Institutionalized role behaviour is guided by expectations of the role and not by personal preferences. For example, all judges act in a similar manner when they are practicing, but it is not necessary for them to behave in the same manner in every situation as well.
- Institutions have some proceedings, which are formed on the basis of certain customs.
- Institutions have certain cultural symbols. People adhere to certain symbols which serve as convenient reminders of the institution. For example, the citizen is reminded of loyalty to the government by the sign of the flag. Similarly, national anthems, national songs, national flags, etc., strengthen institutional ties.
- Institutions have certain codes of behaviour. The people involved in certain institutions are expected to carry out some roles which are often expressed in formal codes, such as the oath of loyalty to ones country, marriage vows, etc.
- Every institution is based on certain ideological principles. An ideology may be defined as any set of ideas that explain or justify social arrangements, structures of power, or ways of life. These are explained in terms of goals, interests or social position of the groups or activities in which they collectively appear. The ideology of an institution includes both, the central beliefs of the institution and a rational justification for the application of institutional norms to the problems of life.
- Institutions are formed to satisfy the primary needs of members of the society and they have social recognition.

12.2.2 Functions

A society is so complex and interrelated that it is impossible to foresee all consequences of any action pertaining to it. Institutions have a list of functions, which are the professed objectives of the institution. They also have latent functions, which are unintended and may not be recognized. If they are recognized, then they may be regarded as by-products.

Manifest functions of social institutions

These are functions which people assume and expect the institution to fulfil, for instance, families should care for their children, economic institutions should produce and distribute goods and direct the flow of capital where it is needed, schools should educate the young, etc. Manifest functions are obvious, admitted and generally applauded.

Latent functions of social institutions

These are unintended and unforeseen consequences of institutions. Economic institutions not only produce and distribute goods, but sometimes also promote

technological change and philanthropy. Sometimes they promote unemployment and inequality. Latent functions of an institution may support manifest functions.

Apart from these functions, social institutions have some other common functions like provision of food, power, maintenance of law and order, shaping of personalities of individuals, manufacture and supply of commodities and services, regulation of morals, provision of recreation, etc.

Malinowski has remarked, 'Every institution centres round a fundamental need, permanently unites a group of people in a cooperative task and has its particular set of doctrines and techniques or craft. Institutions are not correlated simply and directly to new functions, one need not receive satisfaction in one institution'.

Check Your Progress

1. Give examples of cultural symbols of a social institution.
2. What are the type of functions of a social institution?

12.3 FORMS OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

The various forms of social institutions are: marriage, family, education, economy, polity and religion. These are discussed in detail below.

12.3.1 Family

The institution of family is the basic and fundamental institution in the life of an individual. It is the basic primary group and an important agency of socialization. Historically, the institution of family has undergone many changes. The term family has been defined by many sociologists and anthropologists. Murdock (in 1949), after studying about 250 multi-cultural societies, defined family as a social group that is characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both the sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children are owned or adopted by the sexually cohabiting adults.

A family, according to MacIver and Page, is a group defined by a sexual relationship that is sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children. They also bring out certain characteristic features of family:

- It is a relationship that originates from and is bound by marriage. It is formed when two individuals mate and produce offspring.
- It is a system of finding the hierarchy of ancestry.
- A family must have the financial sufficiency to achieve its economical wants and necessities that pertain to the birth and upbringing of children.

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- A family should have a habitat, home or a household which it may either own solely or share with others.

Forms of families

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Various sociologists have studied different forms of families. They have taken into consideration different factors for the classification of families. Following are the different types of families:

- Marriage classifies families into: monogamous and polygamous categories.
- Based on the location of their residence, families are categorized into two main types, family of matrilocal residence and family of patrilocal residence.
- On the basis of ancestry or descent, families are classified into matrilineal and patrilineal types.
- According to the type of authority, families may be identified as matriarchal and patriarchal types.
- In terms of size or structure, there may be two types of families, nuclear or joint.
- Families can be divided into conjugal and consanguineous types, based on the relations between the members. In a conjugal family, relations between the husband and the wife are private and their ties with the extended family are voluntarily. A consanguine family consists of close relatives other than parents and children.

12.3.2 Marriage

Marriage is a universal social institution. Marriage is a deep personal commitment to another human being and a public celebration of the ideals of mutuality, companionship, fidelity and family. **Marriage** is a socially approved way of acquiring a family. It is only through the establishment of culturally controlled and sanctioned marital relations that a family comes into being. The institutionalized form of sexual relations is called marriage. Marriage and family are two sides of the same social reality. From a broader and more collective perspective, marriage ensures survival of the species of the group and its culture.

Forms of marriage

The forms of marriage are diverse in nature. A cross-cultural study of marriage practices in different societies would include rules. These rules lay down preferences, prescriptions as well as proscriptions in deciding the form of marriage.

On the basis of the number of mates, marriage is classified into two types, *monogamy* and *polygamy*. Monogamy is the marriage between single partners (i.e., a husband having one wife or a wife having one husband). Monogamy is a prevalent form of marriage in most societies. It is also considered an ideal form of marriage. Polygamy is the practice of having more than one partner in marriage.

Polygamy may be of two types: *polygyny* and *polyandry*. When one man has two or more wives at a time, the practice is known as polygyny. When two or more sisters share one husband, the practice is known as sororal polygyny.

When one woman gets married to more than one man simultaneously, the practice is known as polyandry. Polyandry may be of two types: *fraternal* or *adelphic* polyandry and *non-fraternal* polyandry. When one woman marries several brothers at the same time, the practice is known as fraternal polyandry. This practice is prevalent among the Toda community in India. When a woman has several husbands, none of whom are necessarily brothers, the practice is known as non-fraternal polyandry.

One may consider this with reference to two types of polygamous marriages, namely

(i) Levirate and Sororate

Marriage of a man with the childless widow of his deceased brother is known as levirate marriage. When a levirate marriage prevails, on the death of a husband, it is the duty of one of his brothers to marry his widow and any children that are born as a result of this union are counted as progeny of the deceased man.

When a sororate marriage prevails, the husband of a childless woman marries her sister and at least some of the children that are born as a result of this union, are counted as children of the childless wife. The term sororate is also used with reference to the custom whereby, upon the death of a wife, her kin provide her sister as wife to the widower. However, any children that are born as a result of this union are recognized as her own.

Levirate and sororate customs emphasize the acceptance of inter familial obligations and recognition of marriage as a tie between two families and not simply between two individuals.

12.3.3 Political

Every individual is involved in some kind of political institution, as member of the society. Political systems have existed since ancient times. Our political institutions are amalgamations of modern superstructure, historical delegation of authority, decentralization and inculcation of the basic level of Panchayati system. These are characterized by the traditional consensus pattern of decision making and are held together by a charismatic leadership. The state has been an important governing institution. No study of society is complete without study of the state or the governing institutions of society, because the government occupies an important place in the social lives of people.

The state

The relation between state and other associations has been a matter of debate among scholars. Some scholars argue that the state is the supreme social institution

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and all other associations owe their origin to its initiative, acquiescence and support. They exist because the state allows them to exist. On the other hand, the pluralists recognize the special role of the state as a regulator of social life. Laski has argued that the state does not exhaust the associative impulses of men. In his opinion, the society should be regarded as essentially federal in its nature. The other associations are real in the sense that the state is real. State is viewed as a community agency that is charged with the responsibility of coordinating and adjusting the claims and activities of various associations. This distinctive function gives the state its unique character.

Nature of power

Power in general means the ability to carry out ones wishes despite opposition. In any process of interaction, some participants usually have more power than others. When we assert that someone has more power than someone else, we usually imply the existence of a more or less extended field of potential conflict. We often have to specify the field of potential conflict. However, it is often true that A has more power than B in some situations, while B has more than A in others. Power is a relative matter. Weber's definition of power implies that those who hold power do so at the expense of others. It suggests that there is a fixed amount of power and therefore everyone does not have access to it. This view is sometimes known as the constant sum of power. Since the amount of power is constant, power is held by an individual or group to the extent that it is not held by others. Arguing from a functionalist perspective, Talcott Parsons rejects the 'constant-sum' concept of power. They view that power is employed in the furtherance of sectional interests. A Marxian analysis of power provides a radical alternative to Parson's functionalist approach. From a Marxian perspective, the source of power in societies is the economic infrastructure. In all stratified societies, the forces of production are owned and controlled by the minority ruling class. This relationship to the forces of production provides the basis for dominance. It therefore follows that the only way to return power to the people involves communal ownership of the forces of production. Since everyone will now bear some relationship to the forces of production, power will be shared by all members of the society. From a Marxian perspective, the use of power to exploit others is defined as coercion. It is seen as an illegitimate use of power which forces the subject class to submit to a situation which is against its interest. If the power of the ruling class is accepted as legitimate by the subject class, it indicates false consciousness.

Power of random groups

Power is the capability of a person or a group to achieve its goals, irrespective of any resistance from any other person or group. Weber recommends that the access of power is based on the party. Party is a united category of organizational structure that focuses on a common interest. This interest may be on the basis of a class, a status or any similar type. Very few persons are able to act individually in order to achieve their interests.

Voting behaviour

Marx predicted that class struggle has turned the western society into an institution that would end in the proletarian revolution. With the extension of franchise and the proliferation of interest groups, members of the working class are drawn into the political process. Their interests are represented by political parties and interest groups such as trade unions. They are able to express their discontent with an institutional framework and as a result, more violent expressions of class conflicts are unlikely. S.M. Lipset sees national elections as an expression of class struggle and competition between political parties as the institutionalization of class conflict. He argues that more than anything else, the party struggle is a conflict among classes and the most impressive thing about party support is that in virtually every country it is economically sound. The lower-income groups vote mainly for parties of the left front while higher income groups vote mainly for parties of the right front. The voting behaviour does not strictly follow class lines.

Pressure groups and political parties

Pressure groups are associations or groups which have objectives that are different from political parties. These pressure groups or interest group have important political functions in all modern societies. These functions may either be useful or harmful to the stability or progress of the society. Interest groups may be based on economic, ethnic, linguistic, religious, regional or other considerations. Sometimes they would convert themselves into political parties or win over some members of the government and pressurize the government to give in to their demands. In this case, the group could be considered as a pressure group. At times, when the government introduces a bill or a budget proposal in the Parliament, the interest groups will use their influence and lobby to pressurize the government to either withdraw or to amend it to a form that is acceptable to them. Interest groups and pressure groups use a number of strategies to influence the government and to get their demands accepted. These strategies include threats of direct action like boycott, threat of holding back essential services, protest closure of shops and agitations such as street demonstrations and strikes.

Political parties are organized groups of citizens who hold common views on public issues and act as political units. They seek to obtain control of the government with a view to encourage the programme and policy, which they profess. A political party is essentially a social group that has an associative type of social relationship. A political party primarily strives to secure political power and to hold it either singly, or in cooperation with other political parties. Political parties are indispensable for the working of a democratic government. They are the connecting link between people and the government. They are the vehicles which individuals and groups use to secure and exercise political power. Political parties are seen as representing diverse elements in a national tradition and as being concerned to some degree with general, rather than class or sectional interests.

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Political participation

Political system functions on the basis of political participation. Lester Milbrath has suggested that members of the society can be divided into four categories, in terms of their degree of political participation. Firstly, the politically apathetic who are literally unaware of the politics around them, secondly, those involved in spectator activities, which include voting and taking part in discussions about politics, thirdly, those involved in transitional activities, which include attending a political meetings or making financial contributions to a political party, finally, those who enter the political arena and participate in activities such as, standing for and holding public and party offices. These levels of political participation are not uniformly distributed throughout the population. In general, higher is an individual's position in the class structure, greater is his degree of participation. Studies have shown that political participation is directly proportional to income level, occupational status and educational qualification. It has also been associated with a variety of other factors. For example, men are likely to have higher levels of participation than women, married people than single people, middle-aged people than either young or old, members of clubs and associations than non-members, long-term residents in a community than short-term residents, etc. However, those with low levels of participation often lack the resources and opportunities to become more directly involved in politics. They lack the experience of higher education, which brings a greater awareness of the political process and knowledge of the mechanics of participation. Secondly, individuals are unlikely to participate in politics if they are likely to be rewarded for their involvement. Robert Dahl argues that an individual is unlikely to participate in politics, if he feels that the probability of his influencing the outcome of events is low. Thirdly, levels of political participation appear to be related to the degree of involvement and integration of an individual in the society. Thus, an individual who is not likely to be involved in local or national politics, does not feel a part of either the local community or the wider society. Finally, Dahl suggests that individuals are not likely to have high levels of political participation if they believe that the outcome of events will be satisfactory without their involvement.

However, the significance of differential political participation varies. Pluralists have argued that low participation may be an indication that interests of the politically inactive are adequately represented. Lipset proclaims that the combination of a low vote and a relative absence of organization among the low-status groups means that they will be neglected by politicians who are receptive to the wishes of the more privileged, participative and organized strata.

Democratic and authoritarian forms

Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Democracy is a mixture of the rational, legal and charismatic types, with a touch of traditionalism in some instances. However, democracy is an emotive term which means for many as freedom of the individual to participate in

those decisions which affect his life. This suggests that the individual should be directly and regularly involved in the political process. From a pluralist's perspective, democracy is seen as a system of representative government, whereby many elites represent a range of interests in the society. It implies that the representative government is the only way in which the democratic ideal can be realized in a contemporary society. Bottomore regards the western system of governance as an imperfect realization of democracy, as it permanently excludes many from the experience of governance. He argues that only when the democratic ideal becomes an established feature of everyday life, a democratic system of national government can be created. This would involve 'social democracy', where people directly participate in the management of their firms. He further argues that a truly democratic national government will only be possible when all major institutions of the society operate on the principles of democracy.

Therefore, democracy can be seen as a system in which every individual has an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and an equal say in governance of the society. Democracy often means easy, egalitarian manners with no expectation that anyone will show a marked deference to another. In a democratic society, power is distributed among many groups. Democratic governance is characterized by emphasizing on the autonomy of individuals and subsystems. An important feature of the democratic government is rule by the law and equal treatment by the law.

12.3.4 Education

Education means developing of and cultivating various physical, intellectual, aesthetic and moral faculties of an individual. Durkheim defines education as 'the action exercised by the older generations on those who are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to awaken and develop in the child, those physical, intellectual and moral values which are required of him, both, by his society as a whole and by the milieu for which he is specially destined. It is a social process. Education is imparted by both, formal and informal means. It is an important means of socialization. Aristotle's famous concept of education says, 'education develops man's faculties, especially his mind, so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of the supreme truth, goodness and beauty, in which perfect happiness essentially consists'. Durkheim further conceives education as socialization of the younger generation. According to him, it is a continuous effort to impose on the child, ways of seeing, feeling and acting which he could not have achieved spontaneously.

Education as a social process

Education is viewed as an integral fragment of socialization. Such a process of social learning is continuous. Education is also considered an agent of cultural transmission. The elements of culture are transmitted from one generation to another, through education. Education not only helps in acquiring knowledge but also inculcates the values of morality among individuals. Educational institutions are

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instrumental in shaping the personality of individuals and also formulation of ideologies. On the whole, education helps in reforming the attitudes of individuals and encourages them by inculcating a spirit of competitiveness in them.

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Primitive and ancient societies had no educational institutions. Children learnt from their surroundings. Schools appeared when cultures became too complex for the learning to be handled within the family. Thus, educational institutions grew as time passed by. In India, the historical roots of educational institutions are referred to in the *guru-shishya* tradition. In this tradition, students had the advantage of being in personal contact with the teacher. The image of the guru was personified and the students were obliged to the guru or teacher.

Sociological perspectives on education

From a functionalist perspective, it is preferred that education contributes to maintenance of the social system. Emile Durkheim saw the major function of education as transmission of society's norms and values. He maintained that the society can survive only if a sufficient degree of homogeneity exists among its members. Education functions to strengthen this homogeneity by maintaining a balance of these similarities in an individual, since his childhood. Due to these similarities, the demands of life in all individuals are similar. Cooperation and social solidarity would never have existed in the absence of these essential similarities, would not be possible. Drawing conclusions from Durkheim's concept, the American sociologist, Talcott Parsons, gave a functionalist view of education. Parsons put across the theory after the spread of primary socialization within a family, the school assumes the role of a central socializing agency. School brings the family closer to the society. It prepares the child for his role as an adult. Davis and Moore shared Parson's view with reference to education. They too considered education to be useful in providing suitable roles to individuals. However, they hold the educational system directly responsible for creating divisions in the society. According to Davis, the education system has proved that it is able to select people on the basis of their capacities and allocate appropriate positions to them. Thus, the process of educational filtering organizes and categorizes individuals on the basis of their skills and capacities. The people with the highest level of talent get the highest level of qualification. Consequently, this leads them to better occupations which are most important in terms of functions to the society.

However, the Marxian perspective provides a radical alternative to the functionalist position. Louis Althusser presents a general framework for the analysis of education, from a Marxian perspective. Being a section of the superstructure, the infrastructure finally gives shape to education. According to him, education benefits only the ruling class. For survival and prosperity, it is very important to reproduce the power of labour. Two steps are involved in the process of reproducing labour, the first step is reproduction of skills that are required for a capable labour force. The second step is reproduction of the ideology of the ruling class and socialization of workers. These processes combine to reproduce a technically

efficient, submissive and obedient workforce. In a social structure that is dominated by capitalism, education reproduces such a workforce. Althusser stresses that reproduction of labour power not only requires reproduction of its skills, but also a simultaneous reproduction of its submission to the ruling ideology. This submission is reproduced by a number of 'Ideological State Apparatuses' which include the mass media, law, religion and education. Ideological State Apparatus is a trademark of the ideology of the ruling class which creates artificial class awareness. This awareness maintains the subject class in its subordinate position to a large extent. Education, according to Althusser, not only transmits ideologies of the general ruling class (which justifies and legitimates the capitalist system), it also reproduces the attitudes and behaviour that are required by major groups in the division of labour.

Ivan Illich has been critical of both, functionalist and liberal views of education. In *Deschooling Society*, that was published in 1971, he raises issues on the incapability of schools in matching educational ideals. In his opinion, schools are institutions that teach students about various means of exploitation. According to him, schools instigate compliance to the society and create a belief in students, to accept the interests of the powerful. However, real learning can never prevail through a set of instructions. It can be inculcated only when an individual is involved in every part of the learning process, on his own. To conclude, the majority of learning processes require no teaching. Illich blames the educational system as the main cause of all problems that have emerged in the modern industrial society. School teaches the individual to delay authority, assume isolation, to absorb and accept the services of the institution and neglect his own needs and wants. He is instructed to view education as a precious product such that it should be taken in large amounts. He, however also presents a solution. According to him, to resolve this issue, it is important to abolish the present system of education, since schools form the base of education. Deschooling is the primary step towards the liberation of mankind. Finally, Illich confirms that deschooling will create a society where every man can be truly liberated and can experience a sense of fulfillment.

Education as an instrument of social control and social change

The general character of formal education has undergone a rapid change through modern science and technology. Technological development today is quite unlike the development that took place in the 19th century. Unlike the present day society, in ancient societies, education was considered as the learning related to a way of life. However, in primitive societies, the terminology of science comprised the production and distribution of labour. Formal education quickens the overall process of education. However, it is incapable in transmitting any practical knowledge. In societies of the recent times, the content of education more scientifically inclined and less scholarly. Thus, it can be concluded that education in modern societies inculcates freedom of thought and values that have an important role in streamlining the attitude of an individual.

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It has been argued that education by itself does not bring about social change, rather it is an instrument which performs the functions that are entrusted to it. Innovations in the education system may lead to structural changes in the society. The Indian society has deep-rooted customs and traditions which are strongly embedded in the Indian lifestyle. Changes are resisted because they conflict with traditional values and beliefs.

12.3.5 Economic

In considering the historical development of sociology, a few figures are taken from a vast interplay of schools of social thought. Any division of labour which leads people to pursue diverse and possibly conflicting lines of economic activity, may generate conditions of social dislocation and inequity. Here, the social arrangements that are aimed at establishing peaceful, cooperative and equitable interchange among economic agents are taken into consideration.

Herbert Spencer marked a confluence of two great traditions of evolution and classical economics. Spencer, from his evolutionary tradition saw many similarities between biological and social organisms. Both are capable of growth; both increase the complexity of the structure as they grow in size and both display a close interdependence of parts. He viewed social evolution as similar to biological evolution. Establishing his evolutionary scheme, he introduced a distinction between two types of societies, the militant and the industrial. The militant society is integrated by force and is characterized by compulsory cooperation. On the other hand, the industrial society contrasts with the militant one on many fronts. The political machinery is no longer subordinated to the single military principle. The principle of integration of industrial society is based on voluntary cooperation.

In industrial society, men interact by forming contractual arrangements. Spencer viewed industrial society like Smith viewed the competitive economy. So his characterization of industrial society indicates that political regulation is almost unnecessary in such a society, since social coordination is guaranteed by voluntary cooperation among individuals.

Emile Durkheim: Solidarity as an active force in economic life

Most of the insights of Durkheim that concern economic integration are found in his book, *The Division of Labour in Society*. In this book, he has analysed the integration of social life. Durkheim set up a dichotomy between two types of societies, segmental and complex. To him, a segmental society is a homogeneous society with the presence of mechanical solidarity. There is a presence of repressive law. It has subordination of the individual to the undifferentiated collective conscience of the society. On the other hand, it differentiates complex societies as powerful forms of integration. He is different from Spencer such that he stressed the increased salience of integration in complex societies, rather than tending to regard it as a by-product of individual interactions.

Max Weber: The origins and sustaining conditions for capitalism

Max Weber made a comparative analysis of societies by using the method of ideals. Weber mentioned a historically unique configuration such as *rational bourgeoisie capitalism*. This refers to systematic and rational organization of the production itself. While identifying the historical conditions that gave rise to industrial capitalism, Weber rejected the belief that the rise of capitalism could be explained by the increase of population. On the positive side, he considered the rise of ascetic Protestantism, especially Calvinism. He established social and psychological conditions that were conducive to this form of capitalism. To him, bureaucracy also forms the most rational form of social organization for perpetuating industrial capitalism. Weber also found out certain institutional structures that were permissive for industrial capitalism. He found these structures in the political legal complex. So Weber specified certain institutional conditions under which maximum mobility is both, permitted and regulated. Weber also stressed the political legal regulation of money and exchange. Above all, he believed that rational capitalism cannot flourish unless the political authority guarantees the supply of money with relatively stable values. As to the type of medium of exchange, Weber saw the advantage of a generalized money currency since it allows for expansion of market and creation of credit. However, unlike traditional economists, Weber was not interested in the regularities that were produced within the capitalist system of production. He believed in establishing an important background of institutional conditions, under which the capitalist system and its regularities could exist.

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Social aspects of division of labour and types of exchange

One of the best known works of Durkheim is his study of division of labour, in which he analysed social functions of the division of labour. He also sought to show how in modern societies, it is the principal source of social cohesion or solidarity. In the course of his enquiry, Durkheim distinguished two kinds of solidarities, mechanical and organic. He associated these with two types of laws, which he called repressive and restitutive. He also analysed the abnormal forms of division of labour, i.e., the anomic and the forced division of labour. By the first, he meant a condition of extreme specialization of labour. In this condition, the individual became isolated in his specialty and particularly a condition in which there was permanent division between capital and labour. Durkheim proposed the fostering of regular and prolonged contacts through professional associations and corporations and through institutional arrangement for discussion and negotiation between capital and labour. By the second form, Durkheim meant a condition in which individuals did not freely choose their occupations, but were forced into them. He regarded this discrepancy between the abilities of individuals and the functions imposed upon them, as the principal source of class conflict. Durkheim thought that modern societies could and would get rid of these abnormal forms of division of labour.

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However, division of labour has not become so extensive in India, as in advanced industrial countries. Division of labour affects the caste system. In the caste system, the division of labour had the integrative functions, which Durkheim emphasised. In the village economy, caste, like the medieval guilds, ensured the performance of necessary functions (by passing on craft, skills, etc). These functions were organized by the direct exchange of services between castes (the *jajmani* system). In an industrial and money economy, the division of labour becomes far more complex and the exchange of services is accomplished through the market or by central planning. The caste system retains some integrative functions on the cultural level. However, these are likely to be less important as social cohesion comes to depend increasingly on the economic division of labour.

Types of exchange

The division of labour and possession by different individuals and groups makes exchange necessary for higher levels of efficiency in production. It is equally true that exchange makes division of labour possible. Exchange is found in every economy, no matter how primitive. There are six possible kinds of exchanges, according to the items exchanged, these are: goods for goods, services for services, goods for services, money for goods, money for services and money for money. The use of money occurs only in advanced economies. Interest was stirred in comparative exchange by the appearance of a volume, edited by Polanyi, Arensberg and Pearson, in the late 1950s. Going through the records of Babylon, Mesopotamia, Greece, Mexico, Yucatan, the Guinea Coast and rural India, they depicted how trading practices were separate from the familiar practices of free market exchange. They criticized the traditional economic theory and suggested an alternative framework for better comparative economics of exchange. Polanyi and his associates identified three major patterns of exchange, reciprocative, redistributive and exchange.

Reciprocative exchange is the most common form of exchange among primitive people. It is illustrated by ritualistic gifting practice among families, clans and tribes, as analysed by Malinowski and Mauss. Exchange of gifts like *kula* exchange is ceremonial in nature. Another illustration is found among farmers of many civilizations, who frequently work for one another, especially during the time of harvest. Economic calculation, price payments and wages are typically absent. Goods or services are given because it is traditional to do so. The only principle of calculation is that giving and receiving should balance among exchanging parties in the long run.

Redistributive exchange means that the produce of the group is brought together, either physically or by appropriation. This is then distributed among the members again. This brings economic goods and services to a central source that is often governmental. It then redistributes them throughout the populace. Polanyi, Arensberg and Pearson identified several instances of this exchange pattern in ancient Asian and African civilizations. Any system of redistribution involves some

economic exchange, but redistribution at the same time is political. Modern illustrations of such type of exchanges are tax institutions which redistribute wealth in the society. *Potlatch*, among the Trobriand islanders and *jajmani* system in traditional India are also examples of redistributive exchange.

The third pattern, which is more familiar in the modern west, is termed exchange. In this case economic goods and services are brought into the market. Prices are not standardized on the basis of tradition, but as a result of bargaining for economic advantage.

12.3.6 Religious Institutions

Since the days of the primitive society, religion has always existed in one form or another. There are mysteries and perplexities of life for which there is no adequate explanation. The elements of nature, sunshine, wind and rain affect man in a number of ways. **Religion** is the expression of the manner and type of adjustment that is effected by people in terms of their conception of the supernatural. In the words of James Frazer, the author of the book *The Golden Bough*, religion has been explained as 'a belief in powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life.' According to Ogburn and Nimkoff, 'Religion is the attitude towards superhuman powers'. Such attitude gives rise to coherent systems of beliefs and practices that concern the supernatural order. Thus religion is a more or less a coherent system of beliefs and practices that concerns a supernatural order of beings, forces, places, or other entities: a system that, for its adherents, has implications for their behaviour and welfare implications that the adherents in varying degrees and ways take seriously in their private and collective lives.

The origin and evolution of religion

The early sociological studies of religion had three distinctive methodological characteristics, these were *evolutionist*, *positivist* and *psychological*. These are shown in the works of Comte, Tylor and Spencer. According to Comte, sociology is one of the fundamental conceptions of the so called law of three stages, according to which human thought had passed through theological metaphysical and positive stages. Comte treats theological thinking as an intellectual error which is dispersed by the rise of modern science. He traces, within the theological stage, a development from animism to monotheism and he explains religious belief in psychological terms by reference to the perception and thought processes of early man. Later, Comte propounded his own religion of humanity and thus recognized in some sense a universal need for religion.

However, the works of Tylor and Spencer were rigorous as they were concerned with explaining the origin of religion. They believed that the idea of the soul was the principal feature in a religious belief. They set out to give an account, in rationalist terms, of how such an idea might have originated in the mind of primitive man. According to this, men obtained their idea of the soul from a misinterpretation

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of dream and death. Spencer refers to that original theory of things as from which the supposed reality of dreams, resulted a supposed reality of ghosts. E.B. Tylor believes animism was the oldest practice of religion. He argues that animism was a result of the efforts of mankind to answer two questions of the difference between a living body and a dead one and what are those human shapes which appear in dreams and visions. The soul is a spirit being which leaves the body temporarily during dreams and visions. Animals were invested with spirits as were human tribes, such as Australian aborigines. Tylor points out that religion, assumes the form of animism with the purpose of satisfying the intellectual capacity of mankind and meet his quest for knowledge about death, dreams and vision. Similarly, naturism endorses the concept that the forces of nature are supernatural powering nature. Max Muller believes this to be the earliest form of religion. He argues that naturism came to exist as a result of man's interaction with nature, typically as the outcome of the reaction of nature on man's emotions. According to him, animism tries to find the source of religion in man's intellectual requirements; naturism seeks it in his emotional needs. Naturism is how man responds to the effect of power and to the nature on his emotions.

However, there is a lot of criticism about the evolutionary approach. The origin of religion is lost in the past. However, theories about the origin of religion can only be based on speculation and intelligent guess work, according to some critics. Moreover, the exact phases of the evolution of religion do not match with the facts. Andrew Lang has highlighted that the religion of a large number of simplest societies is monotheistic in nature, which according to Tylor was restricted to modern societies.

The sacred and the profane

Durkheim held that the essence of religion is to sustain divisions into the phenomena of sacred and profane ideologies. He does not believe that the essence of religion lies in the belief of a transcendent God. He proclaims that the true aim of religion is to establish the phenomena of the sacred and the profane in the society. The 'sacred' consists of a body of things, beliefs and rites. Supernatural entities are always sacred, that is, they are worthy of being treated with respect whether they are good or evil. Supernatural beings and forces are invisible and intangible, but certain sacred objects are quite tangible and visible, for instance, the altar in a Christian church. On the other hand, everything that is not holy is profane. Profanity is using names without proper respect.

Functions and dysfunctions of religion

Religion has various social functions. Religion is an agency of social control. It disciplines human behaviour in terms of sacred and profane. Performance of rituals and ceremonies gives a sense of collectivity to the society. The law of *karma*, the fear of retribution and such other prescriptions, always has a moderating and civilizing impact on human action. The norms of conduct, once established, regulate

social relations. Religion has unified the principles of every society. Religion is an integrating and unifying force of the human society. Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore reason why religion is necessary and is apparently to be found in the fact that human society achieves its unity through the possession by its members of certain ultimate values in common. Although these values and ends are subjective, the influence of behaviour and its integration enables the society to operate as a system.

Though the direct impact of religion remains healthy, elevating and socializing, its indirect effect may be dysfunctional for the society. In Europe, religion hindered the growth of science and inquiry till decline of the organized church in the 19th century. The superstitious superstructure that developed successively, caused immense harm to the society at all levels. Religion inhibits protests and impedes social changes. Religion has resulted in wars, devastations and genocides. While fulfilling the identity function of religion, certain loyalties arise which may actually impede the development of new identities that are more appropriate to new situations.

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Check Your Progress

3. What are the different forms of family on the basis of ancestry or descent?
4. What is fraternal polyandry?
5. Which was the most common form of exchange among primitive people?
6. What does redistributive exchange mean?
7. What according to E.B. Tylor, is the earliest form of religion?

12.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The cultural symbols for social institutions can be understood through the example that the citizen is reminded of loyalty to the government by the sign of the flag. Similarly, national anthems, national songs, national flags, etc., strengthen institutional ties.
2. The types of functions of social institutions are: manifest social functions and latent functions.
3. On the basis of ancestry or descent, families are classified into matrilineal and patrilineal types.
4. When one woman marries several brothers at the same time, the practice is known as fraternal polyandry.

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5. Reciprocatve exchange was the most common form of exchange among primitive people.
6. Redistributive exchange means that the produce of a group is brought together, either physically or by appropriation.
7. E.B. Tylor believes animism to be the earliest form of religion.

12.5 SUMMARY

- Institutions are structured processes through which people carry on their activities.
- The various forms of social institutions are: marriage, family, education, economy, polity and religion.
- The forms of marriage are diverse in nature; on the basis of the number of mates, marriage is classified into two types, monogamy and polygamy.
- The institution of family is the basic and fundamental institution in the life of an individual.
- Education means developing of and cultivating various physical, intellectual, aesthetic and moral faculties of an individual.
- Religion is the expression of the manner and type of adjustment that is effected by people in terms of their conception of the supernatural.

12.6 KEY WORDS

- **Social Institution:** A group of people who have some specific purpose.
- **Marriage:** A socially approved way of acquiring a family.
- **Education:** It means developing of and cultivating various physical, intellectual, aesthetic and moral faculties of an individual.
- **Power:** The ability to carry out ones wishes despite opposition.
- **Pressure groups:** Associations or groups which have objectives that are different from political parties.
- **Religion:** The expression of the manner and type of adjustment that is effected by people in terms of their conception of the supernatural.

12.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What does an institution mean?
2. What is an ideological state apparatus?

3. What are pressure groups?
4. Discuss the forms of families.
5. Briefly state Max Weber's theory of the origins and sustaining conditions for capitalism.
6. Write a short note on the origin and evolution of religion.
7. What is the difference between sacred and profane?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the meaning of an institution. Enumerate some features of an institution.
2. Discuss the functions of institutions.
3. Analyse the various types of institutions.
4. Discuss the nature of power.
5. Examine the sociological perspectives on education.

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BLOCK - V

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND SOCIAL CONTROL

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UNIT 13 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Structure

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Social Stratification: An Overview
 - 13.2.1 Characteristics
 - 13.2.2 Functions
- 13.3 Theories of Social Stratification
- 13.4 Social Stratification and Social Mobility
- 13.5 Types of Social Stratification
 - 13.5.1 Slavery Class Systems
 - 13.5.2 Social Class
 - 13.5.3 Social Caste
 - 13.5.4 Estate
 - 13.5.5 Status
- 13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 13.7 Summary
- 13.8 Key Words
- 13.9 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 13.10 Further Readings

13.0 INTRODUCTION

Man has always desired an egalitarian society where all human beings are equal but this noble ideal has never been fully achieved in recorded history and certainly not in modern societies which are more concerned about equality than any other societies. The indicators of development devised by national and international organizations show that inequalities have, in fact, increased within countries and between the countries during the last century. A number of agencies at different levels are engaged in reducing economic and social inequalities. The modern state has taken the major responsibility of reducing social inequalities. International organizations like UNDP, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank also play a major role in policy formulation and mobilization of resources to reduce poverty. Voluntary organizations are increasingly involved in the implementation of development programmes whose major purpose is to reduce poverty and empower people. Needless to say these efforts have been only partially successful.

Every complex society is faced with the difficult task of assigning roles to its members which are necessary for the society to survive. These roles must be filled

as harmoniously and efficiently as possible. The people should be willing to perform jobs (roles) even though they do not have a lot of status or prestige. A community requires not only people who are doctors, lawyers, and teachers but also those who collect trash, direct traffic and put out fires. Although these roles are not as prestigious, they are nonetheless very important for the efficient functioning of society.

In this unit, you will learn about the concept of social stratification, its characteristics and functions and the types of social stratification.

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13.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Define the meaning and concept of stratification
- Explain the practical applications of theories of stratification
- List the roles and functions of stratification
- Analyse the contribution of education towards social mobility, the concept of social stratification, class, caste and its various dimensions.
- Explain the various types of social mobility

13.2 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION: AN OVERVIEW

Differentiation is the law of nature. This is true in the case of human society. Human society is not homogeneous but heterogeneous. Men differ from one another, in many respects. Human beings are equal so far as their bodily structure is concerned. But the physical appearance of individuals, their intellectual, moral, philosophical, mental, economic, religious, political and other aspects are different. No two individuals are exactly alike. Diversity and inequality are inherent in society. Hence, human society is everywhere stratified.

All societies assign their members to roles in terms of superiority, inferiority and equality. This vertical scale of evaluation, and placement of people in strata, or levels, is called **stratification**. Those in the top stratum have more power, privilege and prestige than those below.

Society Compares and Ranks Individuals and Groups

Members of a group compare different individuals, as when selecting a mate, or employing a worker, or dealing with a neighbour, or developing friendship with an individual. They also compare groups such as castes, races, colleges, cities, athletic teams. These comparisons are valuations, and when members of a group agree, these judgments are social evaluations.

All societies differentiate members in terms of roles and all societies evaluate roles differently. Some roles are regarded as more important or socially more

valuable than others. The persons who perform the more highly esteemed roles are rewarded more highly. Thus stratification is simply a process of interaction of differentiation whereby some people come to rank higher than others.

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Definitions

1. **Ogburn and Nimkoff:** The process by which individuals and groups are ranked in a more or less enduring hierarchy of status is known as stratification.
2. **Gisbert:** Social stratification is the division of society into permanent groups of categories linked with each other by the relationship of superiority and subordination.
3. **Melvin M. Tumin:** Social stratification refers to arrangement of any social group or society into a hierarchy of positions that are unequal with regard to power, property, social evaluation, and/or psychic gratification.
4. **Lundberg:** A stratified society is one marked by inequality, by differences among people that are evaluated by them as being lower and higher.
5. **Raymond W. Murry:** Social stratification is a horizontal division of society into high and lower social units.

The Universality of Social Stratification

Social stratification is ubiquitous. In all societies population is socially differentiated on the basis of age, sex and personal characteristics. The roles and privileges of children differ from those of adults; and those of good hunters or warriors differ from those of the rank and file. It is not customary to speak of a society as stratified if every individual in it has an equal chance to succeed to whatever statuses are open. Strictly speaking, there are no purely equalitarian societies, only societies differing in degree of stratification. Even Russia which dreamt of a 'classless society' could not, any more than any other society, escape the necessity of ranking people according to their functions. The criterion of rank has changed along with values of society. P.A. Sorokin wrote in his 'Social Mobility' that an 'uncertified society with real equality of its members is a myth which has never been realized in the history of mankind.'

Social Differentiation And Stratification

As it is clear from the above, all societies exhibit some system of hierarchy whereby its members are placed in positions that are higher or lower, superior or inferior, in relation to each other. The two concepts — 'social differentiation' and 'social stratification' — are made use of to refer to such classification or gradation and placement of people in society. In differentiation, society bases status on a certain kind of trait which may be (i) physical or biological such as skin colour, physical appearance, or sex, (ii) social and cultural such as differences in etiquette, manners, values, ideals, ideologies, etc. Thus, differentiation serves as a sorting process according to which the people are graded on the basis of roles and status.

Stratification tends to perpetuate these differences in status. Hence, through this process people are fixed in the structure of the society. In some cases, (as it is in the case of caste) status may become hereditary. Differentiation may be considered the first stage preceding stratification in society, sorted and classified into groups. It does not, however, mean that all differentiation leads to stratification in society.

13.2.1 Characteristics

According to M.M. Tumin the main attributes of stratification are as follows:

Social

Stratification is social in the sense it does not represent biologically caused inequalities. It is true that strength, intelligence, age and sex are also factors that serve as distinguishing features, but this still doesn't explain why some strata of society receive more power, property, and prestige than others. Biological characteristics also do not determine social superiority and inferiority until they are socially recognized and given importance. For example, the manager of an industry attains a dominant position not by his physical strength, nor by his age, but by having socially defined traits. His education, training skills, experience, personality, character, etc., are found to be more important than his biological equalities.

Further, as Tumin has pointed out, the stratification system is:

(i) governed by social norms and sanctions, (ii) is likely to be unstable because it may be disturbed by different factors, and (iii) is intimately connected with the other systems of society such as the political, family, religious, economic, educational and other institutions.

Ancient

The stratification system is quite old. According to historical and archaeological records, stratification was present even in the small wandering bands. Age and sex were the main criterion of stratification then. 'Women and children last' was probably the dominant rule of order. The difference between the rich and poor, powerful and humble, freemen and slaves existed in almost all the ancient civilizations. Ever since the time of Plato and Kautilya, social philosophers have been deeply concerned with economic, social and political inequalities.

Universal

The stratification system is a worldwide phenomenon. The difference between the rich and the poor or the 'haves' and the 'have nots' is evident everywhere. Even in the 'not literate' societies, stratification is very much present. As Sorokin has said, all permanently organized groups are stratified.

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NOTES**Diverse forms**

The stratification system has never been uniform in all the societies. The ancient Roman society was stratified into two sections: the patricians and the plebeians, the ancient Aryan society into four *Varnas*: the *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and the *Shudras*, the ancient Greek Society into freemen and slaves; the ancient Chinese society into the mandarins, merchants, farmers, soldiers and so on. Class, caste and estate seem to be the general forms of stratification to be found in the modern world. But the stratification system seems to be much more complex in the civilized societies.

Consequential

The stratification system has its own consequences. The most important, most desired, and often the scarcest things in human life are distributed unequally because of stratification. The system leads to two main kinds of consequences: (i) 'life chances' and (ii) 'lifestyles'. 'Life chances' refer to such things as infant mortality, longevity, physical and mental illness, childlessness, marital conflict, separation and divorce. 'Lifestyles' include such matters as – the mode of housing, residential area, one's education, means of recreation, relationships between the parents and children, the kind of books, magazines and TV shows to which one is exposed, one's mode of conveyance and so on. Life chances are more involuntary, while lifestyles reflect differences in preferences, tastes and values.

13.2.2 Functions

The glimpse of the cultures of the world reveals that no society is 'classless', that is, uncertified. All the known established societies of the world are stratified in one way or the other. According to Wilbert Moore and Kingsley Davis, the stratification system evolved in all the societies due to the functional necessity. As they have pointed out, the main functional necessity of the system is: '.....the requirement faced by any society of placing and motivating individuals in the social structure.....'. Social inequality is thus an unconsciously evolved device by which societies ensure that the most important positions are conscientiously filled by the most qualified persons'. As analysed by H.M. Johnson certain things here can be noted about the 'functional necessity' of the class stratification system.

Encourages hard work

One of the main functions of class stratification is to induce people to work hard to live up to the values. Those who best fulfil the values of a particular society are normally rewarded with greater prestige and social acceptance by others. It is known that occupations are ranked high if their functions are high important and the required personnel is very scarce. Hard work, prolonged training and heavy burden of responsibility are associated with such occupational positions. People undertaking such works are rewarded with money, prestige, comforts, etc. Still

we cannot say that all those positions which are regarded as important are adequately compensated for.

Ensures circulation of elites

To some extent, class stratification helps to ensure what is often called ‘the circulation of the elite’. When a high degree of prestige comforts and other rewards are offered for certain positions, there will be some competition for them. This process of competition helps to ensure that the more efficient people are able to rise to the top, where their ability can best be used.

Serves an economic function

The competitive aspect has a kind of economic function in that it helps to ensure the rational use of available talent. It is also functionally necessary to offer differential rewards if the positions at the top are largely ascribed as it is in the case of the caste system. Even in the caste system, the people at the top can lose their prestige if they fail to maintain certain standards. Hence differential rewards provide the incentives for the upper classes to work at maintaining their positions.

Prevents waste of resources

The stratification system prevents the waste of scarce resources. The men in the elite class actually possess scarce and socially valued abilities and qualities, whether these are inherited or acquired. Because of their possession of these qualities their enjoyment of some privileges such as extra comfort and immunity from doing menial work, are functionally justified. It becomes functionally beneficial for the society to make use of their talents without being wasted. For example, it would be a waste to pour the resources of society into the training of doctors and engineers, and then make them work as peons and attendants. When once certain individuals are chosen and are trained for certain difficult positions it would be dysfunctional to waste their time and energy on tasks for which there is enough manpower.

Stabilizes and reinforces the attitudes and skills

Members of a class normally try to limit their relations to their own class. More intimate relationships are mostly found between fellow class-members. Even this tendency has its own function. It tends to stabilize and reinforce the attitudes and skills that may be the basis of upper-class position. Those who have similar values and interests tend to associate comfortably with one another. Their frequent association itself confirms their common values and interests.

Helps to pursue different professions or jobs

The values, attitudes and qualities of different classes do differ. This difference is also functional for society to some extent because society needs manual as well as non manual workers. Many jobs are not attractive to highly trained or ‘refined’ people for they are socialized to aspire for certain other jobs. Because of the early

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influence of family and socialization the individuals imbibe in them certain values, attitudes and qualities relevant to the social class to which they belong. This will influence their selection of jobs.

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Social control

Further, to the extent that 'lower class' cultural characteristics are essential to society, the classes are, of course, functional. In fact, certain amount of mutual antagonism between social classes is also functional. To some extent, upper-class and lower-class groups can act as negative reference groups for each other. Thus they act as a means of social control also.

Controlling effect on the 'shady' world

Class stratification has another social control function. Even in the 'shady' world of gamblers and in the underworld of lower criminals, black-marketers, racketeers, smugglers, etc., the legitimate class structure has got respectability. They know that money is not substitute for prestige but only a compensation for renouncing it. Hence instead of continuing in a profitable shady career, such people want to gain respectability for their money and for their children and they try to enter legitimate fields and become philanthropists and patrons of the arts. Thus the legitimate class structure continues to attract the shady classes and the underworld. This attraction exerts a social control function.

13.3 THEORIES OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Since the second half of the 19th century, four broad sociological theories have been used to explain and interpret the phenomenon of social stratification. They are:

- (i) Natural superiority theory
- (ii) Functionalist theory
- (iii) Marxian class conflict theory
- (iv) Weberian multiple hierarchies theory

1. Natural Superiority Theory

Natural superiority theory, also referred to as social Darwinism, was a popular and widely accepted theory of social stratification in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The main advocate of social Darwinism was Herbert Spencer, an English sociologist, who saw social organization as an environment. It is believed that certain individuals and groups had the requisite skills or attributes to compete and to rise in that environment. Others, not so skilled or less competitive, would fail. The social Darwinists believed that their theory was part of the law of nature. Some other sociologists believed that the social inequality arising out of stratification is biologically based. Such beliefs are often heard in the case of racial stratification

where, for example, whites claim biological superiority over the blacks. Even in terms of gender stratification, the underlying principle is that the men are biologically superior to women. However, the question of a relationship between the biologically based inequality and socially created inequality is difficult to answer. Rousseau refers to biologically based inequality as natural or physical, because it is established by the nature, particularly with respect to the age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind. In comparison, socially created inequality consists of different privileges, which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others, such as that of being richer, more honoured, or more powerful. However, biologically based inequalities between men are treated as small and relatively unimportant whereas socially created inequalities provide the major basis for systems of social stratification.

2. Functionalist Theory of Social Stratification

The functionalist theory is a theory that is most concerned with how societies maintain order. Generally, the functionalist theorists have tended to stress stability, consensus, and integration in society.

Functionalists assume that the society is similar to that of a human body, comprising several parts which form an integrated whole. Like the human body, the society's institutions must function properly to maintain the stability of the entire social system.

Further, certain functional prerequisites must be met if the society is to function effectively and in order. Social stratification therefore becomes a tool to see how far it meets these functional prerequisites. Talcott Parsons, the leading proponent of functionalist model, differentiated societies as falling on a continuum between ascribed-status-based societies and achievement based societies. Societies in which individuals were value based on their family position, sex, race, or other traits of birth are viewed as the traditional end of the continuum. On the other end is the modern society, in which a system of rewards is used to aid in fulfilling a complex division of labour. According to Parsons, more difficult positions that demanded considerable responsibility required a system of rewards to motivate individuals to take them. In his view, stratification — which is, by definition, social inequality — was both necessary and agreeable. Parsons believed that stratification was necessary to provide rewards for people who would take on the additional responsibility tied to difficult positions, and in his view, stratification was desirable because it allowed the social system to function smoothly. Parsons's ideas on social stratification were further developed by two American sociologists, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore in their essay 'Some Principles of Stratification', published in *American Sociological Review* in 1945. They shared the common notions with Parsons in so far as stating that the social stratification is universal, functional, and integral to fulfilling the division of labour in society.

According to Davis and Moore, no society is classless or un-stratified. Davis and Moore argued that it was necessary and functional for the society to have a varied set of rewards in relation to the varied levels of sacrifices required

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by some jobs. In other words, there are some jobs that require individuals to possess special talents or to develop special skills. These jobs may also require that the individual filling the position works with utmost care. Therefore, Davis and Moore find it logical that societies developed a system of rewards whereby those jobs requiring the greatest preparation and responsibility are rewarded more highly than are other positions. The social order has developed a differentiated system of rewards, which as led to social stratification.

Thus, Davis and Moore argue that one of society's most important functional prerequisites is effective role allocation and performance. Namely, all roles must be filled by persons best able to perform them, who have the necessary training for them and who will perform these roles conscientiously. If the duties associated with various positions would be equally present to everyone and all would depend on the same talent and ability, then it would make no difference as to who got into which position. However, it does make a great deal of difference mainly because some positions are inherently more agreeable than others. Davis and Moore suggest that the importance of a position in a society can be measured in two ways, i.e., the degree to which the position is functionally unique, there being no other position that can perform the work satisfactorily (e.g., a doctor's role is more important than that of a nurse) and then by the degree to which other positions are dependent on the one in question.

In sum, both Parsons and Davis and Moore present a view of structured inequality as being necessary to maintain social order and therefore society's survival, and as being based on general agreement among the members of society.

3. Marxian Theory of Social Stratification

The **Marxist perspectives** generally regard modern society as being divided primarily into two classes — the bourgeoisie and the proletariat — on the basis of property ownership or non-ownership of property. Marx understood classes to be economically determined by the difference between owners of the means of production and non-owning direct producers. Class differences therefore are determined by the mode of production.

Marx and Frederick Engels have divided history into five distinct epochs of production: primitive communism, Asiatic, ancient Greece and Rome, feudal society, and capitalism of these, only the ancient, the feudal and the capitalist phases received special treatment by both Marx and Engels. Ancient society was based on slavery; feudal society was based on serfdom, and capitalism on wage labour. Each of these societies was divided into two major classes: the oppressors and the oppressed or the exploiters and the exploited. In every case the exploiters are made up of those who own the means of production but do not produce. The exploited are those who do not own the means of production but are the direct producers of social goods and services. Because the exploited do not own the means of production, they are forced, in order to live, to work for those who own

and control the productive conditions of life. The exploiters live by means of the surplus produced by the exploited. As a result, the social mode of production also reproduces the social relations of production. Thus the relationship between the exploiters and the exploited is constantly renewed and conserved. The Marxists therefore in contrast to the functionalists regard stratification as a divisive rather than an integrative structure and the focus was on social strata rather than social inequality in general.

Marx also spoke of the hostilities between the two classes. Three terms—class consciousness, class solidarity and class conflict — are important in understanding the dynamics of class conflict in the Marxist approach to the study of stratification. Class consciousness is the recognition by a class, such as workers, of the role its members play in the productive process and their relation to the owning class. Class solidarity refers to the degree to which workers collaborate to achieve their political and economic targets. Class conflict is divided into two: (1) the involuntary conflict between the workers and the capitalists for shares in the productive output at a time when class consciousness is not developed and (2) the conscious, deliberate and collective struggle between the two classes when the workers become aware of their historic role. According to Marx, social change occurs as a sequel to class struggle. Marx said that the revolution of the proletariat will bring an end to the class conflict, i.e., the conflicting interests between the ruling class (bourgeoisie) and the subject class (proletariat).

4. Weberian Theory of Social Stratification

The work of the German sociologist Max Weber represents one of the important developments in the stratification theory. According to Weber, stratification is based on the three types of social formation, namely class, status and power or party. Property differences generate classes, power differences generate political parties and prestige differences generate status groupings or strata.

Like Marx, Weber sees class in economic terms, classes as a group of individuals who share the same position in the market economy. Weber distinguishes four class groups in the capitalist society:

- (i) Propertied upper class
- (ii) Property-less white collar workers
- (iii) Petty bourgeoisie
- (iv) Manual working class

In his analysis of class, Weber differs from Marx on some important grounds. For instance, Weber says that the factors other than ownership or non-ownership of property are significant in the class formation and he rejects the Marxist view of the inevitability of the proletariat revolution. Weber also disagrees with the Marxist view that political power is derived from the economic power. He says that groups form because their members share a similar status situation. While ‘class’ refers to

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the unequal distribution of economic rewards, 'status' refers to the unequal distribution of social honour. Weber also looks at 'parties' or groups which are specifically concerned with influencing policies and making decisions in the interests of their membership.

Check Your Progress

1. List three characteristics of social stratification.
2. Name some of the theories of social stratification.
3. Which are the two class groups that Weber has classified capitalist society into?
4. What are the two functions of social stratification?

13.4 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

Individuals are normally recognized through the statuses they occupy and the roles they enact. Not only is the society dynamic but also the individuals are dynamic. Men are constantly striving to improve their statuses in society, to rise upwards to higher positions, secure superior jobs. Sometimes, people of higher status and position may also be forced to come down to a lower status and position. Thus, people in society are in constant motion on the status scale. This movement is called 'social mobility'.

'**Social mobility**' may be understood as the movement of people or groups from one social status or position to another status or position. For example, the poor people may become rich, the become a big industrialist and so on. At the same time a big businessman may become a bankrupt and the ruling class may be turned out of office, and so on.

Types of Social Mobility

Social mobility is of three types, namely 1. Vertical social mobility, 2. Horizontal social mobility, and 3. Spatial mobility.

1. **Vertical mobility** refers to the movement of people of groups from one status to another. It involves change in class, occupation or power. For example, the movement of people from the poor class to the middle class, from the occupation of the labourers to that of the bank clerks, forms the power position of the opposition to that of the ruling class. By vertical social mobility, we refer to the relations involved in the transition of individuals from one social stratum to another. According to the direction of transition, there are two types of vertical mobility — ascending and descending or social sinking and social climbing. The ascending type exists in two principal

forms as infiltration of individuals of a lower stratum into a higher one, the insertion of such a group into higher stratum, instead of going side by side with existing groups of the stratum. The descending has also two principal forms. The first consists of dropping of individuals from one higher position into lower existing one, without degradation or disintegration of the higher groups to which they belonged. The second is manifested in its degradation of social group as a whole. An example of vertical mobility is that in which the scheduled castes move upward by getting modes of education, new techniques, skills and adopting the ritual and manners of higher status caste groups, changing their caste names, home culture and occupation and maintain the higher position. The theory of 'lagging emulation' under the framework of reference groups is employed to understand this type of mobility both in the field of hierarchy and occupation. However, this type of mobility takes place from lower stratum to higher stratum.

2. **Horizontal mobility** refers to the transition of an individual or social object from one social group to another situated at the same level. Horizontal shifting occurs usually without any noticeable change. If we take occupation, shifting from one job or factory or occupation to another of the same kind would be referred to as horizontal mobility. An example of horizontal mobility is the citizenship shifting or shifting of individuals from one state to another. That does not mean the changing of citizenship, but it is called shifting of citizenship. It indicates a change in position, within the range of the status. For example, an engineer working in a factory may resign from his job and join another factory as an engineer and may work in more or less the same capacity. Similarly, a teacher may leave one school to join another as a teacher.
3. **Spatial mobility** refers to inter-generational mobility which is an outcome of migration or shifting of places, for example, it may happen as a result of migration from rural to urban community or social improvement of individuals within the family and hence provide the chances for change in culture. In this context, some of the scholars of change and mobility have discussed the units of mobility in the form of individual financial groups and corporate mobility. The study of mobility can be subsumed under the above pattern. So we can say that the social mobility is a part of the broader concept of social change. In a transitional society, modern education, industrialization, growth of cities, factories, bureaucracy and change in the occupational patterns are the main variants for the social mobility.

Factors Affecting Social Mobility

There are various factors, which are responsible for the social mobility.

1. The supply of vacant status

The number of statuses in a given stratum is not always or even usually constant. For example, the expansion in the proportion of professional, official, marginal

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and white-collar positions and decline in the number of unskilled labour positions require a surge of upward mobility. These positions retain their relative social standing at times. Demographic factors also operate to facilitate mobility, when the higher classes do not reproduce themselves and hence create a demographic vacuum (Sorokin, 1959).

2. The interchange of rank

Any mobility that occurs in a given social system which is not a consequence of a change in the supply of positions and actors must necessarily result from an interchange. Consequently, if we think of simple model for every move up, there must be a corresponding move down. Interchange mobility will be determined in a large part by the extent to which a given society gives the numbers of lower strata which means complete with those who enter social structure at a higher level. Thus the lesser the emphasis a culture places on the family background as a criteria for marriage, the more will be the class mobility that can occur both up and down through marriage. The occupational success is related to educational achievements which are open to all and hence the greater occupational mobility (Lipset and Zetterberg, 1966).

3. Modern education

Education has particularly created new incentives and motivation to initiate and adopt the ideals, practices, behaviour patterns and style of life of the higher castes which M. N. Srinivas (1965) translates and explains under the process of *sanskritization* and westernization. *Sanskritization* is a process through which the lower castes imitate the traditions and cultural practices of the upper castes and sometimes even the nomenclature to push their case for a higher status in the society. There are many instances of the lower castes that have adopted the practices of higher castes in order to be upwardly mobile which is otherwise not possible in the traditional Hindu society. The process of westernization in terms of adoption of the western ideals in life is also a most potential force in social mobility, especially in the urban and industrial centres. The new value orientations, motivation, behaviour patterns, formal relations, individualism, monetised attitude to social status and western technology are popular among the people. This popularity for status upliftment, encourages the migration to places where economic opportunities in terms of urban trade, industrial occupations and jobs in different governments are available.

4. Migration

Migration to urban areas also contributes to the change in the social status of socially mobile individuals and groups. The traditional occupations slowly disappear and the modern industrial occupations are sought after. All these factors help in the improvement of the social position of the people. Normally, the higher the income of a particular occupation, the greater is the importance of education. However, though money makes the base of living, education decides the quality and mode of life and living. As a result, lots of changes have come in the living arrangements of

the people in the modern societies. The changes also occur in the behaviour and manners of the people, which may be the outcome of social mobility.

Education And Social Mobility

As discussed earlier, education in the present day context is the most important and dynamic force in the life of individual, influencing his social development. It functions more as an agent of social change and mobility in social structure. It leads to economic development by providing ways and means to improve the standard of life. The positive attitude towards education leads to socio-economic mobility among the individuals and groups. That means, a person who is born in an agricultural family can, by means of education, become an administrator or any other government employee. Secondly, education leads to the changes in the lifestyles of people. It modifies the attitudes, habits, manners and their mode of social living. Thirdly, the education is responsible for inter-generational mobility among the individuals and groups. Through inter-generational mobility, the social groups are able to maintain their status and the status of their family. Therefore, it can be said that education plays an important contributory role in the mobility of individuals and groups regarding their social position, occupational structure, styles of life, habits and manners.

Social Mobility And Social Stratification

The nature, form, intensity and magnitude of social mobility depend on the nature and the type of social stratification. Class and caste are the two main types of stratification. In both the systems the same kinds of opportunities are not provided for social mobility. Because, in both the societies, the factors that determine the statuses of the individuals differ radically. There is a close link between the way in which individuals obtain their statuses and the nature of social mobility. In the caste system, the status is determined by birth. Since birth cannot be changed, the status which is determined on the basis of birth cannot be changed. For example, a *Harijan* cannot attain the status of a *Vokkaliga*, or *Lingayat* or *Brahmin*. Similarly, a *Brahmin*, is born a *Brahmin* and dies a *Brahmin*. Caste statuses cannot be changed. Hence, the caste as a form of social stratification does not facilitate vertical society, the 'immobile' society.

In a class system, opportunities are provided for social mobility. Here, the status is determined mainly by the talents, intelligence, wealth and achievements of the persons. The status is not ascribed by birth but 'achieved' by individual attempts. For example, by his endless efforts and struggles a labourer may become the owner of a factory, a salesman of a business house, the owner of a business firm, and so on. There is scope for the improvement of the social status in the class system. Hence, the class system is called an 'open system', and the open-class society, the 'mobile' society.

As and when the society becomes more and more complex, and the life of its members improves, individuals may find better opportunities for the expression

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of their abilities and talents. But in no society can all the deserving individuals obtain statuses of their liking, desires and expectations. As Sorokin has pointed out in his '*Social Mobility*', only in an ideal society all the individuals get employments and statuses in accordance with their capacities. At the same time, it is not possible to confine people to their status when once they occupy or assume a status without going away from it, or changing it in any manner. For example, even in a so called 'immobile' society like India, though a *Harijan* cannot change his caste-status, he can change his educational, economic, employment and political status. In this sense, there are no completely open and mobile societies and completely 'closed' and 'immobile' societies.

Check Your Progress

5. Differentiate between vertical and horizontal mobility.
6. List two factors that affect social mobility.

13.5 TYPES OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

This section will examine three major systems of social stratification — slavery, Social castes, and the social classes. These systems can be seen as ideal types for analytical purposes. It may be pointed out that any social stratification system may include elements of more than one type.

13.5.1 Slavery Class Systems

The most radical, legalized, social inequality for individuals or groups is slavery. The most unique feature of this crushing system of stratification is that one human being owns another. These individuals are treated as possessions, just like household pets or appliances. Slavery has been practised in different forms. In ancient Greece, the main source of slaves consisted of captives of war and piracy. Though the slave status could be inherited, it was not permanent. A person's status might be changed depending on the outcome of the military conflict between kingdoms. On the other hand, in the United States and Latin America, racial and legal barriers were established to prevent the freeing of slaves. In other words, in whatever form it existed, it had required extensive use of coercion in order to maintain the privileges of slave owners.

13.5.2 Social Class

A **social class** is a group of individuals who have more or less a similar wealth. The possession of wealth enables the individual to obtain those goods and services that are scarce and are valued by others. These goods and services differ from society to society. In traditional society, the wealthy person may buy land and gold while in modern society he may invest in the stock market or buy luxurious cars or

go aboard for vacations. Wealth allows the person to create more wealth if he invests it prudently. Most modern societies have class based stratification. However many features of traditional stratification may be observed in modern societies such as elements of caste system and feudalism found in India. But with economic development, class based stratification is becoming increasingly important.

Class is a relatively open stratification system

Any society is said to be relatively open or closed depending on the number of opportunities available to its members for upward social mobility. Equally important, is the attitude of the society towards the mobility of its members. If the society offers a large number of opportunities and encourages members to achieve higher positions then the society can be called an open stratification society. On the other hand, if the society has a limited number of opportunities for upward mobility and its normative values prohibit its members from achieving higher positions, that society is called a closed stratification society. Along with development, the system of stratification becomes open and achievement oriented.

The class system is a form of open stratification system. An individual with his achievements can gain entry to a higher class and acquire prestige. There are examples of individuals who by their hard work and achievements rose from poverty and became millionaires. Modern society appreciates such individuals as they are seen as models for others.

Social mobility in modern societies is based on intelligence, merit, competence and achievement of individuals. However, in every society, in spite of the openness, factors like socio-economic background, parental status and resources, social networks and various ascribed factors play an important role in determining individual motivation, achievement and the availability of opportunities. Since these factors are not in control of the individual and cannot be easily modified to his advantage it cannot be said that modern societies are fully achievement oriented and open.

That is why we have said class based societies are relatively open, that is, in relation to other societies. We will shortly study the caste system, which is a relatively closed stratification system.

Social hierarchy in traditional societies is formed by ascription while in class based societies achievement plays an important role. In other words the difference between traditional and modern social hierarchies, lies in the difference between (status ascribed and status achieved being) the bases social stratification. Traditional social hierarchies are based on ascribed states, while modern social hierarchies are based on achieved status.

The level of competition in modern society is high and only the fittest can survive.

Social workers have to remember two consequences of an achievement based society. Since achievement is stressed, failures of an individual are look

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down upon by others and they lose their self-esteem. You may have read in newspapers about school children committing suicide after failing in school exams. It is the desire for high achievement and fulfilling the high expectations of others that pressurize vulnerable students to take this extreme step. Secondly, an achievement based society should provide the minimum facilities of health, education and housing to individuals to make them fit for competition. In countries like India, we find that these essential facilities are not provided to all and many people are unable to compete with others on an equal basis. This makes the social situation unfair to these people. The government and voluntary organisations implement welfare and development programmes to enable disadvantaged people to enter the mainstream of society.

Impact of class system in India

Membership of particular class groups influences the behaviour of its members. It makes them conscious about their position in society. But in the Indian context more importance is given to caste and related issues rather than class factors. The class character in India is quite different from western societies. Here class and caste categories co-exist in India and class categories like upper, middle and lower are parallel to caste categories. They jointly determine the class status, power and prestige of the individual in the society. Studies have shown that the upper classes predominantly belong to the upper castes which are an ascribed status. There have been significant changes in the last decades but the pattern still continues. The accumulation and distribution of resources including education is determined by the social position of the individual. Those who are higher in terms of the class and caste terms control available resources to a great extent, leaving behind a section of the Indian population below and around the poverty line. The forces of globalization and liberalization seem to have widened the gap between the haves and have-nots, between the rich and the poor, between urban people and rural people and the upper caste and the lower class and lower caste.

13.5.3 Social Caste

Caste is a much debated topic in India. The word caste refers to the Spanish word 'Casta' which means 'breed' in Spanish. In the Indian context it represents caste and its related social practice. The caste system influences the social life of the Indian in a number of ways, as it assigns ascribed status to its members. According to the Rig Veda the oldest and most important of all the four Vedas, there are four *Varnas* which are placed in a hierarchical order — the *Brahmans*, the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vaishyas* and the *Shudras*. The profession of *Brahmans* is that of priests and teachers. The *Kshatriyas* are warriors and rulers. The *Vaishyas* are traders and other common people. The *Shudras* occupy the lowest position in the hierarchy and perform the menial tasks. According to some historians, there is a fifth *Varna*, the untouchables, and they are not considered as a part of society. The tribes and people of other religions are also considered outside the *Varna*.

system. Individuals are born into a caste and membership of a caste is determined by birth. An individual cannot change his or her caste. But there are instances where castes as a whole, after an improvement in economic status and changes in lifestyles have claimed a higher status in society. Such claims may or may not be accepted. The dominant castes might react adversely to the claim. But even if the claim is accepted the caste system remains intact. However the process of *Sanskritization*, inter-caste marriage and advancement of education has changed the degree of the rigidity of the caste system in India.

According to G.S. Ghurye, a noted anthropologist, caste has six characteristics:

1. **Hierarchy:** Hierarchy is superior-subordinate relationship between various individuals and groups. Hierarchy in one form or another exists in every society but the principle of determining the hierarchy differs from society to society. In India caste is the main basis of social hierarchy. The degree of ritual purity and impurity associated with a particular caste determines its position in the hierarchy. Wealth and power are not the determining factors. For example, a *Brahmin* whose economic status is lower than a *Rajput* is accorded a superior position because of his higher ritual status.

In reality, however, political and economic factors do play a significant role in determining the position of the caste. Sociologists have pointed out that high ritual status does not actually translate into a higher social status. For example, while a *Rajput* may not have as important a role in ritual matters as the *Brahmins*, it is unlikely that he will give a higher status to the *Brahmin* in other matters. According to sociologist, MN. Srinivasan, a dominant caste is that caste in the community that has a sufficiently high ritual status, numerical strength and material resources like land, wealth and access to power. It is the combination of these factors which keeps a caste high in the hierarchy. The dominant caste often has a major role to play in the village politics and its social life.

2. **Segmented division of society:** Castes are well-developed groups with membership based on birth and not by selection. The rights and duties of the individuals are controlled by caste councils, which exist in every caste. These councils have large powers to regulate the social life of its members. They can enforce order by punishing offenders for a variety of offences. Offences include adultery, causing injury to others; killing and punishments can include the imposition of fines, ordering corporal punishment and even the death sentence. Many castes have their own gods and goddesses that are not a part of the larger religious tradition. Thus, caste has a sufficient degree of autonomy in dealing with the issues related to its members, and is independent of the controls by the government.
3. **Restrictions on feeding and Social intercourse:** The exchange of cooked food between various castes is based on specific rules and conditions. Certain castes accept only certain kind of foods from members

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of other castes. Food items are divided into *pakka* and *kucha* food. *Pakka* is cooked in ghee and are considered superior to *kucha* food which is cooked in water. A *Brahmin* can take only *pakka* food from *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* but not from *Shudras* and untouchables. On the other hand, *Kshatriyas* will take *kucha* food from a *Brahmin* but only accept *pakka* food from the *Vaishyas* who are lower than them. The distinctions in the offering and taking of food are based on the positions of the caste involved.

Such kinds of differences are seen in the maintenance of social distance between different castes. The physical distance between castes reflects the caste positions.

For example in traditional Kerala society, a *Nayyar* may approach a *Nambudri* but cannot touch him whereas a member of the *Tiya* caste (lower than the *Nayyar* caste) has to maintain a distance of 36 steps from the *Nambudri*.

4. Civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different castes:

Different castes in the hierarchy have different rights and privileges. The result is that social life is segregated on the basis of caste. In north Indian villages impure castes are segregated while pure castes live together. In South India all castes tend to be segregated. In Tamil Nadu for example, we find that the place where caste Hindus live are called *Ur* and where *dalits* live are called *Cheri*. The *Cheri* is situated at a distance from the village.

Ghurye gives a number of instances from the late 19th century and early 20th century to show how these disabilities were enforced. For instance in Viakomom, a town in the princely state of Travancore, *Shudras* were not allowed to walk on the temple streets. A nationwide agitation by prominent leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Periyar against these discriminatory practices changed the situation.

Similarly in Pune, a *Shudra* could not enter the city in the morning and evening as their long shadows would pollute the high caste members. We also find differential treatment in the punishments for committing similar crimes. For example if caught stealing a *Brahmin* had to pay only a fine but for the same crime, a *Shudra* had to undergo corporal punishment. There are a number of places even today in India where *Shudras* are not allowed to offer prayers in the temples.

The religious practices reinforced this hierarchy and *Shudras* had liabilities that were attached to their caste status. They could not enter the most inner part of the temple, the sanctum sanctorum. Only *Brahmins* were allowed this privilege. In rural areas, even now, there is discrimination against lower caste members. We often hear of caste violence after lower caste members were disallowed by higher caste members to take out a marriage procession or funeral procession on the main street.

5. Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation: Membership of the caste is hereditary and each caste had a traditionally assigned occupation. Regardless of the individual's aptitudes and skills he had to adopt the occupation of his caste. In the same way every occupation was linked to a specific caste. So each caste has one occupation and that occupation was the presence of that caste only. For example, only a *Brahmin* could become a priest because of his birth in a *Brahmin* family. Education was imparted on the basis of caste. Young members would be attached to older members to train them in the occupational skills of the caste. There was no universal and common education. However, sociologists have pointed out that in spite of such restrictions on occupations there were certain occupations like weaving, agriculture and military that were open to all castes.

In pre-modern times the economic relations between the various castes was in the form of the *jajmani* system. Each service caste performed a particular function for the landlords. They used to receive payment in kind and commonly on an annual basis. The service castes and the higher castes had a client-patron relationship. In modern times their relation has undergone a change.

6. Endogamy: Endogamy refers to the marriage practice in which the members of a group marry from within the group members. Endogamy is an important characteristic of the caste system. In many castes, there is endogamy at the sub-caste level. For example, *Iyers* and *Iyengars* may not marry between each other even though both are Tamil *Brahmins*.

There are however exceptions to the rule. These exceptions pertain to hypergamy and hypogamy. When a higher caste man marries a low caste woman it is called hypergamy and when a lower caste man marries a higher caste woman it is called hypogamy. Hypergamy is allowed whereas hypogamy is strictly forbidden. It is a matter of prestige for the lower caste family if their daughter had been accepted by a higher caste's man and family. An example of this practice is marriage between a male *Nambudri* and a *Nayyar* woman.

Caste in other religions

Among the major religions of the world, caste exists only in Hinduism. But in India adherents of virtually all religions seem to have caste-like divisions. The Muslims, the Christians, the Buddhists and Sikhs, all seem to follow the principle of inclusion and hierarchy in different ways. Islam and Christianity believe in radical equality between its members. However, the existence of caste-like practices shows that in some aspects the social milieu in which a religion is practiced influences it more than its theology. This is the case of Sikhism and Buddhism also.

Caste-like differences may be observed in religions other than Hinduism. In Sikhism, there are groups like *Jat Sikhs* and *Mazhabi Sikhs*. They do not intermarry. In Islam four groups were identified that can be compared to castes: *Syeds*, *Sheikhs*,

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NOTES

Pathans and *Mughals*. *Syeds* claim that they are the direct descendants of Prophet Muhammad while *Sheikhs* claim that they are descendants of the tribe of Prophet Muhammad. *Pathans* and *Mughals* are considered to be the warrior class comparable to *Kshatriyas* in Hinduism. Other groups in Islam are based on professions they pursue like weavers butchers, water carriers, etc. These groups are considered lower in status than *Syeds*, *Sheikhs*, *Pathans* and *Mughals*. Most of these groups are endogamous. There is limited social intercourse between these members. However, anyone from any social group, if competent in religious knowledge, can become a priest or *moulvi*.

Christianity is also an egalitarian religion and has encouraged conversions of people from all castes during different periods of history. Many of these castes have retained their caste identities even after their conversion to Christianity and this has influenced their social behaviour. However, Islam and Christianity have no concept of pollution and purity, which is central to Hinduism. Hence these religions were less influenced by caste than Hinduism.

13.5.4 Estate

The system of estates was prevalent in many traditional civilizations including European feudalism. The feudal society was divided into three different estates. The first estate included clergy, the second included aristocracy and gentry, and the third included common people. Each estate had different obligations and rights.

According to Bottomore, some of the characteristics of estates are as follows:

- (i) Feudal estates were political groups.
- (ii) Each estate had a defined legal status based on its privileges and obligations.
- (iii) There was clear division of labour among these estates. Each estate had to perform certain functions. The nobility had to defend all estates from enemies, the clergy had to pray for all estates, and the commoners had to produce food for all estates.

Growing industrialization weakened the estate system in Europe.

13.5.5 Status

The anthropologist Ralph Linton first coined the terms ‘ascribed status’ and ‘achieved status’ in his book *The Study of Man*. Ascribed status is the social status which is assigned to a person on his birth and remains fixed throughout his life. Thus, in societies which are based on ascription groups, people have little freedom to move to another group or status, whereas, in a society based on achievement, an individual can work his way up the social ladder through his talents, abilities and skills.

(i) Ascribed or biological bases of stratification

These are the attributes that a person is born with. The position of a person in the society is decided by these attributes. Some of these attributes are sex, race and caste. Now, let us study these bases of ascribed stratification:

- **Race/Caste stratification:** Discrimination on the basis of race or caste is the prime example of ascribed stratification. Here, race refers to the aspects of your physical appearance that make you a part of a particular group which is recognized by the society. Throughout history, people's caste and the colour of their skin have determined their social status. Today, racism and casteism are considered extreme forms of discrimination.
- **Gender stratification:** Gender is also an important basis of social stratification. In many societies, men are considered more powerful and authoritative than women. Women are considered victims of social inequality. Some feminists point out that women do not form a homogenous group as their social status is also determined by their race, age, sexual preference and class. However, there are other feminists who believe that irrespective of these differences, there are some common characteristics among women across the world.
- Professor Lesley Doyal (University of Bristol, the UK) states that the women's physique is the real constraint in their lives; and she explains this statement by saying, 'this is evidenced by the fact that the fight for bodily self-determination has been a central feature of feminist politics across very different cultures.'

(ii) Achieved or socio-cultural bases of stratification

Social stratification is not only based on biological bases but on socio-cultural bases as well. A person can control some of the attributes like power, prestige, wealth and education. According to Max Weber, three Ps form the base of social stratification. These are Property (wealth), Power (influence) and Prestige (status). Generally, these three Ps occur together, that is, people who are wealthy tend to be powerful and have a prestigious status in the society. Yet, this is not always true. For example, a petty contractor may make more money than a school teacher but cannot have a prestigious status like him. Now, let us study the three Ps in detail.

- (a) Power:** Weber sees power as the capacity of an individual to influence others. Favoured by Weber, the American sociologist Talcott Parsons believes that power is the universalized capacity of social system and is exercised to achieve collective goals. Power is classified into two categories:

1. Individualistic power situations
2. Organizational power situations

Individualistic power relationships are exercised by individuals, and they become organizational when these are exercised by social organizations.

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Generally, all power relations have individualistic as well as organizational elements. If the head of the family decides where to marry off his daughter, it is an individualistic power; but as a social unit, family exercises organizational power. Power is also classified as purposive and purposeless, and direct and indirect.

Activities which are intended to affect social order or cultural system come under purposive power. If an activity is not deliberately done to influence the society; but it still influences the society, it would be purposeless power. In case of direct use of power, power flows directly from bearer to the affected individual or group. In case of indirect use of power, other people exist between the bearer of power and the affected individuals or group.

(b) Property or wealth: It refers to material possessions and other things owned by people which help in producing income. Some of the examples of material possessions are money, land, building, jewellery and livestock. Income refers to money that people receive over a certain period of time, including salaries, rent, interest and wages. In advanced capitalist societies, money plays an important role in people's lives.

(c) Prestige: It is also an important basis of social stratification. However, it is subjective in nature unlike property and power. It is because prestige is intangible and depends on other people's perceptions and attitudes. It refers to social honour and respect. Prestige has several aspects. It may result from a person's social roles, socio-political activities, leadership qualities, physical attributes or a property. Social prestige is also related to authority, respect and influence.

Occupation is also an important means of social prestige. For example, doctors and managers enjoy better social prestige than peons or sweepers.

Weber believed that one of the most important factors in the rise of capitalism was the religious belief that wealthy people were smiled upon by God. In the modern capitalist societies, most people believe that people with more wealth have worked harder and are more deserving than people with less wealth.

Besides the three Ps, there are some other bases of social stratification as well. These are as follows:

- **Social network:** Social networks help a person in many social situations. Thus, a person with a good and large social network is considered more powerful than others. People make social network through their classmates, colleagues, acquaintances and neighbours.
- **Education:** Education helps a person in moving up the social ladder. When people attend school or college, they not only earn degrees but also make social network and learn a number of off-course things. All these things help people later in their lives. This is one of the reasons

why most countries force children to attend school and strongly encourage adults to attend college.

- **Human capital:** Human capital refers to useful skills that a person has learned. Some of the examples of human capital are knowledge about how to use a computer programme, ability to fix a car, knowledge of medical treatments, understanding of a country, state, or city's legal system and knowledge of sociology. Specialized skills are valuable in the job market.
- **Cultural capital:** The term 'cultural capital' was coined by a sociologist named Pierre Bourdieu. It refers to the knowledge of and a liking for high-status culture. According to Bourdieu, some of the examples of cultural capital are knowledge of classical music, ability to identify compositions with their composers, interest in art, and knowledge of fine wine and gourmet food.

He states that none of this knowledge has much practical usage, but it shows that the person was raised by relatively wealthy and well-educated parents.

(iii) Closed and open stratification systems

Corresponding to the ascribed and achieved social stratification, there are two types of stratification systems, namely closed and open systems. Most sociologists agree that there is no stratification system which can be considered perfectly open. This implies that there is no system which is totally based on achieved statuses and where ascribed statuses do not help or hurt people in the long run.

When sociologists look at societies which have open stratification systems, they want to determine the extent to which the society is more open than closed. Sociologists determine the openness of a society's stratification system by finding out its permissible social mobility. These ideas can be understood with the help of following flow charts.

Many sociologists believe that inequality exists in all societies, but the degree of inequality varies from society to society. It implies that inequality is more severe in some societies than in others. David B. Grusky, a leading expert in inequality, notes that social stratification systems vary along a number of dimensions. These dimensions are as follows:

- **Type of assets:** Using this dimension, sociologists look at the main attribute that people high in the stratification order have more than others. In some societies, this attribute is money, and in others, it is human capital. Some societies respect people with political power, while others respect people with cultural prestige.
- **Classes:** Under this dimension, major classes in the society are observed. In a capitalist society, as German philosopher and economist Karl Marx said, there exist two classes namely bourgeoisie and proletariat. Other

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NOTES

societies may have class classification such as slaves and slave-owners, or nobles and commoners.

- **Degree of inequality:** While studying this dimension, sociologists observe the extent of inequality between the people in the highest classes and those in the lowest classes. In medieval feudal society, inequality was very high, and in prehistoric tribal society, inequality was relatively low. According to David B. Grusky, Professor of Sociology at Stanford University, in our advanced industrial society, the degree of inequality is in between those two extremes.
- **Rigidity:** In this case, rigidity refers to the permissible social mobility. Traditional caste society allows virtually no mobility unlike modern societies.

Importance of studying social stratification

The study of social stratification is extremely important for sociologists. The importance of studying social stratification can be summed up as follows:

- It helps in understanding the type of life people live. Knowing what type of life individuals in a given social group or stratum live is very important for sociological analysis.
- It helps in understanding the bases on which a society is stratified.
- It helps in understanding the kind of interaction and relationship that exist between individuals of different strata.
- It assists in investigating the relationship between individuals or groups belonging to the same hierarchy.
- It helps in understanding which type of social system gives rise to a particular type of hierarchy. It implies that the type of social stratification varies across cultures, times and types of social systems.

Check Your Progress

7. List the three types of social stratification.
8. Define a closed stratification society.
9. List the two characteristics of caste.
10. Mention the socio-cultural bases which can be controlled.

13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Social stratification is social, it is ancient and it is universal.
2. Natural superiority theory, Functionalist theory, Marxian class conflict theory, Weberian multiple hierarchies theory are three theories of social stratification.

3. Capitalist society is classified into: propertied upper class and manual working class.
4. The three types of social stratification are:
 - (i) Slavery
 - (ii) Caste
 - (iii) Social Class
5. Vertical mobility is the movement of people or groups from one status to another, e.g., the poor rise to middle class. Horizontal mobility is the transition of a group from one social group to another, both situations at the same level, e.g. a teacher moving from one college to another at the same level to another state.
6. The interchange of rank and modern education are two factors that affect social mobility.
7. Three major types of social stratification are: slavery, Social castes, and the social classes.
8. If the society has a limited number of opportunities for upward mobility and its normative values prohibit its members from achieving higher positions, that society is called a closed stratification society.
9. Hierarchy and restrictions on feeding and social intercourse are the two characteristics of caste.
10. Socio-cultural bases such as power, prestige, wealth and education, etc., can be controlled.

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13.7 SUMMARY

- Differentiation is the law of nature. This is true in the case of human society. Human society is not homogeneous but heterogeneous. Men differ from one another, in many respects. Human beings are equal so far as their bodily structure is concerned.
- All societies assign their members to roles in terms of superiority, inferiority and equality. This vertical scale of evaluation, and placement of people in strata, or levels, is called **stratification**.
- All societies differentiate members in terms of roles and all societies evaluate roles differently. Some roles are regarded as more important or socially more valuable than others. The persons who perform the more highly esteemed roles are rewarded more highly. Thus stratification is simply a process of interaction of differentiation whereby some people come to rank higher than others.
- Social stratification is ubiquitous. In all societies population is socially differentiated on the basis of age, sex and personal characteristics. The

NOTES

roles and privileges of children differ from those of adults; and those of good hunters or warriors differ from those of the rank and file. It is not customary to speak of a society as stratified if every individual in it has an equal chance to succeed to whatever statuses are open.

- The two concepts — ‘social differentiation’ and ‘social stratification’ — are made use of to refer to such classification or gradation and placement of people in society. In differentiation, society bases status on a certain kind of trait which may be (i) physical or biological such as skin colour, physical appearance, or sex, (ii) social and cultural such as differences in etiquette, manners, values, ideals, ideologies, etc. Thus, differentiation serves as a sorting process according to which the people are graded on the basis of roles and status.
- The functional necessity of the class stratification system argues that it: encourages hard work, ensures circulation of elites, serves an economic function, prevents waste of resources, stabilizes and reinforces the attitudes and skills, helps to pursue different professions or jobs, ensures social control and has a controlling effect on the ‘shady’ world.
- Since the second half of the 19th century, four broad sociological theories have been used to explain and interpret the phenomenon of social stratification. They are:
 - (i) Natural superiority theory
 - (ii) Functionalist theory
 - (iii) Marxian class conflict theory
 - (iv) Weberian multiple hierarchies theory
- **Social mobility** may be understood as the movement of people or groups from one social status or position to another status or position.
- Social mobility is of three types, namely 1. Vertical social mobility, 2. Horizontal social mobility, and 3. Spatial mobility.
- The three major systems of social stratification — slavery, Social castes, and the social classes.
- The most radical, legalized, social inequality for individuals or groups is slavery. The most unique feature of this crushing system of stratification is that one human being owns another. These individuals are treated as possessions, just like household pets or appliances.
- A **social class** is a group of individuals who have more or less a similar wealth. The possession of wealth enables the individual to obtain those goods and services that are scarce and are valued by others. These goods and services differ from society to society.
- Caste is a much debated topic in India. The word caste refers to the Spanish word ‘Casta’ which means ‘breed’ in Spanish. In the Indian context it

represents caste and its related social practice. The caste system influences the social life of the Indian in a number of ways, as it assigns ascribed status to its members.

- The system of estates was prevalent in many traditional civilizations including European feudalism. The feudal society was divided into three different estates. The first estate included clergy, the second included aristocracy and gentry, and the third included common people. Each estate had different obligations and rights.
- The anthropologist Ralph Linton first coined the terms ‘ascribed status’ and ‘achieved status’ in his book *The Study of Man*. Ascribed status is the social status which is assigned to a person on his birth and remains fixed throughout his life. Thus, in societies which are based on ascription groups, people have little freedom to move to another group or status, whereas, in a society based on achievement, an individual can work his way up the social ladder through his talents, abilities and skills.

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13.8 KEY WORDS

- **Stratification:** It refers to the vertical scale of evaluation, and placement of people in strata, or levels.
- **Social differentiation:** It serves as a sorting process according to which the people are graded on the basis of roles and status.
- **Functionalists:** It refers to the theory that assumes that the society is similar to that of a human body, comprising several parts which form an integrated whole. Like the human body, the society’s institutions must function properly to maintain the stability of the entire social system.
- **Marxist perspectives:** This approach generally regards modern society as being divided primarily into two classes — the bourgeoisie and the proletariat – on the basis of property ownership or non-ownership of property.
- **Social mobility:** It refers to the movement of people or groups from one social status or position to another status or position.
- **Social class:** It is a group of individuals who have more or less a similar wealth. The possession of wealth enables the individual to obtain those goods and services that are scarce and are valued by others.
- **Social caste:** It refers to the Spanish word ‘Casta’ which means ‘breed’ in Spanish. In the Indian context it represents caste and its related social practice. The caste system influences the social life of the Indian in a number of ways, as it assigns ascribed status to its members.

13.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the dimensions of social stratification according to Weber?
2. Write a short note on the two types of social mobility.
3. Which are the types of social stratification?
4. What are the functions of social stratification?
5. What is estate?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the characteristics of social stratification.
2. Explain the factors that affect social mobility.
3. Briefly identify education as a factor in social mobility.

13.10 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 14 SOCIAL CONTROL

Structure

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Objectives
- 14.2 Social Control: An Overview
 - 14.2.1 Types of Social Control: Formal and Informal
 - 14.2.2 Agencies of Social Control
- 14.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 14.4 Summary
- 14.5 Key Words
- 14.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 14.7 Further Readings

NOTES

14.0 INTRODUCTION

Social control is a rather simple concept of sociology. It can be explained as the process wherein it is made mandatory for people to follow the standards and ideals of a society or social group. A spontaneous approach towards social control is by taking instances from the daily routines of life. People always have opinions about a number of things. Opinions are helpful in providing us with the knowledge to act and react in different scenarios. A large number of these opinions are a result of social mechanisms. In this unit, we will learn about the concept of social control in sociology. This will include a discussion on the meaning and definition of social control, the types of social control: formal and informal and the agencies which help in the process of exercising social control over the social relationships and interactions that happen in the society.

14.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Define the concept of social control
- Discuss the types of social control
- Examine the agencies of social control

14.2 SOCIAL CONTROL: AN OVERVIEW

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Social control is the most significant characteristic of modern social and political sciences. There are many writings on how different types of societies are based on fluctuations in the order of institution and specifically the gradual destruction of traditional methods. These were the constituents of modernity. Paradoxically, the extent of freedom directly affects the need to control. In a world where the common belief is that customs, relationships and the links of social structures of the society are persistently delicate and structured, our cognitive and affective response is to try to gain a higher level of social control.

In contemporary usage, social control generally refers to some form of organized reaction to unexpected activities. Stan Cohen calls social control ‘those organized responses to crime, delinquency and allied forms of deviant and/or socially problematic behaviour, which are actually conceived of as such, whether in the reactive sense (after the putative act has taken place or the actor has been identified) or in the proactive sense (to prevent the act)’. E.A. Ross defines social control as ‘the mechanisms by which society exercises its dominion over its component individuals and enforces conformity to its norms, i.e., its values’. However, social control is not only the exercise of control on individuals, but it is also the practice of control by individuals.

Thus, it is generally accepted that social control is a set of methodologies that is used to improve people who are believed to be destructive, crime-oriented, or destructive in one or more ways, by others. Reviewing the literature pertaining to sociology, Meier (1982) proposes the theory that social control is available in three key contexts:

- (i) As a means to describe the basic social process or condition. This methodology relates to classical sociological theory and thus, was the most popular way to define it in the first half of twentieth century.
- (ii) As a mechanism to ensure compliance with norms.
- (iii) As a means to study social order.

In the more recent times, Horowitz (1990) has proposed that, ‘Social control emerges out of and serves to maintain the ways of life and social practices of groups’.

14.2.1 Types of Social Control: Formal and Informal

Social control is broadly categorized into two types: formal and informal. According to Black (1976), **formal social control** refers to an activity where the imposition of control has a legal base. Activity apart from this directly or indirectly implies the power to control can be defined as informal control. However, formal social control

involves enactment of laws, rules and regulations against lack of cooperation. It is usually enforced by the government and organizations that use methods to enforce law and other formal sanctions such as, fines and imprisonment. Societies where the control is democratic get a large degree of support and voluntary compliance from the population. The reason for this is that the goals and methodologies of formal social control are ruled by elected representatives.

On the other hand, informal control means signifying the role of customs, traditions, norms and other usages that an individual inherits. The society executes this without a clear statement of rules. This is done through customs and norms that originate from informal sanctions like, criticism, disapproval, guilt and shame.

14.2.2 Agencies of Social Control

Social control is carried out through series of agencies, many of which are discussed below as both formal and informal agencies of control. The regular channels of social control are as follows:

Law

Law constitutes one of the primary mechanisms through which social control is enacted. Simple societies are characterized by homogeneity among individuals and operation of informal social control. However, when societies grew in size and complexity, they were compelled to formulate rules and regulations which defined certain behaviour patterns. Due to increased differentiation and division of labour, there has been interdependence between different individuals who portray heterogeneous relations. In a society that is marked by extreme differentiation, the old informal means of control like folkways, mores, etc., seem to be insufficient to exercise control. So there is a need to regulate individual behaviour by formulating a set of common laws which are backed by the political machinery of the state.

For Black (1976), law is 'governmental social control', being the rules and processes that the state uses to intervene in social conflicts between both organized and individual interests. Law is a body of rules that is enacted by legally authorized bodies and enforced by authorized agencies. It is enforced with the help of the police, the court and even the armed forces. Law is an instrument of control that eliminates and suppresses the homicidal activities of individuals. It also motivates individuals to pay attention to the rights of others and act in cooperation with others. Law has become the most pervasive and indispensable agency of social control in the contemporary society.

Education

Apart from law, education is also an important agency of social control. Durkheim conceived of education as socialization of the younger generation. He also stated

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that 'it is actually a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting'. Education does not restrict itself only to the transfer of a way of life. In modern times, a large section of it is dedicated to communicate empirical knowledge. Through education, the new generation learns about the social norms and about the penalties that can be awarded for violating them. Education converts social control into self-control. In the absence of a well-organized educational system, social control would remain merely as an arbitrary pressure, which may not last long.

Coercion

Coercion is the practice of attaining a specific goal by using compulsion or power. Whenever people are refrained from doing a particular work, whenever limits are imposed on the range of their choices through the use of force, or through threat of its consequences, it may be defined as coercion. This emerges as the final method to achieve social control when every other method fails. State is the only association which is empowered to use coercion in social control. No other association is vested with this power. State resorts to coercion to combat anti-social tendencies. Coercion may or may not be of a physical nature. Physical coercion can also comprise of bodily harm, captivity or capital punishment. Physical coercion is the most degrading means of social control and societies should avoid using it unless it becomes a necessity. Non-violent coercion, on the other hand, consists of strike, boycott or non-cooperation.

Human experience has revealed that coercion or force is necessary as a guarantee of political laws. Its service is best rendered when it is used to the minimum. Where a common rule is considered necessary or beneficial for the common good, some degree of compulsion is involved. Hence force becomes necessary for common rule. But only when the use of force is limited, it becomes subjugated to the liberties of the people.

Informal means of social control are exercised by informal institutions like family, peer group, neighbourhood, etc. These are discussed below:

Folkways

Folkways are informal means of social control in the sense that they are some customary norms which individuals conform to. These are actually ways of thinking, feeling and acting in a human group that has certain prescribed modes of conduct. William Graham Sumner (1906), in his book *Folkways: A Study of Mores, Manners, Customs and Morals*, defined folkways as 'folkways are a societal force'. They are instinctive in nature. The folkways simultaneously serve every need of life. In one group, they are consistent and global, crucial and constant. As time passes by, folkways become increasingly random, constructive and inevitable.

The process of producing folkways comprises of activities that are repeated continuously, when faced with the same need. It inculcates habits in the individuals and customs in the group. Through the use of habit and custom, every individual within its domain feels the stress. Thus, it emerges as a force of the society. Folkways are not a creation of human purpose or wit. They are like products of natural forces which men, unconsciously set in operation and are handed down by tradition. As a consequence of this, the life of the entire mankind, in all ages and stages of culture, is mainly governed by a large collection of folkways. These folkways are transferred from the primitive races and undergo changes by human philosophy, ethics and religion.

Mores

Mores are established practices of the society rather than written laws. They are basically in the form of social regulations and have a significant impact on social conduct. Sumner used the concept of mores for folkways which were very significant to groups and highly important for their welfare. According to Sumner, mores comprise of popular usages and traditions when they include a judgment that they are conducive to social welfare and when they exert coercion on the individual to conform to them. They are not coordinated by any authority. Sumner believed that mores represent the living character of the group. They are always considered right by the people who share them. Mores help an individual in realizing that living in a community or a group is possible only when one conforms to the norms of that community or group. A distinction is always made between folkways and mores. Sumner says that when folkways work on the ideology of correct living and are directed to the wellbeing of life, then they are converted to mores. Thus, in this context, it can be said that mores are important means of social control. They determine much of our individual behaviour, such that they compel behaviour and also forbid it. In a society, many mores like monogamy, democracy, prohibition, etc., operate. These mores also identify an individual with a group and help in maintaining social bonds. Moreover, violations of these mores entail some punishment in the form of penalties. Therefore mores are considered one of the strongest means of informal social control.

Customs

Custom is also an informal means of social control. According to Kingsley Davis, **customs** refer primarily to practices that have been often repeated by a multitude of generations. These practices tend to be followed simply because they have been followed in the past. The socially accredited ways of acting are the customs of the society. Many of our daily activities are regulated by customs. Custom is a broader term that comprises of both, folkways and mores. Customs are social habits, which through repetition become the basis of an order of social behaviour.

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NOTES

Customs are long established habits and usages of people. Whenever there is a widespread habit, there is a corresponding custom as well. According to Lundberg, they are folkways that persist over relatively long periods of time. Thus, they attain a degree of formal recognition and are passed down from one generation to another. A particular characteristic of custom is that it exists only as a social relationship and an external sanction for the individual. Customs not only regulate social life but also bind it together. Customs guide human behaviour and enlighten man in social life.

Customs are conformed most unconsciously. Man learns about them since early years of socialization and diligently follows them. They are rarely opposed and mostly adhered to. Customs form the base to collective human life and are found in almost every society. They are more influential and dominant in the primitive society rather than in modern societies. In the struggle for existence, only those societies survive which are able to evolve through customs that bind them together, assimilate their actions to the accepted standards, compel control of the purely egoistic impulses and exterminate individuals who are incapable of such control.

Custom is obeyed more spontaneously because it grows slowly. People follow similar behaviour patterns. Thus, customs play an important part in regulating our social behaviour. They determine our culture, preserve it and transmit it from one generation to the next.

Religion

Religion implies man's faith on some supernatural power or force. According to MacIver and Page, 'religion encompasses relationships among men and also those between man and supernatural forces. Religion regulates the activities of people in its own way. It regulates human conduct through religious code. Religion fulfills social, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs of human beings. Religion conserves the norms and values of life through agencies like family, church and school. Religion inculcates the values of life in the minds of growing children. Religion has its own methods to deal with those individuals who violate religious norms and conduct. Various religious institutions like church, temples and monasteries also help to control the disobedient. Religion has its own ways and means to re-integrate people into a social group. Moreover, religious sanctions are widely used to support ethical codes and moral practices.

Check Your Progress

1. Who executes formal social control?
2. What are the ways through which nonformal social control is enforced?
3. What does non-violent coercion consist of?
4. What is the source of folkways?

14.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Formal social control is usually enforced by the government and organizations that use methods to enforce law and other formal sanctions.
2. Informal social control is enforced through customs and norms that originate from informal sanctions like, criticism, disapproval, guilt and shame.
3. Non-violent coercion consists of strike, boycott or non-cooperation.
4. Folkways are not a creation of human purpose or wit. They are like products of natural forces which men, unconsciously set in operation and are handed down by tradition.

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14.4 SUMMARY

- Social control is a rather simple concept of sociology. It can be explained as the process wherein it is made mandatory for people to follow the standards and ideals of a society or social group. A spontaneous approach towards social control is by taking instances from the daily routines of life.
- Social control is the most significant characteristic of modern social and political sciences. There are many writings on how different types of societies are based on fluctuations in the order of institution and specifically the gradual destruction of traditional methods.
- It is generally accepted that social control is a set of methodologies that is used to improve people who are believed to be destructive, crime-oriented, or destructive in one or more ways, by others.
- Social control is broadly categorized into two types: formal and informal. According to Black (1976), formal social control refers to an activity where the imposition of control has a legal base. Activity apart from this directly or indirectly implies the power to control can be defined as informal control.
- Formal social control involves enactment of laws, rules and regulations against lack of cooperation. It is usually enforced by the government and organizations that use methods to enforce law and other formal sanctions such as, fines and imprisonment.
- Informal control means signifying the role of customs, traditions, norms and other usages that an individual inherits. The society executes this without a clear statement of rules. This is done through customs and norms that originate from informal sanctions like, criticism, disapproval, guilt and shame.

NOTES

- Due to increased differentiation and division of labour, there has been interdependence between different individuals who portray heterogeneous relations. In a society that is marked by extreme differentiation, the old informal means of control like folkways, mores, etc., seem to be insufficient to exercise control. So there is a need to regulate individual behaviour by formulating a set of common laws which are backed by the political machinery of the state.
- Through education, the new generation learns about the social norms and about the penalties that can be awarded for violating them. Education converts social control into self-control. In the absence of a well-organized educational system, social control would remain merely as an arbitrary pressure, which may not last long.
- Coercion is the practice of attaining a specific goal by using compulsion or power. Whenever people are refrained from doing a particular work, whenever limits are imposed on the range of their choices through the use of force, or through threat of its consequences, it may be defined as coercion.
- Informal means of social control are exercised by informal institutions like family, peer group, neighbourhood, etc.
- Folkways are informal means of social control in the sense that they are some customary norms which individuals conform to. These are actually ways of thinking, feeling and acting in a human group that has certain prescribed modes of conduct.
- Mores are established practices of the society rather than written laws. They are basically in the form of social regulations and have a significant impact on social conduct. Sumner used the concept of mores for folkways which were very significant to groups and highly important for their welfare.
- Many of our daily activities are regulated by customs. Custom is a broader term that comprises of both, folkways and mores. Customs are social habits, which through repetition become the basis of an order of social behaviour.
- Religion implies man's faith on some supernatural power or force. According to MacIver and Page, 'religion encompasses relationships among men and also those between man and supernatural forces. Religion regulates the activities of people in its own way. It regulates human conduct through religious code. Religion fulfills social, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs of human beings. Religion conserves the norms and values of life through agencies like family, church and school.

14.5 KEY WORDS

- **Social Control:** It refers to some form of organized reaction to unexpected activities.
- **Formal Social Control:** An activity where the imposition of control has a legal base.
- **Coercion:** The practice of attaining a specific goal by using compulsion or power.
- **Folkways:** It refers to the informal means of social control in the sense that they are some customary norms which individuals conform to.
- **Mores:** It refers to the established practices of the society rather than written laws. They are basically in the form of social regulations and have a significant impact on social conduct.
- **Customs:** It refers primarily to practices that have been often repeated by a multitude of generations.

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14.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Differentiate between formal and informal means of control.
2. What is the difference between folkways and mores?
3. State the concept of coercion.

Long-Answer Questions

4. Discuss the various formal agencies of social control with suitable examples.
5. Discuss the informal agencies of social control.

14.7 FURTHER READINGS

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